

**DRC: GRASVOËLKOP: MOVING FROM A MISSIONS-MINDED TO A MISSIONAL
FOCUS**

by

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Declaration

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Opsomming

Die NGK Grasvoëlkop is 'n klein stedelike gemeente wat, in die lig van Galasiërs 6:4, trots kan wees op haar betrokkenheid in plaaslike en globale sending deur vennoot te wees in die uitdra van God se Woord. Demografiese en kulturele veranderings het egter die gemeente gedwing om nuut te kyk na haar identiteit en roeping soos 'n dalende lidmaattal, finansiële druk en die bevraagtekening van haar eie relevansie binne haar onmiddellike konteks ontstaan. Die navorser is die afgelope 24 jaar leraar van hierdie gemeente.

Hierdie navorsing onderneem 'n empiriese studie van die gemeente en 'n beskrywing van die veranderende konteks wat ten doel het om die onmag te beskryf van die heersende institusionele hermeneutiek om die gemeente na groei en 'n vrugbare bediening te neem. Deel I beskryf die veranderings wat in Westerse kultuur plaasgevind het, en hoe die kerk onbewustelik deur hierdie kulturele kenmerke gevorm is.

Eerder as om bloot 'n sendingbetrokkenheid te hê, is dit nodig dat 'n gemeente missionaal moet wees. Dit vra dat die gemeente sal herken waar daar onskriftuurlike akkommodasie gemaak is vir Westerse kultuur en om te skuif van 'n institusionele na 'n missionale hermeneutiek. Die navorsing wys hoe 'n begrip van missionale teologie die gemeente kan begelei na 'n Bybelse begrip van kultuur, roeping en identiteit, en hoe 'n vrugbare toekoms ontdek word deur weg te beweeg van selfbehoud na deelname in die *missio Dei*. Dit word onderneem in Deel II, wat drie sleutelaspekte van missionale teologie onderskei:

1. Die Drie-eenheid, met die moontlikhede wat 'n voller Godsbegrip bring vir 'n sukkelende gemeente deur 'n hernude geloof;
2. Die Koninkryk van God, en wat dit in terme van verlossing en hoop beteken, soos dit vir die gemeente toon hoe sy in die wêreld vrug kan dra;
3. Die roeping tot dissipelskap, en hoe liefde die gemeente kan help om haar roeping en identiteit te herontdek.

Die studie beskryf hierdie drie aspekte en hoe missionale teologie dien as korrekatief op die foutiewe akkommodasies van Westerse kultuur (sekularisasie,

wêreldversaking en individualisme) en bied 'n nodige korrekatief. Die studie wys verder hoe die kerk kan fouteer deur, in reaksie op hierdie misvattinge, oor te hel na 'n teenoorgestelde en ewe onbybelse pool. Saam met 'n waardering van missionale teologie wil hierdie navorsing ook 'n vars bydrae tot die missionale gesprek maak deur klem te lê op die belang van verkondiging (en die plek wat sendingbetrokkenheid binne die gemeente behoort te hê), asook die belangrike maar onderwaardeerde rol van roeping ("vocation") in die daaglikse lewe van die lidmaat. Die groeiende klem op mistiek binne die denominasie word ondersoek en 'n alternatief vanuit Puriteinse spiritualiteit word voorgestel.

Die studie onderstreep die onvermoë van 'n sendingbewustheid wat nie gebore is uit 'n missionale ekklesiologie nie, en vind in missionale teologie die nodige parameters vir die gemeente om te transformeer as 'n deelnemer in die *missio Dei*, en om te bedien en te groei binne 'n veranderde konteks.

Abstract

DRC Grasvoëlkop is a small urban congregation that can, in the light of Galatians 6:4, be proud of its involvement in local and global missions as a partner in the proclamation of God's Word. Demographic and cultural changes have, however, forced the congregation to look afresh at its identity and calling as declining membership, financial pressure, and self-questioning of its relevance within its immediate context arise. The researcher has been a minister of this congregation for 24 years.

The researcher undertakes an empirical study of the congregation, together with a description of the changing context, that aims to expose the impotence of an institutional hermeneutic to move the congregation forward into growth and fruitful ministry. Part I will describe additionally the changes that have taken place in Western culture and how these cultural shifts have unwittingly influenced the church.

Rather than being merely missions-minded, a congregation needs to be missional. This requires the church to recognise false accommodations to Western culture, and to transition from an institutional to a missional hermeneutic. The research aims to show how an understanding of missional theology can assist the congregation in moving to a more biblical understanding of culture, calling and identity; and how a fruitful future lies in rejecting self-preservation to embrace the *missio Dei*. This is undertaken in Part II, which distinguishes three key aspects of missional theology:

1. The Trinity, with the possibilities that a fuller and more faithful view of God may bring to bear on a struggling congregation through a renewed faith;
2. The Kingdom of God, and what it means in terms of salvation and hope, showing how a struggling congregation can interact fruitfully with the world; and
3. The call to discipleship, and how love can help the congregation rediscover identity and calling.

The study fleshes out these three aspects by describing how missional theology corrects an unbiblical accommodation to Western culture (secularisation, spiritual escapism and individualism) and supplies a healthy corrective. The study shows how the church can err through a reactionary response to these errors that then swings to

an opposite, equally unbiblical pole. Together with an appreciation of missional thought, the study endeavours to offer a fresh contribution to the missional conversation by highlighting the important place of proclamation (and how mission-mindedness can be developed further) and the vital but underappreciated role that vocation can play as a missional calling. The growing mystical emphasis within the denomination is questioned and an alternative, found in Puritan spirituality, is advocated.

This study underlines the inadequacy of a missions-focus that does not spring from a missional ecclesiology and finds in missional theology the parameters to transform the congregation as a participant in the *missio Dei*, able to minister and thrive within a changed context.

Contents

1. Introduction 1

1.1. Introduction 1

1.2. Research problem 1

1.3. Research question 2

1.4. Research goal 3

1.5. Research methodology 3

1.5.1. Osmer’s four tasks 3

1.5.2. The descriptive-empirical task 3

1.5.3. The interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks 4

1.6. A Personal biography as introduction 5

1.7. What does “missional” mean? Towards a working definition 8

1.7.1. The need for clarity 8

1.7.2. Historical development of the term “missional” 9

1.7.3. Defining missional 12

Part I *An understanding of DRC Grasvoëlkop: doing the descriptive-empirical task* 14

2. DRC Grasvoëlkop: A Contextual Understanding 15

2.1 The Founding of DRC Grasvoëlkop 16

2.1.1. Early shaping events 19

2.1.1.1. Financial faith 19

2.1.1.2. Mission-mindedness 20

2.2 An ethnographic study 24

2.2.1. Question 1: Describe the congregation to a new person. 26

2.2.2. Question 6: What makes you anxious about the future of the congregation and what gives you hope? 31

2.2.3. Question 7: Describe how you and others feel about the change in the congregation that has happened in the last 3 – 5 years. 36

2.2.4. Question 2: How can members learn what it means to be a follower (disciple) of Jesus Christ? 38

2.2.5. Question 3: Tell something that illustrates how you experience the presence of God and how He works in this congregation. 39

2.2.6.	Question 8: Describe how you and others feel about the change in the community around you that has happened in the last 3 – 5 years. .	40
2.3.	A changed context	41
2.3.1.	Church traditions and the place of the congregation in both society and the minds of people	41
2.3.2.	Political change and uncertainty	42
2.3.3.	Societal change and moral decay.....	43
2.4.	Fresh attainments as rays of hope	43
2.4.1.	Sunday cell groups	44
2.4.2.	Discipleship.....	44
2.4.3.	Elders and lay leadership	45
2.4.4.	Focused fellowship	46
2.4.5.	Mission exposure.....	46
2.5.	Conclusion	47
3.	DRC Grasvoëlkop: A Cultural Understanding.....	49
3.1.	Introduction	49
3.2.	Describing Western culture.....	52
3.2.1.	Culture	53
3.2.1.1.	Defining culture	53
3.2.1.2.	Worldview	55
3.2.2	Modernity	56
3.2.2.1.	Roots of modernity: Greco-Roman period	58
3.2.2.2.	Roots of modernity: the Middle Ages.....	59
3.2.2.3.	Roots of modernity: the Renaissance and Enlightenment.....	60
3.2.2.4.	Shift to America	61
3.2.2.5.	Modernity: the disappearance of God.....	62
3.2.2.6.	Modernity: the disappearance of human nature	63
3.2.2.7.	Modernity: the omnicompetence of the human being.....	64
3.2.3.	The challenge to modernity	65
3.3.	The South African church in Western culture	67
Part II	<i>Looking through a missional lens: doing the interpretative, normative and pragmatic tasks.....</i>	72
4.	First Missional Key: Faith and the Triune God	76
4.1.	Introduction	76

4.2.	Reductionism and secularization	77
4.2.1.	Reductionism	77
4.2.2.	Secularization	78
4.3.	Trinity and the <i>missio Dei</i>	81
4.3.1.	Ephesians and a shift in vision	81
4.3.2.	<i>Missio Dei</i>	82
4.3.3.	Trinity	86
4.3.4.	Christocentrism	88
4.3.5.	Pluralism as a dangerous drift	90
4.4.	What is the aim of God’s mission?	91
4.4.1.	Towards a biblical metanarrative	91
4.4.2.	The glory of God	95
4.5.	Conclusion	98
5.	Second Missional Key: Hope and the Kingdom of God.....	101
5.1.	Introduction	101
5.2.	The Kingdom of God.....	102
5.2.1.	A diminished and watered-down gospel	102
5.2.2.	The reign of God	105
5.2.3.	Kingdom and church	106
5.3.	Representing the reign of God as its servant	109
5.3.1.	Social justice	116
5.4.	Representing the reign of God as its messenger	117
5.4.1.	Evangelism	117
5.4.2.	The relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.....	119
5.4.3.	Incarnational ministry as a dangerous drift	122
5.4.4.	Cross-cultural missions as part of mission	129
5.5.	Conclusion	131
6.	Third Missional Key: Love and the Call to Discipleship	135
6.1.	Introduction	135
6.2.	Discipleship and community	139
6.2.1.	Small groups	142
6.3.	Discipleship and the ordinary.....	150
6.3.1.	The ordinary.....	151
6.3.2.	Vocational as discipleship.....	156

6.4.	Discipleship and spiritual formation	159
6.4.1.	Spiritual formation as active obedience	161
6.4.2.	Mysticism as a dangerous drift	163
6.4.2.1.	Western spirituality as mysticism.....	165
6.4.2.2.	Christian mysticism.....	169
6.4.2.3.	Centering prayer	172
6.4.3.	A rediscovery of Puritan spirituality.....	181
6.5.	Conclusion	183
7.	Conclusion	185
Appendix A	Ethnographic Research: DRC Grasvoëlkop	194
Appendix B	South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC) report....	208
Appendix C	The Missional Manifesto	219
Bibliography	223

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

As one looks at the DRC Grasvoëlkop, all seems well on the surface: a committed group of content, loving and worshipful people. Yet there is a very real and burning question that faces these people: What will the congregation be like in 10 years' time? Though this question is unanswerable, it is accompanied by a specific fear: Will this church still exist in 10 years' time? The dramatic changes in Western culture and South Africa have not left this congregation unaffected.

The researcher has been the pastor of this congregation for over 24 years and has been challenged in and by the pastorate in many diverse ways, yet never as much as recently, as this question requires an answer in an uncertain and changing milieu. It is not just a question before the congregation; it is a personal question that confronts the researcher.

Both the challenge and uncertainty faced add a sense of urgency to this study. This research is as important to the researcher personally as for the congregation.

1.2. Research Problem

The DRC Grasvoëlkop has certain strengths, uppermost being the mission focus that has brought about a global impact through prayer, finances, support and the deployment of missionaries. This involvement has grown and developed consistently over the last 18 years, and much has been achieved through faith. Yet the congregation is also part of a changing community and faces very real challenges as a small urban congregation.

In its 30 years of existence, there have been major changes in the meso and macro-levels of influence on the church. As members have left the suburb, due mainly to retirement, the membership has gradually dropped, resulting in a discernible lack of young adult attendance. Much of the responsibilities in the congregation are carried by older people.

While a strong mission-mindedness has been developed and sustained over years, this focus has tended to be on the spiritually lost and unreached over cultural and geographical barriers, who are more distant from the congregation. Involvement at a local level has not been nearly as strong. This demonstrates the need for the congregation to be missional, rather than mission-minded.

1.3. Research Question

Ed Stetzer states that it is not enough for a congregation to be mission-minded; it needs to be missional.¹ This helpful statement opens up the congregation to examine itself in light of the strengths of missional theology.

I will attempt to address the question: *How can missional theology help DRC Grasvoëlkop to move from a mission-minded focus to a missional identity and ministry?*

This research question confronts the congregation with questions which go to the heart of the congregation's involvement in the world stemming from this missional focus:

- Is the mission involvement of DRC Grasvoëlkop part of a comprehensive, missional involvement in the *missio Dei* and an expression of a vigorous calling to be salt and light in the world?
- Is it possible that the mission-minded orientation that has developed in the congregation is not part of a wider vision of the missional calling of each church and believer to be part of the *missio Dei*?
- What challenges does this congregation face from its context and the future?
- Is the church vibrant enough to face and accept these challenges?

¹Stetzer, E. 2006. "Is your church missional?" *On mission*, Special Issue 2006, Pastors' Edition, iii, online at <http://www.actstone8.com/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx%3Fid%3D8589948401>. Some critique has been expressed of the legitimacy of differentiating missions from "missional". Viewed 04/01/2014. See <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/missionalshift/2013/09/missions-vs-missional-what-ed-stetzer-gets-wrong/>, especially the comments section, where this is discussed. Viewed 04/01/2014. The issue of whether missions and missional can be differentiated and if it should then be integrated will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Part of the answers will entail discovering strengths within the congregation that can be built upon. From this it will be possible to discover guidelines that can play a role in moving this congregation forward.

1.4. Research Goal

The research will endeavour to discover what fresh insights an understanding of missional theology could bring to help this congregation to sharpen and broaden its present missional identity and vision.

The research will undertake an analysis of the congregation and its context through an empirical study (Part I) which will be analyzed in the light of the non-empirical data of a literature study (Part II) in the field of missional theology. The non-empirical research can pave the way for the discovery of important guidelines that should help the congregation in discerning its preferred future.

1.5. Research Methodology

1.5.1. Osmer's four tasks

In *Practical theology: an introduction*, RR Osmer describes four tasks that equip congregational leaders to interpret and respond to different challenging situations. These four tasks will serve as a framework for this study. He shows how answering four key questions is the focus of practical theological interpretation (2008:4):

- 1) The descriptive-empirical task asks: "What is going on?"
- 2) The interpretive task asks: "Why is it going on?"
- 3) The normative task asks: "What ought to be going on?"
- 4) The pragmatic task asks: "How might we respond?"

1.5.2. The descriptive-empirical task

The descriptive-empirical task will be tackled in Part I. Osmer (2008:12) differentiates between *episodes* (short, unrelated incidents), *situations* (a wider pattern of events, relationships and circumstances) and *context* (the broadest social and natural system). Through an exploratory methodology, the research will make use of an empirical study (Chapter 2) to understand the congregational *situation* and a literature study (Chapter 3) to help define the *context*.

A contextual and identity analysis of DRC Grasvoëlkop will thus be done to help gain an understanding of the current state of the congregation. The study will make use of qualitative inquiry (Osmer 2008:49–50) in describing the congregation and its current situation by conducting ethnographic research, personal narrative and interviews.

This demographic data will be gathered by making use of the eight questions formulated by the South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC).

Thirty-two interviews will cover a range of age, gender and congregational involvement. Background information will be sought through minutes of church council and committee meetings and personal reflection.

This first task will help describe “what is going on” in the congregation is and the challenges it faces.

The situation, as revealed through the first task, will then be analysed in Part II, using the other three questions that Osmer has identified. This will be completed through the lens of the insights gained by doing a literature study of relevant missional theology. This literature study will guide the research in its interpretative task to gain an understanding of the “why” question and will richly aid the normative and pragmatic tasks. Osmer (2008:10–11, his emphasis) makes an important point in stating that: “The social sciences, for example, do not develop normative *theological* perspectives to interpret research and, often, do not attempt to shape the field they are investigating. Yet the normative and pragmatic tasks are central to practical theology as an academic discipline.”

1.5.3. The interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks

These three tasks will not be discussed in the order in which Osmer lists them. There is an interaction and mutual influence between these four tasks that is unique to practical theology (Osmer 2008:10). The four tasks of interpretation are described as a hermeneutical spiral (rather than a circle) in which certain insights bring you to face a previous question again, because of new insights.²

As one goes about the normative task, new insights arise as one looks at Scripture and what Osmer describes as “good practice” (2008:152–3). It is suggested that a

² See Osmer (2008:22). He describes how Hans-Georg Gadamer argues that all our interpretation begins in an “already-interpreted world”; accurate interpretation can therefore only take place in a hermeneutical spiral.

study of missional theology will supply this “good practice” that can act as a model for guidance for what congregations can become. But these new insights can also aid the interpretive task, namely gaining an understanding of why the current situation has arisen. For a healthy and fuller understanding of a situation, it is wise to move between the tasks. For this reason it makes sense to attempt to do tasks 2, 3 and 4 together, but from different angles. The different angles from which to view the situation of the congregation will be supplied by a literature study of missional theology.

Through the interplay of the interpretative and normative tasks, the pragmatic task will become clearer. Three key issues facing the congregation, highlighted by the overview of missional theology and discerned through completing the first (descriptive-empirical) task, will be asked:

- “Why is it going on?”
- “What ought to be going on?”
- “How might we respond?”

Chapter 4 will look at the Trinity, and the possibilities that a fuller and more faithful view of God may bring to bear on a struggling congregation through a renewed faith.

Chapter 5 will look at the Kingdom of God and what it means in terms of salvation and hope, and how a struggling congregation can interact fruitfully with the world.

Chapter 6 will look at congregational life and the call to discipleship, and how love can help a struggling congregation rediscover identity and calling.

These chapters will be introduced more fully in Part II.

1.6. A Personal Biography as Introduction

The researcher asks for understanding as he takes inspiration from Osmer to move briefly from a third-person academic work to a very personal first-person description. Osmer begins his book with a personal story and further describes his work as “a bridge between academia and the church, drawing attention to the web of life in which ministry takes place” (2008:17). There is an interconnectedness of ministry (208:15), a “spirituality of presence” (2008:33) in which priestly listening, attending and guiding play a major role. All these are intensely personal actions.

In the same way, this study is intensely personal for the researcher. It is not just a study of a congregation; it is a study of *my* brothers and sisters, my family, my faith and my future. It would thus be a tragic oversight to attempt a purely objective study and to ignore any subjective involvement.

I therefore humbly offer this short personal biographical background to the study:

On 9 March 2010, I quietly celebrated 20 years of ministry at DRC Grasvoëlkop. Though slightly disappointed that the congregation had not noticed this personal milestone, I was deeply grateful that the fog of despair that had enveloped most of 2009 had lifted. Even stronger was the gratitude I felt that I could look forward to another 20 years of ministry, knowing that the much needed vision to support any future fruitful ministry had been quickened in my heart and mind over the last few months.

During the second semester of 2009, I had found myself on the edge of a very deep hole, a place where there was no vision, and more darkness than hope. I was unmotivated and, for the first time, seriously considering a way out of ministry. This occurred at the same time that I did the maths and discovered that, after 19 years of ministry, I had 19 years to go to retirement at 65. It was a time of questioning.

- Would I make another 19 years, when I was barely surviving now?
- What impact had the filing cabinet drawer full of sermons had?
- What of my own lack of power and joy in ministry?
- What was the future of this small and ageing (dying?) congregation?

A small beam of hope in this time was the copious reading that I had been doing for this research. Yet the lack of clarity I sensed about the future of this congregation weighed heavily on my mind. To try and discern a way forward, and even just start writing the thesis, always seemed out of reach. The task required too much.

As I compiled the church almanac for 2010, I struggled with the design of the cover, sensing that it needed something new. At the same time a woman from the church was quilting a banner for the wall behind the pulpit.³ We had decided on a mariner's

³ This was needed because no change is ever simple. We had removed a huge white contraption above the pulpit to place a screen there for the data projector. On removing it, we discovered that

compass, incorporating the words “faith”, “hope” and “love”. The compass represented God’s Word and surety with direction. As I incorporated the symbols for faith, hope and love together with the compass as a new cover, I sensed a change in my mood and thinking. It felt like Ps 40:2: “He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure” (ESV⁴). This was the hope and vision that I had so craved. It was renewing and invigorating. Beginning 2010, I preached from 1 Pet 2:1–10, using the same passage that I had used at my ordination 20 years previously. This developed into a series on 1 Peter, focusing on our identity and resultant calling that is so clear in this letter. It was liberating for me to be able to explain to the congregation that the world we were entering in 2010 was truly worlds apart from the one we inhabited in 1990. Over 20 years so much had changed that the two situations were not comparable. The world we live in is also completely different from 200 or 2 000 years ago. Yet we have the same identity and calling as people of God. Faith, hope and love have not changed, and we are called to live this out in the world of today. If we are still here in 2050, our calling will have remained the same.

This vision created the light for me to perceive a deeper level of openness and caring and a developing leadership that had been growing within the congregation over the last couple of years, though I had felt that a complete and satisfactory description was still lacking. I placed my studies on the back-burner for a couple of years, even though the thinking and analysing was never far removed. An intense time of missional and denominational involvement put huge pressure on my time and, for a while, my research seemed to grind to a halt, only to be confronted again by the importance of this research as the congregation faces anew the challenge of communal living and its Christian calling in 2014. It is thus with faith and hope that I

they had used ugly red bricks instead of face bricks, like the rest of the building. This was duly covered by the screen. The projector had to be set up every Sunday and shone in the eyes of the minister in the pulpit, so I preferred to preach from the front of the stage, rather than the pulpit. I did not mind this, as most of the front pews were empty, and the distance to the members was huge. It also created a less formal atmosphere in the service, which I was trying to promote. We had received a new projector to fix to the ceiling and thus placed a permanent screen to the left of the pulpit and the temporary screen. With the completion of the banner, we were able to remove the old screen. The church council had decided recently to remove the brick pulpit and enlarge the liturgical area. See also minutes of 30/11/2005. 6.7.

⁴ All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

tackle the job of describing our changing history and context and humbly try to discern the way forward, using the unchanging Word of God as direction.

Osmer (2008:133), in unfolding the normative task, says it is appropriate to “describe the interplay of divine disclosure and human shaping as prophetic discernment. The prophetic office is the discernment of God’s Word to the covenant people in a particular time and place”. I trust that the Lord will guide this academic endeavour to be particularly helpful as prophetic discernment for the building of this congregation and the glorifying of His Name in this particular place and time, namely Port Elizabeth, 2014.

1.7. What does “missional” mean? Towards a working definition

1.7.1. The need for clarity

The use of words like “missions”, “missional” and “missional theology” calls for a brief description and definition. It would be a mistake to think that their meaning is self-evident. When a word like “missional” becomes a buzz word or fashion statement, it is very easy to presuppose an understanding of the concept and fill it with one’s own preconceived ideas. Van Engen (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:8 their emphases) states that: “It would appear that *mission* and *missionaries* are two of the most misunderstood words in the vocabulary of North American churches today.”⁵

A concept like missional will mean different things to different people. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the different directions in which key concepts within missional theology have been developed, but it is important to be aware of them. It should be sufficient in this introductory chapter to give a short history and definition of “missional” without an analysis of the divergent emphases.

Those that readily identify with a missional framework for theology form a spectrum between two poles that can be identified as evangelical and ecumenical.⁶

⁵ In his response to the chapter by Van Engen, Gruder (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:54) agrees that the term has become a cliché that means “everything and nothing”.

⁶ This divergence is the well-known contrast between conservative and liberal, between those that view salvation and justice either in a more spiritual or a more material sense. While I feel that the evangelical fringe is more true to Scripture, it is important to listen well and try to understand the differing viewpoint. This study is about seeing truth more clearly, seeing one’s own limitations and blind spots, about enriching one’s own standpoint without falling into the temptation to move the pendulum to the opposite side. See further Jonathan Leeman’s article, “What in the world is the missional church?”, <http://www.9marks.org/journal/what-world-missional-church>. Viewed 04/01/2014.

Ed Stetzer, who identifies with the evangelical fringe, has done much to promote a clear understanding of what missional theology is and to encourage congregations to form a clear missional identity.⁷ He states⁸ that the word missional can lose its meaning and become what he calls an “ecclesiological junk drawer”, where the word is used to justify any personal view of what the church is, or should be. He states further that it was this need for clarity that inspired him and Alan Hirsch who, together with others,⁹ set out a biblically faithful document of what is meant by the term, namely a Missional Manifesto.¹⁰

1.7.2. Historical development of the term “missional”

In a chapter titled “‘Mission’ defined and described” (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:7–29), Van Engen gives a broad but helpful overview of the way in which mission has been understood throughout history, leading up to the use of the word “missional” today.

During the first three centuries AD, the word “mission” was understood by the church to be based on the biblical concept of “sending” and, specifically, the sending of the church by her Lord, Jesus Christ, “whose authority defines, circumscribes, limits and propels Christian mission”. This is the foundational sense of the word. Van Engen stresses that this meaning “should never be lost or eclipsed by subsequent discussions and refinements” (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:12).

A redefinition of mission took place during the Constantine era, when the state became an agent of mission. The church was extended by force and political will,

⁷ “I am a conservative evangelical. No secret there. But, I also think we can learn from others from all sorts of biblically and missiologically informed traditions. We also need to understand what people mean when they use words so we can be sure we are all talking about the same thing”, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2007/october/meanings-of-missional-part-5.html>. Viewed 04/01/2014.

⁸ See <http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-blogs/151063-ed-stetzer-musings-on-the-missional-manifesto-part-1.html>. Viewed 04/01/2014.

⁹ The Missional Manifesto Framers include: Ed Stetzer – President of LifeWay Research; Alan Hirsch – Founding Director of Forge Mission Training Network; Tim Keller – Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC; Dan Kimball – Teaching Pastor of Vintage Faith Church; Eric Mason – Lead Pastor of Epiphany Fellowship; J.D. Greear – Lead Pastor of The Summit Church; Craig Ott – Associate Professor, Mission and Intercultural Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; Linda Bergquist – Church Starting Strategist, California Southern Baptist Convention; Philip Nation – Director of Adult Publishing, LifeWay Christian Resources; and Brad Andrews – Lead Pastor of Mercyview Church, <http://www.edstetzer.com/missional-manifesto/>.

¹⁰ The Missional Manifesto is included as Appendix C. It can be found at http://mission-net.org/sites/default/files/missional_manifesto_engl_1106.pdf. I unhesitatingly subscribe to it. Viewed 04/01/2014.

and the extension of God's Kingdom was seen as synonymous with the might and rule of the emperor.

Van Engen shows how forms of this mission were continued through the colonial expansion of European powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Protestant mission movement that arose under William Carey in the late 1700s grew out of a strong focus on what would become known as the "Great Commission". This would play an important role in mission throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Van Engen's (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:15) description of these underlying assumptions helps us to recognise how many of these assumptions are still active in the mission calling of congregations today, namely viewing salvation as individualistic, having to do primarily with a spiritual and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The primary calling of the church was to go, with the going taking place from the West, with an emphasis on making disciples, not on the "teaching" command of Matt 28:20.

Developments within this movement took place with D McGavran (1897–1991), who questioned the extracting of converts from their contexts into mission stations. H Venn (1796–1873) and R Anderson (1796–1880) stressed that the aim of missions should be churches that were self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. This became a definition of mission that dominated mission theology and practice for a hundred years and still plays a role in many churches in third world countries.

Following the Second World War, there was a desire to formulate a new view of mission as Western missiologists and theologians gathered under the association of the International Missionary Council (IMC) to think through what a relevant mission would look like. The IMC was formed in 1921 and in 1961 became part of the World Council of Churches (WCC) founded in 1948 out of the other two major strands of twentieth century inter-church co-operation, the Life and Work, and Faith and Order movements. All three movements trace their origins to the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910.¹¹

Van Engen describes the conferences of the IMC as wanting to mobilize to become involved with what God was doing in the world. This gave rise to the concept of

¹¹ From <http://roxborough.com/REFORMED/IMC.htm>. Viewed 07/01/2014.

missio Dei, but represented a “radical secularization of missions” (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:18). The concept of *missio Dei* and how best to understand it will be discussed in Chapter 4. After 1961, the IMC shifted its focus to political and social concern. While the emphasis of God’s mission was seen to be in the Kingdom of God and the world, the place and role of the church was severely devalued.

Many voiced concern about this secularized Christian mission, and a more conservative evangelical movement was formed, with Billy Graham and John Stott playing a leading role in The Lausanne Movement from 1974. The evangelical movement was strongly influenced from 1980 by a new focus on unreached people groups, by identifying the unreached 10/40 window, and a strong call by Ralph Winter for frontier missions.

A critique within its own ranks and a struggle on how to reconcile evangelism and social concern within missions has led to a renewed appreciation of *missio Dei* as God’s initiative in missions and towards a more holistic view of mission. Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch were two of the Reformed theologians of mission who developed their missiology through their involvement with the IMC. Their body of work inspired a next generation to seek an integrated understanding of mission as God’s work, the church as instrument of mission and the goal to which God is working.

It is especially Darrell Guder who has been the most influential¹² in propagating the use of the term “missional”. In his inaugural lecture at Princeton Theological Seminary, Guder (2002) identified Karl Barth as the true forerunner of the reshaping of the theology of mission. He stated that Barth’s lecture in 1932, “Theology and mission in the present situation”, is “frequently cited as the actual initiation of the theological interpretation that later came to be known as the theology of the *missio Dei*”.

“With this emphasis upon the missionary vocation of the church, and its linkage with the mission or sending of God, Barth gave a profound and shaping impulse to the re-orientation of western ecclesiology that was already fermenting in the mission discussion. The focus was changing from a ‘church centered mission ...

¹² Ed Stetzer discusses the role of Guder and his precursors in his blog <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2007/august/meanings-of-missional--part-1.html>. Viewed 04/01/2014.

to a mission centered church,' as David Bosch described the process. By the time of the Mission Conference at Willingen, Germany, in 1952, there was a strong, global consensus that the church must be understood as essentially missionary.

"It is the widespread consensus that the 'church is missionary by its very nature' that leads me to suggest that it is now appropriate to speak of 'missional theology.'" (2002:n.d.)

Guder (2002) sees that the most basic identity of the church is missional, and therefore the thinking through of the implications of what missional theology is. The doing of missional theology is not an end in itself, but by its very nature serves the mission of God by supporting the church in its missional calling.

Recently Flett (2010) has questioned this general consensus that the concept of the *missio Dei* has roots that lie in Barth. He studies the conferences that gave birth to this term and the reflections and correspondence of attendees and concludes that "Barth never once used the term *missio Dei*, never wrote the phrase 'God is a missionary God,' and never articulated a Trinitarian position of the kind expressed at Willigen" (2010:Kindle location 206). Flett posits that this incorrect connection with Barth resulted in the Trinitarian basis of *missio Dei* not being developing fully. "By severing any link with Barth, we can take the opportunity to reformulate the Trinitarian ground of mission using his work" (2010:Kindle location 1660).

The central concept of missional is found in the inter-relation of the Trinity as a process of sending: the Father sending the Son, the Father and the Son sending the Spirit. The church is taken up in the *missio Dei* and this unites the identity and the activity of the church. Whereas many churches see missions as just being a portion of their duty, *missio Dei* helps the church to understand its calling as flowing from its identity; an identity grounded in the very nature of God.

1.7.3. Defining missional

It is interesting to note how closely Guder links missional theology to the missional church. It will be a vital part of this study to come to an understanding of the calling and place of the church within God's mission. It is especially noteworthy that Van Engen (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:7–29) chooses to define mission for the twenty-first century by describing what a missional church looks like.

Relying on Guder, Bosch and his own 40 years of missional experience, Van Engen gives us a good working definition:

“... a church that is missional understands that God’s mission calls and sends the church of Jesus Christ, locally and globally, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to be a missionary church in its own society, in the cultures in which it finds itself, and globally among all peoples who do not yet confess Jesus as Lord. Mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purpose to restore and heal creation and call people into a reconciled covenantal relationship with God. *Mission* means ‘sending’, and it is the central biblical theme describing God’s people (now the church) being the primary agents of God’s missionary action.

“Thus if a church is missional, it will be:

- *Contextual*: A missionary church understands itself as part of a larger context of a lost and broken world so loved by God.
- *Intentional*: A missionary church understands itself as existing for the purpose of ‘following Christ in mission’.
- *Proclaiming*: A missionary church understands itself as intentionally sent by God in mission to announce in word and deed the coming of the kingdom of God in Christ.
- *Reconciling*: A missionary church understands itself to be a reconciling and healing presence in its contexts, locally and globally.
- *Sanctifying*: A missionary church understands itself as a faith community gathered around the Word preached, thus personally living out its truth and serving as a purifying influence to society.
- *Unifying*: A missionary church understands itself as an embracing, enfolding, gathering community of faith, anxious to receive persons into fellowship.
- *Transforming*: A missionary church is ‘the salt of the earth’ (Matt 5:13), a transforming presence as the body of Christ in mission, called to embody, and live out in the world the following biblical concepts of mission, among others: *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *martyria*, prophet, priest, king, liberator, healer, sage.” (eds. Hesselgrave & Stetzer 2010:24–25)

This definition, together with the Missional Manifesto, will act as a guide to tackle the different tasks set forth by Osmer. This will be done in Part II, Chapters 4 to 6.

In the next two chapters the empirical-descriptive task will be undertaken. An understanding of the congregation and its context will serve not only the descriptive task, but also the interpretative and pragmatic tasks.

PART I

An understanding of DRC Grasvoëlkop: doing the descriptive-empirical task

Osmer's first step for engaging in practical theological interpretation is to ask: "What is going on?" This descriptive-empirical task will be undertaken in the next two chapters. An empirical study (Chapter 2) will aid an understanding of the congregational situation and a literature study (Chapter 3) will help define the context. The research methodology that has been introduced in Chapter 1 will be followed.

The research question that guides this study is: *How can missional theology help DRC Grasvoëlkop to move from a mission-minded focus to a missional identity and ministry?*

Part I will help shape an understanding of how the mission-minded focus developed within the congregation and in what ways it may be insufficient to carry the congregation forward in a changing context that creates unique challenges.

Part II will build on the foundation that will be laid here when Osmer's next three tasks will be undertaken in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This will bring greater clarity towards a fruitful answer of the research question.

CHAPTER 2

DRC Grasvoëlkop: A Contextual Understanding

The aim of this chapter is to gain an understanding of the current contextual situation of the congregation and to discern the challenges that it faces. This will be the first step (descriptive-empirical) of Osmer's four tasks of practical theological interpretation. The answer to "What is going on?" will be provided by describing the history of the congregation through a personal description as well as by looking at the minutes of church council meetings and other sources that help to do this. The researcher will attempt to trace key moments in the history of DRC Grasvoëlkop and his ministry there to aid an understanding of the current state of the congregation and what is needed to move forward into a God-ordained and blessed future. The personal narrative shared in the Introduction illustrates a strong correlation between the researcher's personal situation and the present context of the congregation, namely an uncertain future. A brief history of both, that also notes the positives that have recently arisen, has enabled the researcher to see light again in a time of personal darkness. Both situations need to be examined to determine in which way they could act as beacons to illuminate the way forward.

The results of an ethnographic study and reading report (the process of this study and report are explained in point 3 below) will help to explain the contextual situation of the congregation and the challenges faced in this present context. This study raises critical questions which must be noted. This chapter will document the most important of these questions.

This study would be incomplete if it did not also trace the major changes that have happened in both the macro and meso contexts within which the congregation lives and operates. The researcher will briefly mention some of the surface changes that can be found within the congregation and its immediate context in this chapter. These surface changes reflect change that has taken place on a much deeper, foundational level. The following chapter will describe in greater depth what exactly underlies these surface changes.

This chapter will raise serious questions as to what the role of the church is, what the most effective, biblical way of ministry is, what must change, what should be retained and encouraged, and what must be reintroduced. In following chapters, the researcher will look at major focal points of missional theology to discern what can be learnt and applied to the situation of this suburban congregation, situated in a changing context, and how they aid the interpretive, normative, and pragmatic tasks of practical theological interpretation.

2.1. The Founding of DRC Grasvoëlkop

The congregation seceded from DRC Port Elizabeth-Wes in October 1978, during a time when “afstigting” was very popular and financially possible. The first minister, Samuel Murray, served from this time till the completion of the church building, six years later. He was administratively very strong and left a structure of committees¹³ that still serves the church council very well. The church council minutes reflect that these commissions were very active in those first years, and there was no lack of hands willing to serve on the council, in different youth groups or as representatives for wider organizations. The minutes of 23/04/1979 show careful planning of the youth groups and the Pentecost services; other minutes are filled with addenda reflecting the planning and thought that went into the edification of the congregation, including the task of church officers¹⁴ and tithing,¹⁵ as well as the task of evangelism.¹⁶

In 1981, the plans for the new church building were authorized, together with the purchase of an organ. Building and fundraising would consume most of the congregation’s time, energy and vision for the next 10 years.

¹³ The first church council meeting (minutes 22/10/1978) appointed eight committees, and divided the congregation into 18 wards (“wyke”), each with an elder and deacon. See also 18/06/1979, 6.1.2.

¹⁴ The service contract/agreement for the church secretary, drawn up in August 1979, includes six pages of very clear service obligations.

¹⁵ Minutes 20/08/1979 and 15/10/1979.

¹⁶ The minutes of 17/09/1979 reflect that the mission secretary of the East Cape Synod (Ds J Claasen) was present to address the council on the mission work of the synod, as well as the responsibility of the local congregation.

During the consecration of the church building, Ds Murray prayed¹⁷ a prophetic prayer in which he clearly avoids the still-prevailing error so ubiquitous within the DRC of viewing the church building as the “house of God”. He prays that the church doors would be open to every sinner desiring fellowship with God. This is especially poignant when it is remembered that this was prayed during the height of apartheid separation. In this prayer he beseeches God that the gospel would spread from this building, across the city and the world. While viewing this on video during a 25-year celebration, those in attendance had a strong sense of gratitude that the Lord had heard and answered this prayer.

The second minister, Ds AJC van Staden, served for a period of six years, from January 1984. This was a time of strengthening relationships and fundraising. These went hand-in-hand, as a variety of initiatives was tackled to raise the needed funds to service the mortgage. No one seemed to mind the huge effort this required. The minutes of 19/09/1984 reflect, for the first time, the critical financial situation of the congregation.¹⁸ The church council minutes of 22/08/1984 reflect the complete costs of the church building at R380 000 and that the mortgage had been increased by R75 000 to help cover the overdraft.

The minutes of 19/06/1985 show that the congregation was out of the red, but state that “hierdie is geen rede om te dink dat ons finansiële probleem iets van die verlede is nie. Daar is dus geen rede vir die verslapping in ons fondsinsamelingspogings nie.” A period of four years passed with nothing more to report of any financial crisis,

¹⁷ The prayer of Samuel Murray, on 11/02/1983, as transcribed from a video taken by Johnny Paulsen: “Ons Vader wat in die hemel is, hoe lieflik is u woninge, Here, Heer van die leërskaie! Maar vir ons besonderlik hoe lieflik om ’n plek te hê wat daarvoor ingerig is om ons harte tot U op te hef, wat vir ons help om U te aanbid, wat vir ons help om ons gedagtes op U te rig. Daarom is ons gebed dat hierdie kerkdeur oop sal wees vir elke sondaar wat gemeenskap met die Here sal verlang. En ons gebed is dat vanuit hierdie kerkgebou, die Evangelie van verlossing in Christus Jesus oor hierdie stad en oor die wêreld heen versprei mag word. Dit is ons gebed in die Naam van ons Here Jesus Christus.”

¹⁸ “Kassier deel raad mee dat finansiële posisie uiters kritiek is en dat die Bank alle verdere O/T fasiliteite gestop het.” It was decided that the most urgent payments would be made first, and the remainder paid as the funds became available.

but at the end of 1989, urgent talks¹⁹ were held with the financial institution to seek relief.

It was to this congregation that I was called as I returned to my home town in March 1990. I arrived with a strong English accent,²⁰ a very limited understanding of the functioning of a Dutch Reformed Church,²¹ and a too academic training,²² but with a clear calling to serve in the DRC²³ and a strong yet underdeveloped vision²⁴ of a call to serve world mission in and through the local congregation.

I was welcomed and accepted by a most loving and accommodating congregation and church leadership. This young church had been planted with wonderful structures in place, affording me time to find my feet, learn and be able to make mistakes without disastrous consequences.

Grasvoëlkop is unique as a suburban congregation in that it has always been small in comparison to other Dutch Reformed Churches in the city. Its geographical situation is also distinctive. Grasvoëlkop has borders that are more than imaginary lines on a map; they consist of a quarry, a valley and the N2 highway, which separates the suburb of Cotswold from the rest of the city. Even though a small part of the congregation is on the city side of the highway, this has never really changed the way the people of Cotswold see themselves – a rural island within city limits. Many a visitor to the worship services has noted that the friendly atmosphere and the

¹⁹ Minutes of 22/11/1989 and 22/02/1990: “Na samesprekings met Saambou Nasionaal was dit duidelik dat ’n verlenging van die termyn geen noemenswaardige verligting gaan bied nie en sal derhalwe net die rente verhoog. Saambou het egter die toeweging gemaak dat slegs 11 ipv 12 paaimente betaal sal word in die huidige boekjaar.”

²⁰ I completed my schooling at Grey High, Port Elizabeth.

²¹ With a bilingual upbringing, leaning towards English, I attended the NG Kerk and their catechism classes, but was strongly involved with SCA, YFC and the Trinity Baptist Church youth group. I had never attended a Kerk Jeug Aksie (either Junior, Senior or Belydende).

²² My first year in the pastorate almost broke me. I started in March 1990. My father-in-law had passed away in November 1989, my mother-in-law died in April 1990, and our first child was born in May – a week before my first Pentecost (“Pinkster”) services. My father died at the end of my first year in ministry, in June 1991, after a long struggle with cancer. The weekly preparation of a sermon for Wednesday and two services on a Sunday seemed impossible to sustain.

²³ I felt much more at home in an English environment and had not yet developed my strong appreciation for the Reformed tradition, the covenant or paedobaptism. I just sensed a calling to play a role within the DRC. Through exposure to English friends and SACLA in 1979, I was aware of the evil of racism and the inconsistencies of apartheid, but other than voting against it and, at times, voicing a weak disapproval, I never took much of a stand or fought against it, to my embarrassment.

²⁴ I served as chairman of the Teologiese Seminarium Sendingraad (TSSR).

openness, caring and support between members definitely remind one more of the “platteland” than the city. These geographical boundaries place a limitation on the “natural” growth of the congregation.

2.1.1. Early formative events

Two events stand out from the researcher’s first years of ministry that played a significant role in the congregation, namely the successful servicing of the mortgage and a growing involvement in world mission. The events are strongly connected, as both were steps of faith, both were a looking away from the needs and situation of the congregation, and both shaped the congregation over the following years.

2.1.1.1. Financial faith

After the building of the church, the congregation was faced with a seemingly impossible task of repaying the debt, despite the huge effort expended on raising funds. Talks were held with the bank to find relief from the monthly payments. The start of the researcher’s ministry was thus characterized by a real financial crisis.

The church council decided on 20 June 1990 to take a decision of faith²⁵ with regard to the finances of the congregation and stopped all fundraising, made it a matter of prayer, challenged the congregation to tithe faithfully, and decided to pay off more on the monthly repayment. Increased payments were made.²⁶ Within a few years, the congregation was able to settle the full amount. A special thanksgiving weekend was held at the end of November 1996 to celebrate this occasion.

There were two other periods of grave financial need. Each time the church council handled this in faith, realizing that a lack of money in the church was a spiritual

²⁵ 5.7.2: “Die volgende aanbeveling word gemaak: Dat in hierdie gemeente die Bybelse riglyne gevolg word m.b.t. die gee van DANKOFFER. Dat weggedoen word met alle “spesiale fondse” d.i. Skulddelging, 1000+ ens. en dat slegs ’n DANKOFFER van elke gemeentelid gevra word. Die gemeente deur die Kerkraad aangemoedig word om die saak van die DANKOFFER met die Here uit te maak.” The minutes (14/06/1990) of the finance committee show that the monthly mortgage payment was increased from R5 540 to R6 000.

²⁶ Minutes of 15/08/1999. Amounts of R14 000 (27/02/1991), R10 000 (12/06/1991) and R20 000 (19/08/1991 – finance committee) were paid over and above the monthly repayments.

problem rather than an economic one.²⁷ Through prayer, wise decisions and open communication with the congregation, these challenges were overcome and led to seasons of fruitful giving. They have also led to strengthened and renewed cross-cultural development.

2.1.1.2. Mission-mindedness

Early in the researcher's ministry, a number of important events assisted in setting a mission focus in the congregation. These included the following:

- The arrival of Prof. Jean Greyling almost 22 years ago. He has become a close friend of the researcher and has developed into a strong mission-mobilizer in Port Elizabeth. He played a big role in starting prayer groups for missions and giving momentum to what had been preached, so that practical involvement could start.
- A World Thrust seminar, which some of the church council attended, gave practical tools²⁸ which were implemented.
- The visit of Edison Queiroz of Brazil to Port Elizabeth for a mission week, and the translation of his book into Afrikaans (*Gemeente en sending*), inspired faithful obedience in congregations.
- A minister, well known to some in the congregation and a personal friend, left to serve in unreached northern Mozambique.
- Support of a Christian medical doctor in Mozambique started in April 1993 and included a monthly contribution of R2 000 per month.²⁹ This was the first time the budget reflected a substantial amount to be spent outside the borders of the congregation.

²⁷ Minutes of a special church council meeting held on 19/07/1994. See also addendum to minutes of 16/09/2009.

²⁸ Specifically the implementation of an annual world missions conference, short-term outreaches, faith promise offering (which has been running for 16 years), effective communication of information and prayer involvement.

²⁹ Minutes of 28/04/1993, 6.7.2.

- In 1996, a visit by Kingfisher³⁰ dramatically increased vision and involvement within the congregation.

The congregation's first involvement was the support of missionaries through prayer, in both weekly prayer groups and worship services. A vision for missions was planted through the tools explained by the World Thrust seminar. This was followed by financial support of a single mission doctor working in southern Mozambique. He attended the first few mission conferences³¹ and hosted a few outreach teams that supported his work and the hospital.

The question can be raised: What of mercy ministries and social justice? The truth of the matter is that there have been very few community-based expressions of serving the Kingdom with others. This does not mean that there have not been any steps of faith, obedience or crossing of boundaries, but it does mean that the best way to describe the congregation in terms of the suburb and city would be *inward focused*.

Most of the forays across congregational borders seemed to die after a while.³² There have been projects like a soup kitchen run in conjunction with a URC and a RCA congregation in a black suburb; support of a crèche in a township; a food and tract outreach to outpatients at the Livingstone provincial hospital, and support of various missions to the poor and unemployed. While the researcher could expand on these, it would not be an accurate reflection of involvement of the current congregation. The fact of the matter is that this is a small congregation and these projects have never ignited in the same way as their involvement in world missions.

While many projects have been attempted, it has really been a few mission opportunities that have been ignited with what is seen as fire from above. In a modest way, this small congregation has been noticed by others across the world. It

³⁰ A weekend mission mobilization developed by Ds Johann Theron and presented by ministers and members of the different DR Churches of Cradock. It was very similar to World Thrust, but was probably more effective because it was in Afrikaans, the presentation and testimonies were by ordinary lay members, it was presented at the congregation and thus involved more members.

³¹ A personal highlight of this time was the radical, positive change in attitude of an elder (chairman of the finance commission) after he hosted Dr Pieter Ernst during one of these conferences.

³² The "while" has, in some cases, been for quite a number of years, but the projects never matured or became sustainable by new or different members becoming involved.

is astounding to realize that they have been a part of what Almighty God has been doing in the world, and they are filled with gratitude for this opportunity.

These mission opportunities have continued and grown over many years and include support of a local SIM ministry among Muslims, and a family serving in the Transkei. The two biggest projects are the adoption of an unreached people group in Afghanistan and support of Veritas College International.

Through exposure to Adopt-a-People, the AD2000 & Beyond Movement and GCOWE '97, the congregation started to pray for an unreached people group to adopt. On 23 August 1998,³³ they committed to pray and work for the evangelization of and church planting among the Hazara of Afghanistan.

During this time, a group of students from the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit (RAU)³⁴ had been praying about involvement in a 10/40 window country and also decided on Afghanistan. Out of their efforts a network³⁵ arose in South Africa that has played a major role in advancing the Kingdom in Afghanistan.

Throughout the turbulent history of Afghanistan, God has been at work, raising up people to bring them the gospel. There is too much to share here,³⁶ but after celebrating 10 years³⁷ of commitment to the Hazara and Afghanistan, it was with gratitude that they saw that this people-group was the most open to the gospel.

The congregation has partnered with an organization coordinating mission efforts to Afghanistan (SALA), F.E.B.A. Radio, a local believer working with the International Missions Board and many other workers and organizations. They have seen their involvement taking a big step forward as they partner with families from South Africa who are working among this group and in this country.

³³ Minutes of 18/05/1998, 6.3.1.

³⁴ Today the University of Johannesburg.

³⁵ Previously known as the Canaan Consultation, it is now called South Africans Loving Afghans (SALA).

³⁶ They saw God making breakthroughs in the midst of the September 11, 2001 horror, in starting a work for the first time in the southern parts of the country, and bringing many to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

³⁷ At a special service during August 2008, they celebrated 10 years of giving and praying. A personal highlight was the testimony of an older woman about the depth of love that she feels for these people whom she has never met, and of her continued prayer for them.

One of the most exciting developments in the life of the congregation was the faith step explained above and the resulting involvement in the North Africa Middle East (NAME) region. After the full repayment of the mortgage, the council decided that the monthly bond payment should be channelled into Kingdom ministry. At this time they providentially made contact with a theological student, Phillip Scheepers, who enquired about the possibility of a position as a candidate minister (“proponente pos”) focusing on Muslim outreach. Being geographically very close to the Muslim community in Port Elizabeth, they felt that this was God’s guidance. The church council was unanimous, and a position was created for him.³⁸

Some years later, Phillip was contacted by Veritas College to start a work in the NAME area, training church leaders within their own context. This ministry has literally exploded in Egypt, bearing much fruit, and spreading to many other NAME countries. Many different congregations in South Africa have joined to support this ministry.

The congregation has a growing relationship with the director of Veritas in Egypt. The researcher was able to take seven ministers (six from his presbytery) to visit Egypt on a vision and mobilization trip during October 2007. The Lord showed His favour on this project in many ways and it resulted in life-changing³⁹ experiences for those who went. A further visit early in 2010 has seen a tremendous strengthening of the bond between the congregation and presbytery and the workers and office of Veritas in Egypt.

Describing where the congregation has come from helps to understanding who and where it is currently. The researcher will complete the description of this congregation by describing first an ethnographic study completed in 2007 and then the changing context in which the congregation finds itself.

Keifert’s (2006:17) call to congregations to a journey of spiritual discernment to “move from the maintenance of Christendom to innovating missional church in their

³⁸ Minutes of 30/10/1996. Phillip was later ordained in the congregation (29 March 1998).

³⁹ The researcher realises that he is waxing lyrical about the blessings experienced, but he does not choose this word lightly. The impact of this trip on individuals and ministry can truly be described as life-changing.

time and location” resonates with the researcher as the challenge for this congregation. Part of Keifert’s innovative journey begins with understanding where the congregation is now (2006:22–23). He calls for a positive assessment of the local church “because I believe God provides all the gifts necessary for the future that God prefers and promises each local church”.

While the understanding of the “what and where” of the congregation can raise serious concerns about the future of this congregation, the call is also to note the gifts God has provided for the future: “This spiritual journey begins with a much more positive assessment of your local church, of its capacities as Christian community, and a more radical and challenging understanding of the depth of change necessary for our time and place in Christian history” (2006:22). Special care thus needs to be taken not to miss the positives already in place, nor the dangers that can so easily be ignored.

2.2. An Ethnographic Study

Keifert (2006:76) calls for a process of congregational discovery where applied ethnography is used to gather narratives. “Applied ethnography, a well-established model of social scientific research, allows people within the local church and within their service area to explore open-ended questions in their own language and tell their own stories.”

As part of a group of 12 students enrolled for an MTh degree,⁴⁰ the researcher was guided by Ds Danie Mouton and the South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC)⁴¹ in using the eight open-ended questions of the partnership to do an ethnographic study⁴² within the congregation. These questions were posed to 28 people of differing age and gender. The most important distinction between the 28 was their level of involvement within the congregation. Differentiation was made between 14 inside members (people who attended services regularly, but without

⁴⁰ Permission for this study was granted by the church council in 2006. This included permission to gather and use the data gathered, such as this ethnographic study.

⁴¹ Hendriks (2009:111–112) describes the formation of the SAPMC and the rest of the article describes the work and growth of this partnership.

⁴² This process is described fully in an appendix to the unpublished notes “Gemeentegids vir hul reis van geloofsonderskeiding” as used by the SAPMC.

much deeper involvement), seven family members (those with deeper involvement) and seven outside members (who attended services irregularly).

Hendriks (2009:114) describes the process:

“Two very important ‘research’ or listening activities take place in the discovery phase. A listening team of three to six persons is appointed and trained to ask 24⁴³ people eight questions about the congregation. Eight must be active and influential ‘family members’; eight ‘inside members’ – people who attend regularly but who are not very involved; and eight ‘outside members’, who basically only use the church and its various services when required. The purpose of the ethnographic research is to understand the identity of the congregation. This is formulated in a ‘reading report’ that, in a way, summarizes the message of the 24 ethnographic interviews.”

Dr Pat Taylor Ellison⁴⁴ explains that the strength of community recording (ethnography) lies in the fact that the point of view is of an insider to the community. The responses to these questions give a good understanding of the situation of the congregation.

A listening team of five leaders in the congregation were trained and tasked to pose the questions. The 28 responses were collated in order under each question, with only the reference to age (decade), gender and congregation involvement given and posted to the SAPMC. The results are attached as Appendix A. A team of readers from the SAPMC then analyzed and interpreted these responses. The complete report is attached as Appendix B. These reflections and responses from outside the community help to understand the current congregational practices, strengths and challenges.

The researcher provides a summary below of the reading team’s comments for each of the eight questions, with added responses where pertinent. The questions are not presented numerically. Those that give the most insight into the congregation are presented first. Question 5 (“Describe a situation where you or another person was involved in conflict or some other problem in the congregation and how it was

⁴³ The researcher used 28 people, keeping the ratio of family, inside and outside members the same, namely 2:1:1. The congregation became part of the SAPMC during the 2nd semester of 2010.

⁴⁴ Director of Research, Church Innovations Institute, writing in the unpublished notes “Gemeentegids vir hul reis van geloofsonderskeiding” as used by the SAPMC.

handled”) is not presented as all that is reported here is a healthy culture of dealing with problems and conflict.

2.2.1. Question 1: Describe the congregation to a new person.

The reading team notes that the clearest characteristic of the congregation, as noted by 19 responses to this question, is the close core group that functions as a loving family, with a very clear mission vision and commitment (12 responses with another stating that there is an outward focus).

The congregation is a small, intimate family that is warm and welcoming, with a rural atmosphere and a place where a stranger is welcomed and made to feel at home. Within this family circle, there is a true caring and concern for each other, with people involved with others and willing to help in times of need.

The reading team makes special mention of the fact that all seven outsiders conveyed positive sentiments with regard to the congregation and that this confirms the other descriptions. This could be an open door to people outside the congregation and should be taken into consideration.

There is appreciation for strong spiritual leadership, dynamic biblical preaching and the spiritual experience of the weekly services. Five responses mention cell groups positively.

It is surprising that the reading team did not pick up⁴⁵ on the description of the congregation as “small”. Only six of the 28 responses did not describe the congregation as small, but even two of those six (19; 27) commented on the family atmosphere that prevails. What must one make of this very strong self-identification of being “small”?

The researcher contends that this self-identification is not something new that had developed because of the changing context, but that it had been part and parcel of what this congregation has always been in its own eyes. Traditionally, DR Churches in South African cities have always been numerically strong. Grasvoëlkop has never

⁴⁵ This is noted very clearly in Question 6, which will be discussed next.

been a large city congregation. In 1997, the membership was 428 (317 adults and 111 children),⁴⁶ while neighbouring congregations were much larger.⁴⁷

This description as “small” probably acts as one of the primary self-identifications for this congregation. “Dutch Reformed” and “Afrikaans” are unstated but taken for granted. For many this probably includes “white”. While it would be profitable to discuss this description further to gain an insight into where the congregation finds itself, it would also be wise to test this in light of the following literature study. How important is size for a congregation? It takes discernment and wisdom for a small congregation to be able to gauge its own biblical faithfulness and obedience. This is especially true in a time when success is measured quantitatively and empirically. Large and growing churches are not necessarily healthy. It is easy to feel insecure when other congregations have a large membership and a substantial budget for advertising and branding. It is no sin, nor even a disgrace, for a congregation to be small. There needs to be awareness, however, of the twin but opposite dangers of complacency, apprehension and even despondency on the one hand, and pride and self-satisfaction on the other, that often face a small congregation.

When “smallness” becomes a badge of honour, these dangers are especially real. Pride and smugness can become factors that cause a congregation to focus so strongly on what it achieves, that smallness can become an excuse not to question what is lacking within the congregation. At the annual presbytery meeting, it is not unusual for Grasvoëlkop to be praised for its financial stewardship, warm family atmosphere and mission involvement. In these circumstances, it becomes very difficult to raise or entertain any critical examination of areas of congregational life that could be improved or broadened.

The opposite danger of complacency can then also play a role. While “small” has always been a biblical motif, seen for example in the calling of Israel and in the roles played by Gideon and David to the calling of the Corinthian church in weakness (1

⁴⁶ According to “Verslag van die Kommissie vir Administrasie voorgelê aan die Ring van PE-Wes tydens sy vergadering te Grasvoëlkop op 6 September 1998 e.v.d.”.

⁴⁷ PE-Wes: 827 members (703 adults and 124 children); Newtonpark: 1 269 members (985 adults and 284 children); Kraggakamma: 1 571 members (1 147 adults and 424 children), and Sonheuwels 1 181 members (896 adults and 285 children).

Cor 1:26–27), it has never been an excuse for lack of action or love. The researcher recalls reading and sharing a statistic with the congregation that more than half the congregations in America have a weekly attendance of fewer than 100 members.⁴⁸ He sensed that the congregation shared his awareness that their size in no way incapacitates them, that they are not “below average”, but simply an instrument in the hand of the living God. They should look to Him and not themselves for the strength to serve.

Hendriks (2004:39, his emphasis) states that:

“If the leadership of a congregation focuses on the living God and is missionally active, the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship and relationships makes all the difference. Growth then often leads to scenario one [change takes place during a long process with difficult passages and conflicts]. Conflict, as such, is not damaging. Whatever choice a congregation makes about its future structural form and organisation, the most important constant factor that defines its being and essence, is to remain focused on the triune missional God and in being what God intends it to be. As such congregational size is not a big issue. However at a secondary level, knowledge and understanding of basic sociological and cultural traits and how they affect management and organisation are rather indispensable skills for leading a congregation through any form of transformation and growth.”

Grasvoëlkop can be described as a pastoral-sized congregation. Hendriks (2004:40–41) describes this pastoral-sized congregation with the sociological term “clan”. The pastor fulfils the role of clan leader or “tribal chief” that knows and cares for everyone. There is a strong expectation that the pastor must take the lead, keep families together and deal with conflict. As the pastor links most members together, most events revolve around the pastor and a small group of leaders. Specific challenges to this congregation size are pastor burnout, difficulty in handling growth (especially structurally) and fewer resources that affect the way the congregation functions. The role of the pastor is central in that new members become incorporated

⁴⁸ Marlis McCollum, “Congregation size: what the research tell us”, <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=3190>, viewed on 07/07/2010. “By any measure, most congregations are small’ (p. 17), writes Mark Chaves in *Congregations in America*, in which he describes the findings of the 1998 National Congregations Study, a survey of 1,236 U.S. churches, the majority of them Christian and Jewish. ‘Fifty-nine percent of U.S. congregations have fewer than one hundred regular participants, counting both adults and children; 71 percent have fewer than one hundred regularly participating adults’ (p. 17–18).”

into the congregation almost exclusively because of the relationship that they develop with him, and members look to him to meet their spiritual needs “and expect and reward house visitation”.

The lack of leadership or, more specifically, the heavy burden that is placed on the few available leaders, plays a role in the lack of a strong missional vision developing in this congregation. Those that are involved are busier than they should be, because the workload is not divided equally, and are often stretched to do all that is required of them. The development of leaders and the need for a change in the view of the role of the pastor are important. Some of the questions below will indicate where this has started to happen.

A final but important issue to be discussed under this question is the role of the congregation’s mission task. The reading team’s question as to how close this vision and involvement is brought to the congregation’s own environment is vitally important. The ethnographic study aligns with the description of the congregation as mission-minded. The real question to be discerned is what happens in the immediate context. Ed Stetzer speaks directly to this situation when he asks what a missional church is:

“Missional is not the same as ‘missions-minded,’ though they are both important and related. A missions-minded church is one that cares about missions around the world. It gives to missions, it goes to mission contexts, it’s involved in cross-cultural missions. Missional leaders, however, know the mission field is here—now. They realize they need not only to support missions, they need to be missionaries where they are.

“In its simplest form, the term missional is the noun ‘missionary’ adapted into an adjective. For example, an ‘adversary’ is your enemy. So, someone who is ‘adversarial’ acts like your enemy. A church or a follower of Christ who is viewed as missional acts like a missionary. They do the things that missionaries do, regardless of the context. They can be parachute-dropped into a village in India, or into the hustle of any North American city and be missional. They study and learn a culture, live and proclaim the good news and contextualize it for that culture. Missional churches take Acts 1:8 literally and act like missionaries—sharing the gospel in word and deed—in their own Jerusalem (city or area), Judea (state or region), Samaria (North America) and to the ends of the earth.” (2006:iii)

While this involvement could correctly be seen as the strength of the congregation, it can blind them to areas in which the congregation is unhealthy. Focusing only on this strength could lull them into a false sense of security. The congregation faces a real danger of languishing and fading away as the context continues to change and the congregation becomes a lonely island, growing smaller until it can no longer sustain itself.

While a strong mission-mindedness has been developed and sustained over years, this focus has tended to be on the lost and unreached over cultural and geographical barriers. Involvement at a local level has not been nearly as strong. This illustrates the need for the congregation to be missional, rather than mission-minded.

It will be important to research the role that cross-cultural missions must and can still play in the vision and calling of a congregation. Should the congregation continue to increase their involvement in these historical cross-cultural mission activities, and even seek to increase involvement?

The reading team concludes with three questions:

- There is only one negative response among the 28, a 20+ aged insider member that comments on many cliques. Is this a danger for this close family congregation?
- Are they aware of this rich blessing with which God has graced them? Are they able to channel this warmth, love and care to their immediate surroundings?
- It is exciting to read about the outward focus and extraordinary world mission vision, but how close is this vision and involvement brought to their own environment? What does “missional” mean to this congregation?

In response to the first question of the reading team, cliques can be a real danger within the congregation, despite an outer atmosphere of warmth. But even more so, the entire congregation can become so comfortable, inward focused and pleased with itself, that it remains unaware of the needs of others; a clique that looks no further than itself.

The second and third questions raised by the reading team also form the hypothesis of this study: What can “missional” mean for this congregation? It could be that the **mission achievement** of this **small** congregation has left it self-satisfied. This could lead to a blindness and unwillingness to discern and engage with any needs and challenges that are closer to home and require a strong act of love and concern across boundaries.

2.2.2. Question 6: What makes you anxious about the future of the congregation and what gives you hope?

The reading team reports that the greatest source of anxiety and worry is the declining membership as members leave or “disappear” and church services becomes emptier. Twenty-three respondents noted this and included concern about youth and a missing generation of 20-to-40-year olds. It is here that the reading team makes mention of the many references to the size of the congregation in Question 1 and notes that this was not negative, nor had it prepared them for the “tsunami of concern” that this direct question raised. The question of survival and preservation of the congregation is a central and realistic concern which is rooted deeply in the culture of the congregation.

Also noted are those that do not verbalize the fear directly, but speak of the “situation” of the congregation. There is a whole list of ways in which respondents describe the people living around the congregation:

- “Die potensiaal in die omgewing vir [die] betrek van inwoners wat moontlik nêrens kerklik betrokke is nie”
- “... uitreikgeleenthede na ander kultuurgroepe en jongmense wat groei kan bring”
- “... die hoop is dat daar tog baie geleenthede is om nuwe mense nader te trek ”
- “... daar is baie mense wat nog in die gemeente ingebring kan word”
- “Soveel anderskleuriges het in die woonbuurt ingetrek, ... ek glo vorentoe sal ons mense van alle rasse in die kerk hê; ons moet uitreik na hulle.”

The reading team wisely questions the true motives of the numerous desires to “reach out” to the context. Could it be primarily focused on self-preservation?

Against this “dark cloud of concern” are surprisingly strong signs of hope. It is as if the congregation is forced to experience and confess their dependence on and faith in God within these circumstances. Together with this, the strongest factors giving hope are the strong spiritual leaders and the positive attitude and faith of the core believers as “people who serve faithfully and with wisdom”.

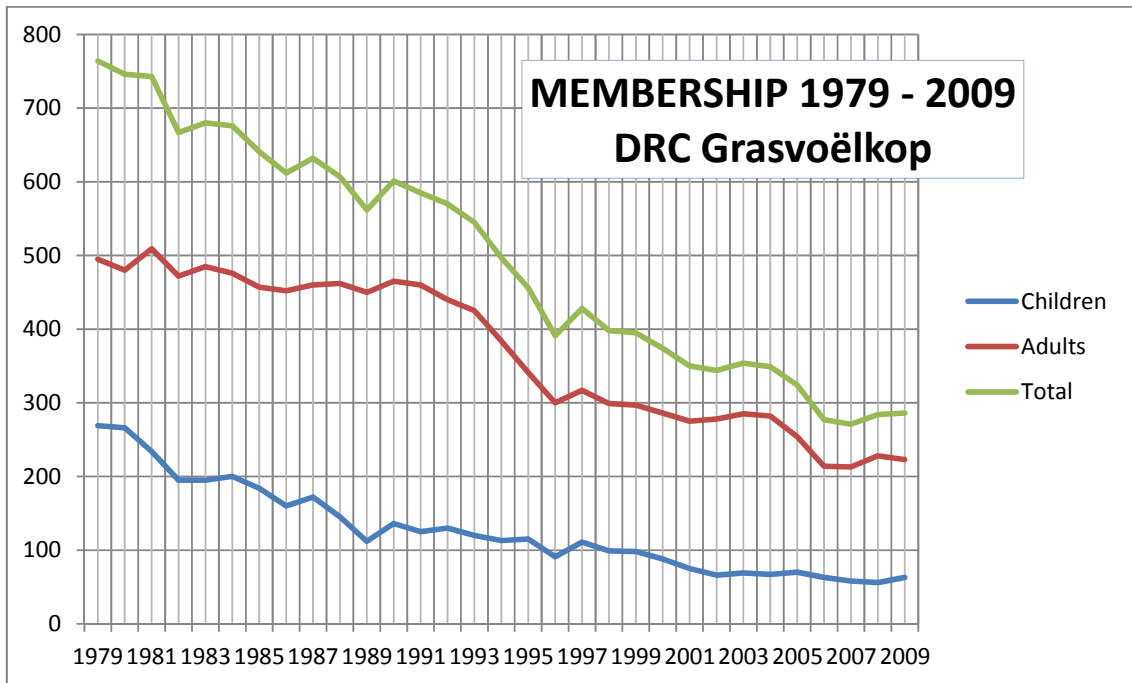
Two responses drew special attention:

- “Ek is soms bekommerd dat ons God se plan vir ons gemeente miskyk – soos vir diens, groei, integrasie of vernuwing.”
- “Dit wat hoop gee is die gevoel dat die Here ’n plan het vir die gemeente en teenwoordig is, en besluite om te kyk en te verander aan die gemeente om meer betrokkenheid te bevorder.”

These are positive calls to a missional vision that can move the congregation towards its God-ordained and hopeful future. The changing context in which the congregation finds itself must be noted, because the traditional existence of the congregation as a Dutch Reformed Church serving the Afrikaner cannot be sustained and brings no hopeful future. It is surely only through looking outward and crossing boundaries that the Lord’s “preferred future” will be found.

When the congregation was formed, most of the adult members had young children. A graph of the church membership from 1979 to 2009 shows a continuing decline in membership. Numbers were more stable over the first few years. There was a surprisingly large number of children when the congregation was formed, though this fell more dramatically over the first years. Membership in 1979⁴⁹ was 495 adults and 269 children.

⁴⁹ Membership records for 1979 to 2001 are taken from the annual *Jaarboek van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke* with the understanding that each annual reflects the previous year’s statistics; for 2002 to 2009, membership records are taken from Form A, as reported in the annual presbytery agenda.



Membership during 1980 to 2009:

Year	Adults	Children	Total
1979	495	269	764
1980	480	266	746
1981	509	234	743
1982	472	195	667
1983	485	195	680
1984	476	200	676
1985	457	184	641
1986	452	160	612
1987	460	172	632
1988	462	145	607
1989	450	112	562
1990	465	136	601
1991	460	125	585
1992	440	130	570
1993	425	120	545
1994	384	113	497

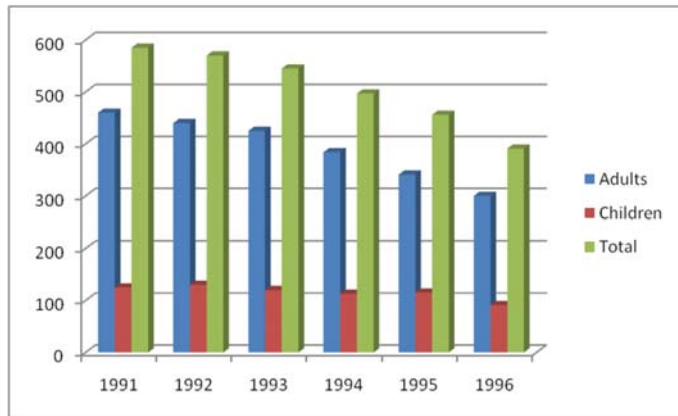
Year	Adults	Children	Total
1995	341	115	456
1996	300	91	391
1997	317	111	428
1998	299	99	398
1999	297	98	395
2000	286	88	374
2001	275	75	350
2002	278	66	344
2003	285	69	354
2004	282	67	349
2005	254	70	324
2006	214	63	277
2007	213	58	271
2008	228	56	284
2009	223	63	286

Looking at these figures, one notices the following:

- Two periods of dramatic decline: 1991 to 1996 and 2004 to 2007, the congregation shrinking by 33% over five years and 23% over three years respectively.
- A sharp decline in child members in the first decade, followed by slower but steady decline thereafter.

The following table and chart show how the membership shrunk dramatically over a five-year period.

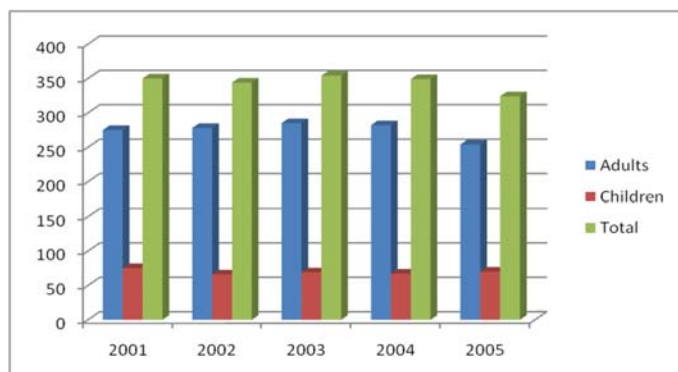
Year	Adults	Children	Total
1991	460	125	585
1992	440	130	570
1993	425	120	545
1994	384	113	497
1995	341	115	456
1996	300	91	391



A third of the congregation was lost over a relatively short period of time. The main reason was that most of the children had grown up and left home, and the parents needed or wanted to downsize or had reached retirement age. Many retired to Jeffreys Bay, a popular nearby coastal town. It seemed that most of those moving into the suburb were English and coloured people who mainly chose to attend their home churches in the adjacent northern areas of PE. The researcher recalls that this loss of members did not have a huge impact on the congregation and ascribes this to two reasons. Firstly, there was a growing vision for world missions and the loss was never felt financially. During this time, the faith promise offering was growing annually. Secondly, the core members and leaders were still involved and most of them remained at this stage.

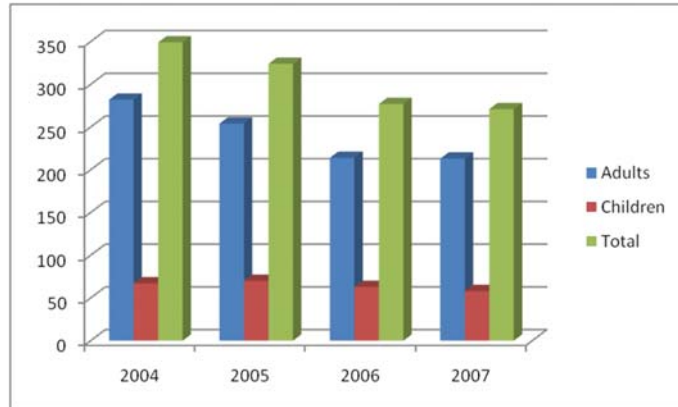
This period was followed by a time of stability in membership, as reflected in the numbers below.

Year	Adults	Children	Total
2001	275	75	350
2002	278	66	344
2003	285	69	354
2004	282	67	349



This was again followed by a period of steady decline with 2004 included as the boundary between a time of stability and decline:

Year	Adults	Children	Total
2004	282	67	349
2005	254	70	324
2006	214	63	277
2007	213	58	272



It is not only the decline in membership that is reflected in the ethnographic report under the question of what causes anxiety about the future. The anxiety reflected is exacerbated by additional factors that increase the impact of the falling membership, namely the ageing of the congregation, and not only an absence, but also a lack of involvement by a younger (age 20 to 40 years) generation.

A further factor is the change in the demographic of the suburb. Whereas Cotswold had been an open Afrikaans neighbourhood, where everyone knew each other and had partnered in building a church and primary school, it had now changed quite dramatically. This is reflected in the demographic of the primary school.⁵⁰ A few years previously, this school had two strong Afrikaans grade 1 classes; in 2010 less than 10 Afrikaans pupils were enrolled each year. For the past three years, there had not been a separate Afrikaans class. The school was now predominantly black and coloured.

This is the context that impacts the congregation, but also calls the congregation to discernment and faithful service.

2.2.3. Question 7: Describe how you and others feel about the change in the congregation that has happened in the last 3 – 5 years.

⁵⁰ This was related by Mrs Marlene Erasmus, a deacon and teacher at Moregrove Primary in a interview on 01/06/2010. This was recorded as part of Form A (07/06/2010) that is completed each year by each congregation, as is reported at the annual presbytery meeting.

The reading team reports that the general attitude towards change is positive. There are two meaningful responses from senior members:

- “Ek keur nie al die veranderings goed nie, maar aanvaar dit so. Kyk na wat werklik belangrik is. ’n Positiewe Christen ontvang die genade om uit te styg bo irritasies deur te berus in die teenwoordigheid van Christus.”
- “Dit moet gaan oor die Koninkryk van God.”

And, in similar vein, reaction from two younger members:

- “Ek is positief oor die wegbeweeg van nuttelose reëls en regulasies wat die NGK kenmerk, bv. die leraar wat hoog en verhewe eenkant is, die wettiesheid en die houding van ‘dit is die dominee se werk.’”
- “Dit is vir my goed dat daar nie meer ’n groot ophef van die dominee gemaak word nie en dat die betrokkenheid van almal meer beklemtoon word.”

This, together with a response from someone in their fifties that there is much more care from members among themselves seems to show that there a cultural shift from ministry and edification *for* members to ministry and edification *by* members has started.

Most of the change reported is smaller internal change. Respondents report that spiritual growth can be observed, especially in cell groups, informal communion services, and times of worship.

There is a positive attitude that creates energy and can be used going forward. This is also seen in respondents attempting to discern some positives in something like the loss of strong spiritual leaders: “Dit het die geleentheid vir nuwe leiers geskep (maar die leiers is nog nie ontwikkel nie).”

In the description above of the pastoral-sized congregation, it was noted that the pastor played a central role. The legacy of the DR churches has been the dominant position of the minister,⁵¹ functioning in a very strong shepherd/flock context, where people traditionally expect any spiritual input to come from the minister. It is very

⁵¹ Ministers are referred to as “dominee” – an unfortunate title coming from the Latin *dominus*, meaning “master”.

positive that most of the change in the congregation has been away from this traditional role towards mutual edification by members. This is also confirmed by the responses to Questions 2, 3 and 4, which are dealt with next.

The contextual situation of the congregation is certainly one of change. It seems that denominational traditions, including the position and role of the pastor, are being challenged, despite traditions normally being the most resistant to change. This raises the question as to the role that the pastor must play within the missional community. The next chapters will look at gaining insight as to how to answer this.

2.2.4. Question 2: How can members learn what it means to be a follower (disciple) of Jesus Christ?

The reading team recognizes that the Bible forms the basis of discipleship in the congregation, even though this is not mentioned explicitly. Important instruments are the service and sermons, discipleship course and cell or small groups – each being mentioned by 16 respondents. It is also clear that members realize that discipleship means living out one's faith in daily life (nine responses). The example of Christ is to be followed (two responses), and the example of leaders (two responses) and visiting missionaries (one response) are also mentioned.

The reading team highlights an important concern, namely that discipleship in the workplace is not mentioned. This raises the question as to how much active discipleship is practised outside an organized structure or project, in the daily lives of members, families and individuals.

It is encouraging to see that this has been recognised in the last several months. Form A of 07/06/2010 reports that it is important to recognize the role that many members play in and through their employment in serving the Kingdom. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6, where the missional calling to discipleship is examined.

With regard to the closing paragraph of the discussion of Question 7 above, it is important to appreciate that the running of the discipleship course over the last five years has been without any involvement of the local minister. So too the cell groups

are run by lay leaders, many of them playing a vital role in the edification of their fellow believers.

2.2.5. Question 3: Tell something that illustrates how you experience the presence of God and how He works in this congregation.

The reading team reports an experiential consciousness of the presence of the living God reflected in the different responses. Many practical examples are given from the life of the congregation, and God is acknowledged as an active worker of spiritual growth and change in people's lives (nine responses), as Helper and Provider who answers prayer (five responses) and supplies in concrete needs like congregational finances (nine responses).

Other meaningful moments which are mentioned are:

- How God is present in the different mission projects in which the congregation is involved (9);
- Different congregational projects and the support thereof (3);
- God is experienced in the care of people in need, sickness and death (3); and
- In services (6), sermons (3) and song (3).

Question 4 ("Describe an experience of meaningful worship of God that you experienced in the congregation") also tests the spiritual depth, and the responses to these two questions confirm one another. Awareness of the presence of God is found in a prayer relationship with Him. Responses make it clear that this is not foreign or far off, but an experienced reality.

These joyful experiences must also be viewed through a missional lens:

- Are there people outside the congregation that have a strong desire to experience God?
- How can this intimate experience of the living God be opened to them?
- How can this experience of God within the faith community help to live out their missional calling?

2.2.6. Question 8: Describe how you and others feel about the change in the community around you that has happened in the last 3 – 5 years.

The reading team reflects on the change noted (crime, moral decline, change in society, work pressure and insecurity) and ponders if they now see clearer and further than years ago when evil was further from their view. They might be better equipped in choosing how they, as called children of God, will react to these things, and how they can change the situation. Do they choose only to survive or are there opportunities to live the love of Christ? This will be the challenge: to be agents of change, expecting God to use them, not just to protect them, as they listen to the descriptions of what is taking place. The challenge for the congregation is to turn the situation around and ask how they can be instruments of love to people that feel like they do, but do not have the living knowledge of God in Jesus.

Note the reading team report:

- “As 6 respondente kla oor die feit dat mense al meer ‘soos kluisenaars’ na binne begin leef omdat hulle hulself isoleer van ander en ‘by mekaar verbyleef’, en dat dit veroorsaak dat daar nie meer ’n ‘gees van gemeenskap’ in die woonbuurt is nie (2), en: ‘ek sukkel ’n bietjie daarmee dat mense nie meer natuurlike kontak maak met hulle bure nie’; ‘nuwe intrekkers kan soms sku wees om kennis te maak’, wil ons vra dat julle die realistiese feite ’n slag moet ‘omdraai’ en daaroor nadink: Hoe kan ons/ek as lewende verteenwoordigers van Jesus aan hierdie situasie begin werk en dit omkeer om iets van God se bedoeling vir die wêreld te realiseer? Julle wat mekaar so getrou versorg en mekaar se belange op die hart dra, vir die wat buite julle warm geloofsgemeenskap staan, maar ook sukkel om in hierdie harde, koue en stukkende wêreld te oorleef, kan julle iets van die warm omgeeliefde van die Here Jesus laat proe?”
- “In wie se vereensaamde of wanhopige bestaan kan julle ’n draer van hoop wees? Wie kan standhou teen ’n volgehoue offensief van sagte omgeeliefde?”
- “‘Daar is groeiende armoede en werkloosheid, bedelaars. Daar is mense en kinders wat swaarkry. Mense sien God ook nie meer raak nie.’ Aan watter uitgeworpene(s) van die samelewing kan julle benewens ’n bekertjie sop of ’n stukkie brood ook ’n tikkie selfrespek skenk? Wie is uitgehonger vir egte

Christusliefde? Wie het behoefte om God aan die werk te sien? Het julle julleself al ooit afgevra wat kan julle alles doen of gee waarvoor geld nie nodig is nie?”

- “Die moeite wat julle doen om die gemeentelede tot gehoorsame dissipels van Jesus Christus te vorm, die besondere kwaliteit van julle verhouding met Hom en julle gebedskultuur laat by ons geen twyfel nie dat die Here julle reeds voorberei [het] om julle op groot skaal te gebruik om sy hart en sy hande en voete in julle direkte omgewing te wees. Wat julle saam as gemeente by Hom moet hoor is: ‘Here, ons is beskikbaar en gewillig, ons is ryklik begenadig met geestelike gawes; U het ook vir ons gewys dat U kan sorg dat genoeg fondse inkom; wat wil U hê moet ons in hierdie omgewing vir U doen? Na wie toe stuur U ons?’”

2.3. A Changed Context

In concluding this description of DRC Grasvoëlkop, it may be prudent to summarize the main changes that have occurred over the last years. As mentioned previously, we have been challenged and motivated by the realization that the situation of the congregation is worlds apart from what it was 20 years ago. These changes are definite challenges that the congregation must face and contend with as it seeks to understand its specific role and calling for the future.

The researcher will describe some of the most immediate and visible changes that have taken place and how this world differs from the one in 1990, when he entered the ministry at this congregation. Most of these changes are but symptoms of a deeper change in culture and worldview. The next chapter will describe the changes that have occurred on a macro level in the move towards an understanding of what being missional means for a congregation.

2.3.1. Church traditions and the place of the congregation in both society and the minds of people

In 1990, the pastor wore a black suit, white tie and liturgical gown, and preached from the pulpit. The church council sat in separate pews to the side of the pulpit. The atmosphere was sombre. This has all changed – the pastor is comfortable standing in front of the pulpit in semi-formal dress, the council sit with their families, and people feel at ease enough to talk and interact with each other in the pews before

the service starts. As noted in the ethnographic study (Question 5), there is very little ill will or conflict in the congregation. The researcher recalls that the only real time that there were heated debates within church council meetings, with some becoming angry, irrational and resigning after the decision was taken, was with regard to these changes in church tradition. The first was when it was decided to do away with liturgical dress; the other when it was decided that the church council would sit with their families during services.

In 1990, the church had a central position in the community and the minds of people. The suburb and surrounding areas were strongly Afrikaans and church life was important to this culture. It was frowned upon to do anything secular on a Sunday. There was honour and prestige to be on the church council, and this was a sought-after position. The independent and charismatic churches were viewed as sects. Today people move very easily to the larger charismatic churches, and there is no shame in spending your Sunday on the beach, at home with a newspaper, at a restaurant for brunch or in the mall doing your weekly shopping. There is no church attendance out of loyalty, except among the older members. Afrikaans churches in Newton Park/Cotswold are now positioned on the outskirts of society.⁵² This was clearly illustrated by the recent complaints in the letters section of a local newspaper about the constant ringing of the church bell by DRC Newtonpark. Of course this is true of not only these churches in a changing suburb, but of all churches in contemporary Western society.

2.3.2. Political change and uncertainty

It would be untrue to say that there was no anxiety or uncertainty within the Afrikaner community during the late 1980s, but the researcher does not believe it was anything approaching the levels of the last couple of years. There were concerns about political instability, high petrol prices and bank lending rates, young men doing national service and the threat of communism, yet the Afrikaner community had a sense of safety in community, political power and faith.

⁵² The change in context has been even more dramatic for DRC Port Elizabeth-Wes, as the suburb of Newton Park has changed from a residential to a business area. In an interview with the minister, Jan Kampman, on 28/05/2010, he reported that they now have 360 members, with an average age of 68 years.

It seemed as if white suburbs (including Cotswold) were islands of security, untouched by political turmoil.⁵³ The political unrest seemed to be taking place in a different world, even though the Indian (Malabar) and coloured (northern areas) communities where the unrest was strong, are geographically very close.

In 2014, the Afrikaner is a much less homogenous group. People feel stripped of any power or sense of safety. There is economic uncertainty caused by black economic empowerment and unemployment. Moral decay seemed to follow political change. The comfort of a “white suburb” has been changed demographically and socially by political change and rising crime rates. There is a much greater sense of uncertainty in the psyche of urbanites.

2.3.3. Societal change and moral decay

Our society is very different to 20 years ago. Things that were absent, insignificant or present but hidden have proliferated today, like prostitution, pornography, drug abuse, abortion, homosexuality, HIV/Aids, divorce and single parent families, and unmarried mothers. Broken homes seem to have become the norm. Discipline in the home and at school has deteriorated and become a challenge in many situations. These are the things that members see in their own homes, streets and city. There is no longer the comfortable, secure circumstances in which faith was practised by a previous white Afrikaner generation.

2.4. Fresh attainments as rays of hope

The interpretation of the reading team serves two very important purposes in discerning the way forward for Grasvoëlkop. Firstly, it shows that there is a long way to go to establishing a true missional vision in the congregation. Through many open questions, the congregation is challenged to look beyond its own situation to its context. It is not difficult to see that this has not happened yet. It would be wrong to regard the minutes of 30 years of church council meetings as a full and true reflection of congregational life, work and calling, yet it is disturbing that they reflect an almost complete lack of awareness of what happens outside the congregation

⁵³ In retrospect, with a far greater understanding of what was actually happening in the Eastern Cape, one also has to look at the effectiveness of the government’s apartheid propaganda and control of the media to understand the level of denial this induced/colluded with in whites whose whole way of life was at stake. This is a very complex issue, with many more contributing factors.

and its immediate boundaries. The minutes reveal many trivial household arrangements and decisions, without any attention given⁵⁴ to the suburb, city or country. If a stranger were asked to read the minutes of congregational meetings and guess the congregation's location, it would be impossible for him to place it in the correct country, let alone the city.

Secondly, the reading report brings the ability to highlight strengths and positives. These rays of hope can function as beacons on the way forward.

There have been some positive developments since the ethnographic study of 2007. The researcher will briefly describe the most important developments which he believes can be important tools for moving purposefully towards the future.

2.4.1. Sunday cell groups

After a fruitful 40 Days of Purpose campaign, it was decided to hold a follow-up, and 40 Days of Community took place during the first quarter of 2008. The popular small group meetings were held on a Sunday evening, rivalling the attendance of the morning worship service. It was decided that they would continue to meet as small groups on a Sunday evening,⁵⁵ with an evening service once a month.

Many members attest to the meaningful fellowship and support that happens there. The spiritual support and edification that happened in the old ward system with house visitation by elders had broken down a long time ago. Cell groups have played an important role in this edification of members.

They have also begun to provide a home for the younger generation. Two new families that moved in recently became part of a small group that consists of families with young children. They have been well integrated into the congregation and play leading roles in different areas. Other families who have been part of the congregation for years but uninvolved have also been drawn in through the small groups.

2.4.2. Discipleship

⁵⁴ A lone entry in 1994 describes a decision to take a bus tour through the black areas of PE. This did lead to involvement with a local crèche; however, it did not have much impact on congregational life.

⁵⁵ Minutes of a special church council meeting 13/04/2008, pt 1.

This process involves a two-year course of 28 fellowship meetings a year, and an annual retreat. This is run under the leadership of an elder and his wife. At least fifty members have been part of this process over the past six years. The course is effective in developing spiritual growth and helping people overcome sins and hurts that have hindered growth in their lives. Community and fellowship are vital ingredients, and the support of each other plays a significant role. I believe that one of the great strengths of this process is the relationship that the elder and his spouse develop with the participants. They are mature, caring, wise and humble believers and, through their example, counsel and pastoral insight, they have supported and encouraged many.

2.4.3. Elders and lay leadership

The pastor became aware that some elders had sin issues in their lives. After confronting them lovingly, three decided to resign and take time to address these issues. Even though it was not reflected in the minutes, it was clearly stated that it is far better to have fewer elders than simply to choose people to fill a vacancy if their lives do not reflect the biblical requirements for leaders. This has resulted in a much smaller corps of elders. They started meeting every three weeks, and this was a wonderful opportunity for prayer. It was also an opportunity for the pastor to share specific challenges and receive input from spiritually mature brothers. This has been very fruitful, increasing open communication, sharing of concerns and wisdom for difficult decisions. The pastor believes that the continuing development of this group will be very important.

Since 2010 a number of members had stepped forward to coordinate and lead new initiatives in the congregation. Certain members have played a key role in equipping and edifying other believers. It was noticeable that in 2013 many of these new leaders went through times of testing and hardship in the form of illness, work and family challenges. These resulted in many of them not being able to follow through to reach the full potential that their ministry originally displayed. Even as some of them had to step back from leadership, or play a smaller part in ministry, they have had a significant influence on the congregation and have played a role in raising the awareness of the need of leadership and involvement from a much broader base than what was traditionally seen.

In 2012 the church council appointed a person as a congregational manager. This person played an important role in both administration and spiritual ministry. The pastor was very appreciative of the role he played and the way his different leadership skills and gift complemented those of the pastor. He was widely accepted by the members and continues to play a role, even though he stepped down from the post in 2013.

2.4.4. Focused fellowship

A concern for the role of men and their spiritual growth led to a camp in October 2009. This was well attended and was followed by several men's breakfasts and other get-togethers.

A support group for elderly and retired members was started in 2010. This has grown from strength to strength.

These "focused fellowships" have become surprisingly popular. This is also an opportunity for lay members to lead and has resulted in a few people coming forward to fulfil roles of service and leadership. A regular Bible study for men was started by the congregation manager.

2.4.5. Mission exposure

There is always the challenge to keep missions personalized so that the support is personal, meaningful and committed. Because missionaries are far away and out of sight, it is easy to forget them and support can become little more than the giving of finances. It has always been the aim of the missions committee to promote partnership and strong support. In the last few years, this has developed with the families in Afghanistan and especially the workers in Egypt. The director of this work visited the congregation in March 2009, and a group of four members visited Egypt in April 2010. The building of this relationship has been a rewarding and remarkable endeavour.

Recently a group of 34 members (24 adults and 10 children) visited the Transkei to support a missionary couple. The aim was to serve them by building cupboards and desks for the study and room in which they do home schooling, together with other repair work and smaller tasks. It was a most uplifting experience to witness the

number of gifts on display and how each person slotted in to be able to achieve the goals that had been set. The researcher believes that they will see much fruit from this visit as a result of the strengthening of relationships, an awareness of the challenges that the missionary couple face, including reaching the Transkei with the gospel and the excitement of crossing boundaries in the Name of the Lord.

2.5. Conclusion

Mainline churches are in decline (Hendriks 2009:110). Hendriks describes the unique South African situation, which differs from those in other Western countries:

“When typical mainline denominations in South Africa interpret the decline phenomenon they do so from a situation where trauma and conflict are very real entities and where power balances have shifted, placing the typical member of these churches in a vastly different position than that of their Western brothers and sisters. One example: most churches were racially divided and still are, but, especially in mainline congregations, there is a deliberate urge towards unification processes and multicultural congregations. Currently, the business and socio-political worlds are integrating racial groups by means of affirmative action that is supported and driven by legislation. Unemployment remains high and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening even after the new dispensation came about in 1994.

“Thus, crime stays unacceptably high and skilled people are emigrating. Against the backdrop of this scenario, the natural tendency for a typical traditional Afrikaans white congregation is to keep their laager tightly closed in order to have at least one place ‘where you can be at home with your own people, language and friends.’ The fact that quite a substantial number of congregations are moving away from this ‘natural’ but theologically unacceptable position, begs investigation. The hypothesis is that a profound theological transition process is taking place and is resulting in an identity transformation of the congregations involved.” (2009:110)

This chapter has shown that Grasvoëlkop has not been spared the trauma of change, and certainly many members are exposed daily to the conflict of change described above. There is much cause for this congregation to seek this laager mentality as an attractive possibility. The danger is also present that the mission-mindedness of the congregation can bring a sense of satisfaction and contentment, dulling the call to serve in a world that has changed and seems more distant and dangerous.

This chapter has also shown that there are rays of hope, new attainments and a history of serving that convinces the researcher that this congregation can accept the challenge of serving God in a changed context, by looking away from itself and towards God's preferred future.

The researcher will endeavour to describe the call to be missional and portray what that entails as a way forward for this congregation in Part II. First, however, it is important to describe what this changed world looks like from a perspective that is wider than the local congregation. This will be undertaken in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DRC Grasvoëlkop: A Cultural Understanding

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter described some of the changes and challenges that test the congregation in its current situation. Behind these surface changes lie seismic shifts that have changed both the national and international landscape and whose influence even this small congregation, stuck away in a corner of a sleepy coastal city, could not escape.

The changes that have taken place within the congregation over the last 20 years are of such magnitude that one could truly say that they are living in a new situation, and it would be wise to look at the congregation with new eyes. That which worked for a past generation would, in all probability, not be effective in reaching this new generation.

The purpose of this chapter is to do more than describe some of the changes that have occurred and influenced the congregation, looking rather to ascertain the reasons for these changes. This will be done by zooming out from the immediate context to take a wider look at the macro level of the congregation. This chapter will attempt to posit a foundation for an understanding of the vital relationship of the church to culture. The following chapters will build on the insights gained here. An understanding of culture should give insight into the influences that have helped to shape the congregation. It must also help to shape the missional calling of the congregation. While this chapter will focus on the descriptive task of Osmer's model of practical theological interpretation, the insights gathered here will aid in the interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks that each of the following chapters will attempt through the lens of missional theology.

As they search for the way in which a missional vision can lead DRC Grasvoëlkop into God's preferred future, they will have to understand how to engage culture. The immediate cultural context must be understood and engaged by a church with a missional vision.

In the previous chapter, we saw that, even while developing a strong cross-cultural mission, DRC Grasvoëlkop never truly developed a direct involvement with the local context outside the congregational boundaries. This did not prevent the cultural changes from influencing the congregation. Even while turning a blind eye to its own wider cultural context, a congregation is never isolated from the changes that occur within the culture. Many of the external changes that occurred reflect a change in cultural values and even worldview. In understanding how and why these changes occurred, they might better understand their present cultural situation, as well as be better able to engage with it in a missional way. Understanding exactly how the culture influenced the congregation belongs to the interpretive task, and this will be undertaken in the next chapters.

If one were able to place the 1990 congregation next to the 2010 congregation, one would have no difficulty in seeing many differences (beyond fashion, including hairstyles and spectacles). Sermons on the catechism have disappeared. So has the practice of the male members standing during the closing prayer. Dress and relationships are very informal, and families look different – divorcees, single parents, stepmothers and fathers have almost become the norm. If one looks slightly deeper, one notices more subtle but equally telling differences: gone are the Sunday school tests and memory verses; gone are the congregational boundaries (even though the Synod has a clear implementation policy, the researcher know of no congregation that follows these prescribed procedures), and gone is any denominational or cultural loyalty to a church that was still so strong in the 1990s.

Many of these external changes happened gradually and unconsciously, without a clear decision to implement them. These changes have also occurred widely across the country, even in remote and conservative rural areas. The changes within this congregation have taken place in most other congregations. There is, of course, differentiation in how far different congregations have moved with the change, and many of the changes have been challenged and delayed by strong conservative traditionalists within local congregations.

It is important to understand that most external behavioural changes reflect a deeper internal change in values and worldview. It is difficult to underestimate the impact that these changes have had on congregational life in South Africa.

In the past, many South African, and especially Afrikaans congregations, have been isolated from the influence of a changing Western culture. This can be ascribed to many factors, mostly grounded in the apartheid model of Christian national education and an effective state censorship of external ideas and influences. Most church members lived and moved in a very small, isolated world. Even the introduction of television in 1976, with a careful selection of programme types, did not do much to broaden horizons. The political changes that have happened in the country since 1994 with the release of Mandela and the unbanning of political organizations have, however, accelerated and amplified the impact of these changes on our society. The doors have literally been thrown open and the sight of a changed and changing world within white South Africa is ubiquitous.

When Guder (ed. 1998:2) describe the varied crises that the North American traditional denominational church faces, it is impossible not to see it also as a description of the church in South Africa, namely:

“... diminishing numbers, clergy burnout, the loss of youth, the end of denominational loyalty, biblical illiteracy, divisions in the ranks, the electronic church and its various corruptions, the irrelevance of traditional forms of worship, the loss of genuine spirituality, and widespread confusion about both the purpose and message of the church of Jesus Christ.”

It is thus crucial to take a discerning look at the changes and influences of Western culture that have impacted the South African church, including DRC Grasvoëlkop. Hendriks (2004:76–77) underlines the importance of looking at macro level influences (as distinguished from the meso and micro level) when undertaking a contextual analysis.

The researcher believes that a broad description will be sufficient to gain understanding of the current macro situation of the congregation. Some changes and influences may call for a more detailed description, as these insights will also serve as an aid to understand the missional calling of the church in South Africa. The changing Western culture is not only a challenge to the church, but also a calling.

“Bishop Newbigin and others have helped us to see that God’s mission is calling and sending us, the church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary church *in our own societies*, in the cultures in which we find ourselves. These cultures are no longer Christian; some would argue that they never were. Now, however, their character

as a mission field is so obvious as to need no demonstration.” (ed. Guder 1998:5, my emphasis).

The missional calling of the church will mean that local congregations begin to see their own context as their mission. It is as essential for a local church to understand the culture within which it must live and proclaim the gospel as it is for a cross-cultural missionary to understand the cultural challenges he faces. This must be kept in mind as one looks at the key changes and influences of Western culture that impact DRC Grasvoëlkop and other local churches throughout the Western world.

The researcher will give a concise description of Western cultural and then trace the most important changes within it that have impacted life in South Africa and that have thus also influenced church life. This will serve an understanding that must not only comprehend the current situation in which the congregation finds itself, but also be navigated as a missional congregation. This will be described under four headings, namely

- a description of Western culture;
- the recent change in Western culture;
- the changed position of the church within Western culture, and
- the changing face of Western evangelicalism.

From these different viewpoints, we can delineate some of the major shifts and influences that impact and challenge the local church.

3.2. Describing Western Culture

There is much to learn from an understanding of Western culture and the historical roots and sources that shaped it. It would be wise to describe this culture before one traces the major changes that are so much part of twenty-first century life, because it is not only the changes that influence and shape congregational life. It often happens that the church that is very comfortable in its cultural setting becomes blind to unfaithful compromises with the prevailing culture. It is often when the church is challenged by changes that it becomes aware of its cultural entrenchment. This is

true not only of DRC Grasvoëlkop (and the researcher's own life), but also of the DRC as a denomination.

It would be prudent to understand what culture is before one tackles the task of describing Western culture and the changes one faces.

3.2.1. Culture

3.2.2.1. Defining culture

Newbigin (1983:5) chooses a workable "dictionary definition" to explain what he means by culture, which he then further describes as:

"The sum total of ways of living built up by a human community and transmitted from one generation to another.' Culture thus includes the whole life of human beings in so far as it is a shared life. It includes the science, art, technology, politics, jurisprudence and religion of a group of people. Fundamental to any culture is language which embodies the way in which a people grasps and copes with experience, sharing it with one another within the group."

Hiebert (1999:374–377) gives a very useful description of culture that builds on a slightly deeper but still simple definition of culture, namely "culture is the more or less integrated systems of beliefs, feelings and values, and their associated symbols, patterns of behaviour and products shared by a group of people" (Hiebert 1999:374).

This definition underlines the important difference between that which is external and that which is internal. Externally, there are both human behaviour and material objects that are readily observable. The products show how people have adapted to nature (where they live) and how they have moulded it for their use. Cultural behaviour is shared and is governed by an unwritten set of rules that answers the question as to what is acceptable and unacceptable. This brings identity and continuity to a group of people.

Hiebert (1999:375) shows how these behaviours are influenced by "shared beliefs, feelings and values" that, in actual fact, lie at the "heart of culture". Culture can be described as "a people's mental map of the world", which is more than just a map of their physical world, but rather a map "for determining action". In other words, these shared beliefs, feelings and values guide and form the way people act.

These beliefs, feelings and values are formed as people respond to reality through a cultural filter of questions that are answered on a basis of agreement and mutual acceptance.

- Shared beliefs cover the realm of what exists and what does not, what is and what is not. These give the categories and logic that are used to experience the world. A Westerner, without the category of spirit beings, will struggle to understand a Xhosa woman's trepidation at night when she is fearful of a tokoloshe.⁵⁶
- Shared feelings answer the question of what the communal likes and dislikes are, and how emotions are expressed.
- Shared values determine what is right and wrong, as well as what is good or evil. Hiebert (1999:376) mentions that in parts of India sexual immorality is less frowned upon than losing one's temper; strange and incomprehensible again to our Western standards.

I include a diagram (Figure 1) that shows how these beliefs, feelings and values influence and form behaviour.

The Dimensions of Culture

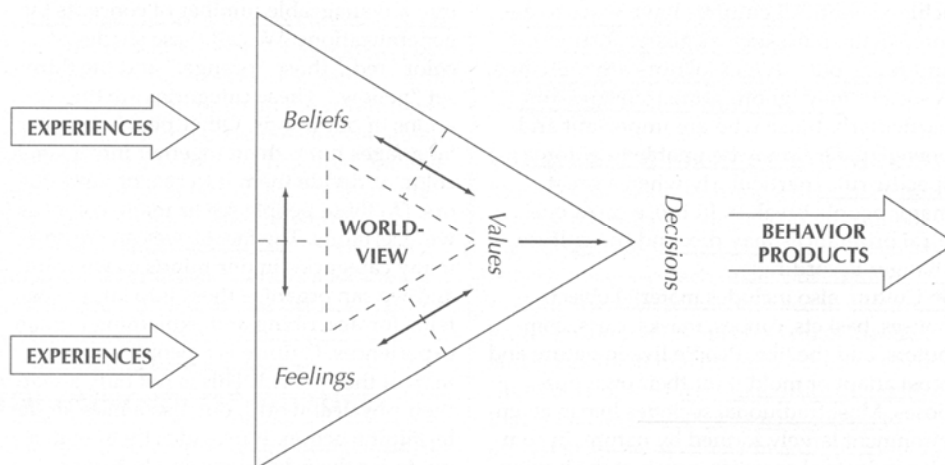


Figure 1: The dimensions of culture (Hiebert 1999:376)

⁵⁶ See <http://www.aquiziam.com/tokkeloshe.html>.

3.2.1.2. **Worldview**

Figure 1 shows the important place of the central concept of a “worldview”.

“A culture is made up of a great many patterns of behavior, ideas and products. But it is more than the sum of these. These patterns are integrated, more or less, into large cultural complexes and total cultural systems by a worldview which forms the core of the culture. This worldview is made up by the fundamental cognitive, affective and evaluative assumptions people make about reality.” (Hiebert 1999:376)

Kraft (1999:385) concurs that that which one sees as patterned or structured behaviour is the “lesser part of culture” in that it is but a reflection of the deeper-lying basic assumptions called the worldview.

“In its simplest terms, a worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life” (Nash 1992:16). Nash continues to show that beliefs fit together to form what he calls a “conceptual scheme” that helps us to interpret reality. A worldview is not what people “think about” but what they “think with” (Hiebert 1999:377). It is important to understand that these assumptions are implicit and accepted, shaping one’s interpretation of all of life and that “we are totally submerged in it, relating to it much as a fish relates to water. And we are usually as unconscious of it as a fish must be of the water” (Kraft 1999:386).

A worldview is formed and shared within community. It would include ultimate beliefs in five major categories (Nash 1992:26–31):

1) God

The question of God’s existence, nature and how he is approached has many different answers. This is one of the essential elements of a worldview.

Different religions embrace different worldviews and it is possible to differentiate between theism, polytheism and pantheism.

2) Ultimate reality

These foundational beliefs can be placed under the term “metaphysical” and have to do with concepts like creation, the nature of the universe, the supernatural and our ultimate purpose.

3) Knowledge

A third element of worldview is epistemology. Again, these are generally unstated, yet people will have concepts of truth, reason, experience and faith and how knowledge is possible.

4) Morality

This would be concerned with why a certain action can be seen as being wrong. Do moral laws exist, and are they subjective or objective? A worldview also contains an attempt at answering the question as to what is wrong with the world.

5) Humankind

A worldview also looks at human existence and ponders ultimate questions. Are they free? Are they spiritual? Are they eternal? And are they good? What about death and the afterlife?

These form the spectacles through which people look at their reality and form their beliefs, feelings and values, which give rise to behaviour. A worldview is truly a way of looking at reality. Kraft (1999:287) confirms that “worldview assumptions provide the ‘glue’ with which people hold their culture together”. So too we see Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:11–13), after a short description of the origin and development of the term, summarizing as follows: “... worldview expresses a set of beliefs that are *foundational* and *formative* for human thinking and life” (2008:13, my emphasis).

At this stage, many things will have to be left unsaid, including how cultures change, the relationship between Christianity and culture, contextualization, syncretism and cultural differences and misunderstandings. The researcher will return to ponder the place of a Christian worldview and endeavour to explain the importance of understanding culture for the missional task; for now, though, this description of the way in which culture unites people as they conform in certain ways will suffice.

3.2.2. Modernity

The political changes in South Africa since 1994 have had a profound influence on the Afrikaner and the DRC. With a black majority government in power after years of

oppression, this was inevitable. But it was not an African worldview with its understanding of spirituality and communality that rose to power. The influence of Western modernity was too strong and was felt far and wide. The researcher's argument is that the Afrikaner worldview⁵⁷ shifted from theistic to humanistic in this time.

Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:68) speak of confessional humanism as a belief system in which humans have replaced God (as Creator, Ruler and Saviour) and which has become the centre of Western culture. "Confessional humanism – secular, naturalistic, rationalistic, scientific – has also been called by other names, including 'the Enlightenment worldview,' 'the modern worldview' or simply 'modernity.'" (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:69)

The four descriptions above fill out our understanding of modernity. They are:

- a) *Secular*: where God has no influence or relationship with this world;
- b) *Naturalistic*: which holds the belief that this world is all that exists and that any causes can only be found within this existence;
- c) *Rationalistic*: namely the belief in reason as the only way to understand and influence this world, and also influence any change;
- d) *Scientific*: the scientific method becomes the way that reason can have impact and "the humanist believes ... trusting in reason and science, we may be assured of progress towards a world of happiness, freedom, material prosperity, truth and justice" (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:69).

Bauckham (2003:1ff) responds to a newspaper article by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in which he stands against "universalist cultures" immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks. These cultures consider that they possess universal truth and this truth is seen as being beneficial to the whole world. Bauckham uses the word "metanarrative" to describe this:

⁵⁷ It has become very difficult to speak of an Afrikaner culture, as there is now such wide diversity in attitudes and behaviour. There is a huge difference between north and south, as well as between rural and urban, but even conservative Afrikanerdom has been influenced by this change.

“When he speaks of universalist cultures, cultures with an ideological drive to universalize themselves, he is talking about cultures that see the world in terms of a metanarrative, that is, a story about the meaning of reality as a whole. A metanarrative is an attempt to grasp the meaning and destiny of human history as a whole by telling a single story about it; to encompass as it were, all the immense diversity of human stories in a single, overall story which integrates them into a single meaning.” (2003:4)

He then describes (2003:87–88) the metanarrative of modern Western culture as the idea of progress. This concept of progress rests on rationalist values, which were taken to be universal values resulting in the belief that it was for the common good of humankind to extend these values.

Leitham (2004:447) describes modernity as “an optimistic belief in human progress, based on a high evaluation of reason, stemming from a rejection of the biblical and Christian worldview.”

3.2.2.1. Roots of modernity: Greco-Roman period

There is much insight to be gained from understanding the roots of modernity. These roots are traced back to Plato by Pearcey (2005:74–83) and Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:67–109). The researcher will venture to summarize this historical survey in a few paragraphs.

The development of modernity was formed in the clash of two competing worldviews through the historical periods of the classical (Greco-Roman), medieval and modern (Enlightenment and Romantic) extending into the postmodern period.⁵⁸

Greek philosophers since the sixth century BC replaced the reigning mythical worldview with what they developed out of independent reason. In this way, by a long process, it became a source of modernity’s reliance on reason. Plato and his student Aristotle searched for universal truth and order. Plato conceived a world of two realms, the visible (Matter) and invisible (Form). Behind the visible, material world lies a spiritual with universal ideas, the true reality that gives an unchanging

⁵⁸ Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:71) show that these labels display an underlying prejudice in favour of humanism and prefer to use those inspired by Dirk Vollenhoven (Vollenhoven, DHT. 2005. *The problem-historical method and the history of philosophy*. Ed. Brill, KA Amstelveen: De Zaak Haes, 29–88). Looking through the lens of the gospel, the classical period would be “pagan” (meaning that which has developed apart from the light of the gospel); “synthesis” rather than medieval (reflecting the amalgamation of these two metanarratives) and the modern period as “antithesis”, showing the growing hostility between the worldviews. The postmodern period is described as “neo-paganism”.

order to the world. Matter was regarded as disordered and this empirical world was seen as being only a shadow of true reality.

“In essence, Plato was offering a twofold origin of the world. Both Form and Matter are eternal: Form represents reason and rationality, while the eternal flow of formless Matter is inherently evil and chaotic. This twofold view of origins led to a two-story view of reality, with *Form* in the upper story and *Matter* in the lower story.” (Pearcey 2005:75, her emphasis)

This dualistic view of the world was also projected onto humans, distinguishing between a material body and rational soul, which would not perish with death but return to the realm of Form. In Plato we thus find a twin influence that would continue till today,⁵⁹ namely the view of created order as inherently evil and of lesser value and the confident use of reason as the source of true knowledge and insight. Aristotle differed from Plato in that he saw the universal unchanging ideas to be found within the world, and discoverable through human reason.

3.2.2.2. Roots of modernity: The Middle Ages

These early roots of rationalism and dualism that were central to the formation of modernity were taken up into church life by two influential Christian thinkers, namely Augustine⁶⁰ and Aquinas.⁶¹

Augustine retained some of the influence of Plato on his life and retained a dualistic view of the Christian life. This meant that the natural world (including the body) was viewed as inferior and needed to be renounced to arrive at a true, deep spirituality. His influence on medieval times was huge.

Aquinas lived in the late medieval times when there was cultural, social and technological advancement. During this time, there was a challenging of the “vertical and world-denying element in the worldview of the early Middle Ages” due to the “growing interest in this world” (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:78).

⁵⁹ Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:74–75) show how neo-Platonism was developed by Plotinus (AD 205–270) during a time when the Roman Empire was in decline. This was developed into four main convictions: 1) there is a division between the spiritual (good) and material (evil) worlds; 2) people have a material body, inferior to a rational soul; 3) bodily life is inferior to spiritual life, and 4) human life has an otherworldly, spiritual orientation. Salvation in this view becomes the release of the soul from its material imprisonment.

⁶⁰ Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430), see Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:77) and Pearcey (2005:76).

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), see Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:78) and Pearcey (2005:78).

A renewed interest in the writings of Aristotle allowed Aquinas to attempt “to forge a finely tuned synthesis that would both honour the vertical orientation of the Christian life as it had been shaped in the Middle Ages and give due emphasis to life and empirical reason in this world” (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:79).

Even though he had a positive view of life and spirit, Aquinas retained the dualistic framework of Greek philosophy. In the upper storey was “grace” (including the supernatural, spiritual realm, the eternal, faith, theology and revelation – that which God has given over and above the natural). “Nature”, the lower storey (including the body, science, reason, the material realm) was an affirmation of the good in creation but was viewed as subordinate to the Christian life.

Over time there was a development in which these two storeys slowly split and drifted apart. In this secularization, the lower level was seen as self-contained and self-reliant, not needing grace. This movement was away from Aquinas, who always viewed the lower storey as subordinate. This resulted in a “radical dichotomy that divided human nature in half.” (Pearcey 2005:80)

“In the ensuing centuries the lower story of the natural world, cultural life, and reason would increasingly be disengaged from the upper. In effect, most of human life would be severed from the authority of God and the power of the gospel. Reason was divorced from faith, self-sufficient nature was divorced from the upholding Word of God, and human society was divorced from God’s normative ordering word. In these divisions lay the seeds of the secularism that was soon to blossom in the history of the West.” (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:80)

3.2.2.3. Roots of modernity: the Renaissance and Enlightenment

The Renaissance (fifteenth to sixteenth centuries) describes a time when Europe moved out of the Middle Ages with a “rebirth” of interest in the arts and humanities and a renewed appreciation of this world combined with a moving away from the authority of the medieval church. It was during this time that the separation of Aquinas’ two storeys occurred, with the birth of humanism.⁶² This would only come to fruition in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.

⁶² Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:83) note a “radical and anti-Christian form of humanism” arising in northern Italy, resulting in a renewed interest in the present world, a growing sense of autonomy, a deistic view of God and a new awareness of being “master over nature”.

The Reformation failed to stem the movement of secularization into modernity.⁶³

As science developed, Isaac Newton played a key role in combining the experimental and empirical method (Francis Bacon) with the rationalist method proposed by René Descartes. The formation of this worldview was encouraged by two grave mistakes the church made. The first was a strongly negative and fundamentalist reaction to the new developments in science. Concurrently, horribly dark religious wars were taking place across Europe after the splintering of the church by the Reformation. Science thus seemed a more reasonable avenue through which to seek answers.

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment can be seen as a conversion where “scientific humanism seemed to replace the gospel as ‘the light of the world’, and its core beliefs may be summarized under these headings: (1) faith in progress, (2) faith in reason, (3) faith in technology, and (4) faith in a rationally ordered social world” (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:91). This would shape society and, through the French and industrial revolutions, eventually form the Western modernity of the twentieth century.

3.2.2.4. Shift to America

Both twentieth-century world wars did much to shake the faith in the notion of progress, yet with a growing optimism and economy, America would become the new centre for this worldview to flourish. Wells (1993) describes this shift in power (68–69) from Europe to America and explains how a whole new set of forces came into play to form society. He describes a “series of stunning inventions” that produced “new ways of looking at life, new values, new relationships to the society at large, new priorities, new horizons – in short, a new civilization” (70). While modernity was passing in an intellectual sense, it was “being born in its sociological form” (61). The world has moved from one that was formed by philosophers to a world being shaped by forces of capitalism, information, technology, urbanization

⁶³ Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:86–87) show how, despite numerous positives that have shaped Western culture, the Reformers, by not being critical enough of the reigning humanism and by tendencies within the Reformation also accelerated the movement towards secularism. Pearcey (2005:82) notes that, despite the strong rejection of a nature/grace dualism, there was a failure to provide a new “philosophical vocabulary” and the scholastic teaching in universities was thus never changed or challenged.

and the power of the state. It was this modernization of society that gave the thinking of the Enlightenment a home in which to flourish⁶⁴ (Wells 2005:31).

While many of the tenets of modernity are being challenged, it remains a powerful worldview with an ever-spreading influence. Even though the idea of progress (a central tenet of modernity) is being rejected by many, we find that:

“... in the marketplace modernity still shapes much of our social, political and economic life. Many cannot or will not bring themselves to believe that the secret of human happiness does not lie in an ever-expanding material prosperity. And thus globalization is a movement that is spreading the modern, liberal story around the world.” (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:108)

In our short description of culture, we have noted that behaviour is formed by shared beliefs, feelings and values that build upon the worldview. We can now look at the way in which modernity, as a worldview,⁶⁵ is displayed within Western culture. How is this worldview lived out?

Wells (2005:32–59) describes three things that happen: “The disappearance of God, the disappearance of human nature, and the omniscience of the human being”.

3.2.2.5. Modernity: the disappearance of God

It may seem strange to describe a “religious” country like South Africa or the United States as secularized, yet this is exactly what happened as secularization has taken the shape of a *fact/value dichotomy*. Rather than religion being totally banished from all life, it has been relegated to a space in the private arena, with no role to play in public life.

The two-storey divide that Aquinas gave us underwent radical changes through the contributions of Descartes and Immanuel Kant.⁶⁶ Kant placed freedom or autonomy in the upper storey and nature (based on the Newtonian scientific model) in the lower. Pearcey describes the lower storey as “the realm of publicly verifiable *facts*”

⁶⁴ “This happens without those who live in the modernized world encountering a single Enlightenment thinker!” (32)

⁶⁵ Wells (2005:25) feels that it is an ideology rather than a worldview, which he describes as a “worldview with an attitude!” He is accurate in describing an ideology as that which intends to control, becomes coercive and is thus very difficult to challenge. Certainly this accurately depicts modernity.

⁶⁶ This is explained in Pearcey (2005:102–107).

and the upper as “the realm of socially constructed *values*” (2005:106, her emphasis).

With the development of science (and Darwinism) and the naturalistic viewpoint, the upper storey became completely severed from the lower. Any “truth” or insight to be gained from the gospel could no longer have any influence on daily life. Life in Western society is lived in two separate spheres, the public and the private, with a different set of values operating in each (Wells 1993:74). Christian thought and influence is removed from public life. “It is axiomatic that secularism strips life of the divine, but it is important to see that it does so by relocating the divine in that part of life which is private” (Wells 1993:79).

The development of capitalism, within this process of secularization, birthed an “unbridled consumer desire” (Wells 2005:38), leading to a lifestyle of consumption.⁶⁷ We are certainly living in a time of rampant materialism.

3.2.2.6. Modernity: the disappearance of human nature

For Wells (2005:48), it is inevitable that the disappearance of God would lead to the disappearance of human nature. The idea of human nature as something that sets a person apart from animals had come under attack during the Enlightenment, and was now rejected as a way to understand the meaning of the person. Western individualism preferred an understanding of the uniqueness of each person. Wells gives wonderful insight⁶⁸ into three important shifts that have occurred since the late nineteenth century that lead to the loss of the concept of human nature:

- The replacement of virtue by values, where values actually become value-free, are no more than personal preferences and are not seen as normative;
- From a focus on character to one on personality;
- From speaking of human nature to the self.

“The moral axis in life has collapsed and has been replaced by the assumption that each person must be his or her own person, must pursue one’s own

⁶⁷ Wells (2005:42) shows that this is more than just the consumption of goods, but includes the consumption of services and now also of experiences.

⁶⁸ A full discussion is found in Wells, DF, 1998. *Losing our virtue: why the church must recover its moral vision*. Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company.

uniqueness, must realize oneself, must make of oneself what one can, and must buy whatever will bring her or him to these ends. The single most important signal that this is what has happened is our shift from talking about human nature to talking about the self. Our whole society is being reordered around the self understood as autonomous from others, from the past, and from a moral order.” (Wells 2005:52)

We thus see the rise of an “autonomous, rational self” that no longer stands under the authority of God or the church. This modern self is described by Guder (ed. 1998:25–30) as a “Modern Self” as

- Citizen with rights and freedoms, arising out of the formation of modern nation-states;
- Consumer, with spending power, sucked into a endless cycle of marketing, advertising and discovery of a host of new needs needing fulfilment;
- Constructed roles and identities, finding identity in their functions rather than their character;
- Product of technique, holding to myths that are created by the atmosphere of technology and change, namely that new and efficient is better than old, and that we can find all answers in science and technology.

3.2.2.7. Modernity: the omnicompetence of the human being

The Enlightenment idea of progress has flourished in modernity with the assumption that man has the ability, with reason, science and technology, to offer solutions to any problem. Of course this is again a removal of the divine from public life.

Salvation can come from within and thus, as Wells shows, one finds that the West trusts in the state and the political process for answers. In the same vein, a thriving self-help industry has developed.

3.2.3. The challenge to modernity

There is general consensus⁶⁹ that French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's dictum that postmodernism is best described as incredulity towards metanarratives sums up the rebellion against modernism.

While it would be incorrect to state that postmodernity replaced modernity,⁷⁰ a huge cultural shift has nevertheless taken place in Western society since it became clear that modernity could not deliver on its promises. Newbigin (1983:17) gives a very poignant, almost poetic description of the uncertainty of these times:

“Inevitably – writing in the year 1983 – I have implied that for us in this day these things are no longer self-evident. The expectations of the eighteenth century have not been realized. The heavenly city has not arrived, and we no longer expect it. Science has won victories beyond the dreams of the eighteenth century, but the world which results does not appear to us to be a more rational world than that of previous centuries. More and more people among the most powerful nations on earth feel themselves helpless in the grip of irrational forces. Irrespective of the divide between 'east' and 'west', there is profound scepticism about what governments can achieve. The modern techniques of communication and control give governments more and more apparent power, but this is met by more and more sophisticated forms of resistance by groups which demand their rights. There is consequently a spiralling escalation of violence – terrorism on one side and the use of torture on the other. Obscene cruelties which the eighteenth century philosophers relegated to the dark ages are now practised by 'civilized' governments. And among those who are not directly involved in terrorism or in torture, there is a profound sense of meaninglessness, of 'anomie', leading from the pathetic question of young people in the rich world: 'Who am I', to the mindless vandalism in the streets of our affluent cities. The Paris students, in the heady days of the 1968 revolution, had among their graffiti the slogan: 'We reject the alternatives – to die of starvation or to die of boredom.' Thousands of their successors roam through India in search of 'meaning' – and find both of these things from which they flee.”

⁶⁹ Wells (2005:79), Goheen (2001:19–20) and Bauckham (2003:87).

⁷⁰ Wells shows that there are important threads of continuity between modernity and postmodernity, most importantly that the self remains firmly in the centre (2005:97–68). He quotes David Harvey (1992, *The condition of postmodernity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 116): “... there is much more continuity than difference between the broad history of modernism and the movement of postmodernism”, and he therefore sees postmodernity as being a particular crisis within modernity. See also Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:108, 114).

It is important to hear his missional pathos in this description: this is more than ideas and concepts; this is life being lived by flesh and bone.⁷¹

Modernity was unable to answer or explain the reality of evil or the brokenness of life. The promise of progress did not materialize and many of the assumptions of modernity were therefore rejected. Goheen and Bartholomew (2008:104) list the evidence of the failure of modernity as:

- 1) poverty,
- 2) environmental degradation,
- 3) proliferation of weapons,
- 4) psychological problems, and
- 5) social and economic problems.

One of the results of the postmodern shift away from trust in reason and the confidence in science and technology to usher in a time of peace and prosperity is scepticism about the possibility of achieving any universal, objective knowledge (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:110). This opens the door for relativism and pluralism as well as the rejection of any absolutes.

Wells (2005:88–90) shows that the demise of belief in progress also resulted in the death of belief in purpose. This has resulted in a search for spirituality, despite the continued secularization of Western society. This is related to a “non-rational anthropology” which now characterizes postmodernity (Goheen 2001:23–24). Where modernity viewed people as autonomous and rational, there was an underappreciation of other aspects of humanity as expressed in creativity, emotion, imagination, body and socially. With the development of a non-rational view of humanity, there is not only a development of a new spirituality, but also a veneration of the body (seen as diversely as in health clubs and pornography), emotions and art.

⁷¹ Mt 9:36: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

The belief that there are no absolutes in life gives rise to a “decentered world” (Wells 2005:233), where there is a “loss of coherence to life” and a fragmentation, leaving people with a sense of disconnectedness and aloneness. In this search for meaning, a new contender for the position of the new metanarrative has arisen, namely consumerism (Goheen & Bartholomew 2008:115). Not only do possessions become a criterion for measuring people, but anything, including social relations, can be exchanged as commodities. Ubiquitous advertising creates needs that it promises to be satisfy, yet are never sated.

How is the church to live and respond within this culture? This chapter will close with general guidelines which can be discerned. The following chapters will flesh out those issues that are germane to the situation of the congregation and interact more specifically with what has been described here.

3.3. The South African church in Western culture

Postmodernity has challenged the church strongly, but also enabled the church to gain some distance from its own cultural entanglement with modernity and understand where it has been compromised. Newbigin (1983:23) saw in British (and in Western) Christianity the signs of an “advanced case of syncretism”. Much of the impetus of the missional movement is based on a critique of Western culture and the unhealthy influence it has had on evangelicalism.

In an online article, Goheen (1999, no pagination) looks at the cultural captivity of the Western church. A church is embedded within culture and, as such, has two responsibilities, namely to play a role in the development of that culture, but also to take an antithetical stand against that which is idolatrous and sinful. In a situation like Western Christendom, this antithetical stance is lost. Newbigin’s return to Britain in the 1980s was the catalyst that moved missiology to look at Western culture as an object of mission. At that stage, mission was conceived in terms of geographical expansion, and an interaction with Western culture was lacking.

“If the church in the west is to be liberated from her cultural captivity its life and attitude must be transformed in two ways. First, there must be an inner reformation. That is, the church’s self-understanding must be transformed from a non-missionary to a missionary self-image. In her own self-perception and self-identity she must see and understand herself as existing to communicate the

good news of the kingdom of God. She must recover the missionary nature of the church. Second—and very closely related—this missionary self-understanding will lead to a new understanding of her relationship to culture. Along with and closely aligned with an inner missionary consciousness there must be a recovery of an outer missionary encounter with her culture (Shenk 1995:87, 94). This involves a missiological analysis of culture that enables the church as a contrast society, called to witness to the gospel, to confront the idols of the reigning worldview. It is an analysis of the foundational assumptions of culture that will equip the church to resist the temptation to live in comfortable co-habitation with powers that contradict the reign of God.” (Goheen 1999)

When Constantine became a Christian and legalized the Christian religion in the fourth century, the church grew dramatically, heralding a new era of Christendom. “The early church moves from a marginal position to a dominant institution in society; from being socially, politically, and intellectually inferior to a position of power and superiority; from being economically weak and poor to a position of immense wealth; from being an oppressed minority to being the oppressive majority; from being an illegal religion to becoming the only religion of the state.” (Goheen 1999)

The implication of this was fourfold:

- 1) The church became an established institution, its agenda set more by society than the *missio Dei*, thereby losing its prophetic voice.
- 2) The church became a non-missionary church.
- 3) The church moved into a position of power and privilege.
- 4) The church took on cultural responsibility, in contrast with the early church.

Through the process of modernity and postmodernity, the church lost its centred position and was moved to the margins of society. Through privatization and secularization, the church again lost its ability to speak to Western culture. Having been pushed to the margins in postmodernity, the church has the opportunity to recover its identity and calling, or it could again lose its voice as it accommodates postmodernity in the name of relevance and newness.

With this short cultural analysis, the question is now: Where does one place the church in South Africa? Much of the literature describes the North American and

European situation and one would be amiss not to ask if this is true of the church in South Africa, and specifically the Dutch Reformed Church.

In concluding this description of Western culture, one must ask in which culture DRC Grasvoëlkop finds itself. The following brief remarks are pertinent:

- 1) Kraft (1999:385) differentiates between several levels of culture, including multinational (e.g. Western or African), national (e.g. Japanese, French) and subcultures (e.g. Afrikaners) that can be further differentiated (community, family and individual). The higher the level, the more diversity it includes.
- 2) White South Africa (both English and Afrikaans) has a strong European influence (including French, German, Dutch, English and Scottish) and there is an affinity to the Western world seen in the many young people who have left to work in the United Kingdom as well as the families that have chosen to emigrate to the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and Australia.
- 3) The North American church has had a huge influence on the South African church through influences like Bill Hybel's Willow Creek movement (and the Global Leadership Summit), Rick Warren and the Purpose Driven Life Movement, Bruce Wilkerson and Walk Thru the Bible, teaching like the prosperity gospel, the impact of emergent church leaders (Rob Bell; Brian McLaren) and the influence of Christian broadcasting (TV and internet).
- 4) It would be accurate to describe the DRC as part of Western culture and most definitely influenced by this culture and challenged by the changes taking place.
- 5) The Afrikaans community and the DRC were more isolated from unhealthy influences of Western culture due to the isolation and laager mentality that resulted from the opposition to apartheid. The DRC as a "volkskerk"⁷² had a stronger biblical influence on the Afrikaner worldview. It is probably true that before 1994, the church still held a privileged position in society. While the church in the rest of the Western world had experienced the end of

⁷² Literally a national or people's church. Membership of the church is a shared identity among people, the church influence is strong, and there is an affiliation to the church due to birth and culture.

Christendom⁷³ with the advent of modernity, this was not so in South Africa, and especially in the Afrikaans church. With a dominant theistic worldview, political power and social acceptability, the church played an important role in society, and there was no segregation between state and church.

- 6) This resulted in more pressure on the culture, after 1994, and a clear shift in worldview as the influence of both modernity and postmodernity came into play.
- 7) With the full exposure to secular humanism, there was a growing mistrust of the Dutch Reformed Church among Afrikaners (including the freedom not only to change churches but to become “kerklos”⁷⁴). After 1994, the Afrikaner and the DRC were thus challenged by change in two directions: firstly, the move to a fuller secular humanism in Western culture (away from the theistic worldview held in Afrikaner Calvinist culture), and secondly, the changes happening within Western culture.
- 8) It would be fitting to use the word “liminality” (Roxburgh 2005:20) to describe this situation of change and transition.⁷⁵

This completes the groundwork of the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation that has been undertaken in Part I. An understanding of culture, the shifts that have taken place in society and the factors influencing these movements will be vital for the next steps in this study. A look at the congregation through the lens of missional theology will follow and the insights of Part I will aid an understanding of “what is going on?” and will be essential for the task of discerning what a congregation’s identity and ministry should look like, and how it can be achieved. An understanding of missional theology will assist in evaluating the place of missions within this congregation and what changes are called for to move to

⁷³ See Keifert (2006:30–36).

⁷⁴ Literally “church loose”, a situation that was strongly frowned upon.

⁷⁵ The church in Western culture is at a point of liminality. Liminality is a condition of transition from one position or role in culture to another. For example, the movement from adolescence to adulthood is a point of liminality. At such times, one struggles with identity. The church has lost its dominant position and is now at the margins. As it struggles with its identity, the opportunity is there to recover a missionary self-consciousness. And perhaps it is just there — at the margins — that the Western church can learn again to become missionary. Maybe the postmodern condition offers the church the opportunity to recover the counter-cultural stance Bosch calls for, the redemptive tension of the early church — hopefully a stance that will take seriously both cultural responsibility and antithetical critique (Goheen 1999).

missional identity and ministry. The task of missions, as cross cultural proclamation, will also be examined.

Osmer's next three tasks will be undertaken in Part II. These three tasks will be tackled together in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Each of these chapters will pick up one of three key concepts from missional theology to discern the way forward towards God's preferred future. This will provide a key to interpret the current position of the congregation, as well as its preferred future, from a different missional angle. Keifert (2006) reminds us that: "We are here now" – confronted by a new missional era, while Goheen and Bartholomew (2008) remind us that we are "Living at the Crossroads". We are called to be church in this specific time and place.

These chapters will show why a singular mission-minded focus within the congregation would be deficient and will provide a clearer description of the way forward for the congregation in which a true missional identity can be expressed.

PART II

Looking through a missional lens: doing the interpretative, normative and pragmatic tasks

Having completed the empirical-descriptive task for the congregation in the previous two chapters, Osmer's next three tasks will now be undertaken. This will be done through a missional lens, using missional theology as a conversation partner.

These three tasks will be conducted concurrently in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Each chapter will interpret the current position of the congregation, as well as its preferred future, from a different missional angle supplied by missional theology.

This will guide the researcher to determine whether missional theology could provide the necessary path, momentum and goal to move the congregation forward, which a mission-minded focus on its own could not. The hypothesis is that missional theology will supply the key to an authentic understanding of what is deficient in belief and behaviour and will be valuable in defining the remedy needed.

The three angles are three key concepts in missional theology, namely the Trinity, the Kingdom of God and a life of discipleship. It does not seem contrived to describe these three concepts further in terms of faith, hope and love – the triad described in Chapter 1 that was so significant for a rediscovered sense of anticipation in the congregation:

- *Faith*: found in a renewed understanding of and trust in God as Trinity (Chapter 4);
- *Hope*: focused on the Kingdom of God, with a renewed sense of calling and security (Chapter 5);
- *Love*: found in an individual response of heartfelt obedience to God within a renewed understanding of community (Chapter 6).

These three chapters will follow a similar structure:

- 1) A brief explanation of the missional content of each concept and an explanation of its importance will serve as the *normative task*: “What ought to be going on?”

Osmer seems to underplay the role of Scripture when he describes the task in terms of theological interpretation, good practice and ethical reflection (2008:139,153,169). Missional theology definitely supplies the “good practice” needed for this task. It would be wise to consider briefly different Scriptures that have played a role renewing the vision of the congregation over the last several years (mainly from Luke and Ephesians).

A part of this normative task will be to describe unbiblical or unwise expressions of missional, which could be a danger to the true missional character of the congregation if followed. When the researcher started this study, the emergent church had a very strong following and voice as a vibrant new postmodern movement. Stetzer (2008) noted the diversity within this movement as well as the different reactions to it, ranging from very welcoming to a strong rejection. He suggested a helpful differentiation of the movement and suggested a distinction between what he named: “the Relevants, Reconstructionists, and Revisionists” (2008:81).

The “Revisionists” strive for a re-visioning of both methodology and theology in the Western church (Stetzer 2008:83). Their theological critique moves them into positions that are similar to those of liberal Protestantism. While they voiced a very clear and helpful critique of the modern Western church, some of their prescriptions were reactionary and moved too far from what they are reacting to. The negative response to the “Revisionists” meant that many conservative evangelicals did not hear the critique this movement brought to the cultural accommodation within evangelicalism. Today it seems that the strong voice and the fervent following that the emergent movement enjoyed has quieted considerably.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Today the question on blog discussions seems to be: Is this movement dead? For some different perspectives on this question, see <http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2013/01/what-happened-to-the-emerging-church/>; <http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com/tallskinnykiwi/2009/12/emerging-church-movement-1989---2009.html>; <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/tonyjones/2013/04/03/the-ongoing->

Wittmer (2008:21) describes this as a pendulum swing, and this swing happens regularly.⁷⁷ It is wise to give an ear to the critique, but at the same time not to drift into the opposing error. It becomes easy to drift from one unbiblical accommodation to modernity into an opposite and equally unbiblical accommodation to postmodernity.

An important part of this study will be to identify those unbiblical over-corrections to which the congregation could succumb as it strives to move into a position of greater biblical faithfulness. The researcher will attempt to identify these “dangerous drifts” in each of the chapters of Part II.

- 2) The *interpretive task*: “What is it going on?” will discern what factors could be playing a role under the surface of congregational life that should be confronted, changed, rejected or repented of, for the congregation to be able to move forward. Osmer (2008:84) says that this task requires not only wisdom but wise judgement. These chapters will reflect insights into the congregation gained through personal reflection, preaching and deliberation by the church leadership, together with insights from missional thinking.
- 3) The final question: “How might we respond?” will be undertaken in the *pragmatic task*. Osmer (2008:175ff) expresses this in terms of leadership. In these chapters the focus will be more on differentiating beacons that could direct the congregation in ways to move out of “stuckness” to what has been described as “God’s preferred future”.

Two pertinent aspects of looking at how the congregation should move forward need to be kept in mind:

- An essential part of this task is to move beyond mere missional clichés which are very much in vogue in church culture today. It is unfortunately possible for congregations and leaders to apply missional jargon to congregational life (for example: being missional, discerning God’s will,

[witness-of-the-emerging-church/](#);

http://www.worldmag.com/2010/04/farewell_emerging_church_1989_2010. Viewed on 13/01/2014.

⁷⁷ This pendulum swing is seen in Brian McLaren’s *A New Kind of Christianity*, as reviewed by Scot McKnight: “Brian McLaren’s ‘A New Kind of Christianity’”, *Christianity Today* 26 February 2010, viewed on 20/02/2014, from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/march/3.59.html>. Viewed on 20/02/2014.

missio Dei, seeing what God is up to and joining Him, joining the dance of the Trinity, etc.) without it bringing any new commitment to bear. This just rearranges the religious furniture to look fresh. It is important to discover a way forward that is authentic, contextual and doable. Change is needed and is important but will only happen if there are real foundational changes.

- This study will interact with the emergent premises that “everything must change” and we need a new “kind of Christian/Christianity”⁷⁸ and hopes to demonstrate a renewed appreciation of some old congregational furniture that it might have been deemed necessary to discard. This should not be viewed as a resistance to change or reluctance to critique issues. It may just be that certain church practices, while they might not be in vogue, remain an important part of being missional.

There will be some overlap between these three chapters as the three concepts necessarily play into each other. They cannot always be sharply delineated as this interplay is unavoidable.

⁷⁸ Titles of books by emerging church leader Brian McLaren. The researcher will not interact with these books directly.

CHAPTER 4

First Missional Key: Faith and the Triune God

4.1. Introduction

“For her seventh-grade science project, our youngest daughter, Emily, decided to measure bacteria levels along the bank of a local stream. I was doing the project with her, and at our first stop, we waded into the creek, got a water sample, and carefully tested it. We were both nervous about following the precise steps of our little bacteria-testing kit, so before we started we prayed.

“Our family’s record with science projects was not stellar. The previous year Emily barely got a passing grade for her experiment on training fish to eat in response to a flashlight. (There was a reason that Pavlov used dogs and not fish). The year before that, Jill, thinking it was a bag of trash, took our son Andrew’s experiment to the thrift store the day before it was due. She spent the rest of the day going through the thrift-store dumpsters in a vain attempt to retrieve it. We definitely needed to pray.

“After we finished our first test, Emily took out her logbook to record each step. She asked me what we’d done first, and I told her we’d prayed.

“She said, ‘I can’t write that.’

“‘Why not? We prayed.’

“‘That’s not how it works, Dad. They don’t want us to say that.’

“Emily had gone to Christian schools her whole life, starting with nursery school. She regularly attended church and Sunday school and went to a Christian camp in summer. All her friends were Christian, along with her brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. Frankly she lived in a Christian ghetto. Yet this mysterious ‘they’ trumped this massive Christian influence in her life.

“Western culture (North America and Europe), along with public cultures created by the West through communism (such as Russia and China), is the most publicly atheistic culture that has ever existed. Among the thousands of cultures in the history of humanity, our culture is the only one not to have a regular public acknowledgement of a spiritual world.” (Miller 2009:103)

This chapter is the first step in an understanding of missional theology. The three key concepts of missional theology will be developed in the following chapters of Part II. These insights will provide a deeper understanding into the situation that has been

described in Part I, which undertook the first of Osmer's tasks. They will provide guidance for the way forward as they help define the congregation's identity and calling. In this chapter, the researcher will identify the effects of secularism in the current situation of the congregation. He will discuss the way in which missional theology addresses this situation through the insights of *missio Dei* and "God as Trinity".

The chapter will endeavour to map out an awareness of God as active in history with a specific missional vision, the intention of God's mission, and if there is place for a biblical metanarrative in understanding what God is up to. In dialogue with these concepts, it is believed that the congregation can be strengthened in its *faith* and therefore more readily discern the direction it needs to follow towards God's preferred future.

4.2. Reductionism and secularization

4.2.1. Reductionism

Guder (2000:97) calls for the continual conversion of the church as it interacts with its culture. He defines the mission mandate of the church in terms of witness which includes proclamation but should be seen in a wider sense to include community and service. The message that the church must convey through its witness needs to be "translated" to each different culture, which generally leads to a "reduction" of the message. This is unavoidable, but the negative impact thereof is overcome by the work of God's Spirit and through the power of God's own self-disclosure through His Word.

By God's design, his message is thus "enculturated". This is not without challenge for the church, whose task it is to culturally translate the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. The church can:

- Struggle to grasp how fully inclusive the love of God is (2000:81);
- Struggle to understand its task as more than translation of language; it is called to embody and display the life-changing message through discipleship as a Spirit-empowered response to Christ's lordship (2000:82–85);

- Attempt to bring the gospel under control of the culture by fitting the person and work of Christ into patterns of accepted religious practice (2000:85, 93);
- Miss how cultures evolve and do not respond to the challenge of translating the message anew to the changed attitudes, values and expectations of the culture (2000:93);
- Become enmeshed due to compromises with its own environment or its own sinfulness (2000:97–98).

The need for conversion is especially true for the church in modernity, when the unavoidable reduction becomes what Guder calls “reductionism” (2000:100).

“The danger rests in our desire to ‘control God’ which leads us to regard our unavoidable reductions of the gospel as validated absolutes. We are constantly tempted to assert our way of understanding the Christian faith is a final version of Christian truth. We tend to enshrine one cultural articulation of the gospel as normative statements for all cultures. This may happen when we regard one creed or tradition as canonical, making its authority co-equal with Scripture. It may happen when we make a particular institution the unquestioned agency of God’s work and even equate it with God’s kingdom. This may happen when we insist that a certain spiritual experience or practice of piety be a requirement for authentic Christian existence. However it happens, we cut, shape, and fit the gospel into a cultural setting to serve all kinds of alien purposes. When such reductions, which inevitably occur, are made absolute and then defined as normative truth, then we confront the problem I call ‘reductionism’. Reductionism is at work when we as human witnesses are no longer aware of our own reductions of the gospel.” (2000:100–101, his emphasis)

There are a myriad ways the church through the centuries has been guilty of this reductionism in its view of salvation, the Kingdom of God and its missional calling. These will be analyzed in this and the following chapters.

4.2.2. Secularization

Guder (ed. 1998:1) states that Christianity in North America has moved away from a position of dominance and, together with a loss of numbers, has experienced a loss of power and influence as religiosity reflects the culture by becoming more pluralistic, individualistic and private. This resulting marginalization of the church cannot be

solved by a simple methodological approach as the problem is deeply spiritual and theological.

This marginalization is the result of a reductionistic influence within the church as well as the church's too ready acceptance of a home within the private sphere of Western culture after the public door to religion closed.

Guder (2000:114) describes the reductionism that the church was guilty of as having roots in an unhealthy focus on individual salvation, being no more than the "management of each soul's salvation on earth in preparation for heaven". The process of the Enlightenment contributed further to the reduction of the gospel. Man's problem was viewed as ignorance rather than sin, and the solution to the problem was therefore knowledge rather than salvation. The loss of a Christian eschatology and the "evangelical conviction that history and life were defined by God's purposes" led to a situation where, after a progressive disestablishment of religion, Christianity had become privatized.

"Now, at the end of the twentieth century, the church that is to proclaim the gospel appears to have become unsure of itself and incapable of persuasive witness. There are many reasons that so many Christians and Christian groups have become sceptical about evangelism, but high among them is the inability to formulate a gospel that can break through the individualization and privatization of religion. In the conversations of polite and cultivated society, religion is avoided or treated with great caution. The usual parlance is to speak of 'values', which may or may not have religious grounds, and to distinguish between them and 'facts'. Only 'facts' are acceptable themes in public discourse. The gospel of God's mission in Jesus Christ, forming a missional community as its witness, moving out to the ends of the earth to demonstrate the truth of the inbreaking kingdom, has been reduced to a pallid set of values which may not be publicly linked with the name of Christ without offending many. The reductionism is complete." (Guder 2000:117–118)

The question is: To what degree is this true of the church in South Africa, and specifically the Dutch Reformed Church? Speaking in general terms, the church in Afrikaner culture held a very dominant position. It was never marginalized nor did it experience the separation of state and church (see ed. Guder 1998:50) anywhere close to the extent that the North American church did. Even today it is not unusual to find Scripture reading and prayer as part of a school assembly, staff meeting or other "secular" gathering or meeting (more so in rural areas, though not exclusively).

The researcher would suggest, though, that this public role that the church plays in Afrikaner culture does, to some extent, fall into a fact/value or spiritual/secular divide.

Afrikanerdom has a very strong religious history and therefore many religious practices are often acceptable cultural exercises. As a youth who grew up in an Afrikaans home and church but attended an English school, I soon realized that, even though the Afrikaans boys were as ungodly as any English lad, they at least ended the day on their knees with prayer and a Scripture reading.

Religion may therefore be more visible in an Afrikaans community, but it often lacked the transforming power that comes with the gospel message.

Over the last years, secularization and the marginalization of the church has grown within South Africa. The divide is therefore not only placed upon the church, but becomes visible within the church. It was usual for young people to grow up with a strong practical secular/spiritual divide.⁷⁹ Members would therefore lead a very secularized life, with the spiritual being strongly compartmentalized. As the church's voice in South Africa became muted and the church was humbled through its apartheid history, it was not only society that thought the church had become irrelevant, without a meaningful message; this seemed to reflect the view of some members of the church as well.

The dominant calling of churches in this situation (Grasvoëlkop and other DR Churches) becomes a search for maintenance, for survival, for a programme that will make the difference. The description of Guder (ed. 1998:6) is accurate for our situation: "Even when the legal structures of Christendom have been removed, the legacy continues as a pattern of powerful traditions, attitudes and social structures that we describe as 'functional Christendom.'"

A shift is needed, where we begin to understand that the church is not the purpose or goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness (ed. Guder 1998:5); where mission is not just a part of the programme of the church, but the shift from church with mission to a missional church takes place (Guder 2000:6); where

⁷⁹ Among youth, this was colloquially known as "geestelik" and "beestelik". Camps would have geestelike/beestelike components. "Geestelik" was usually staid, traditional and lacked joy.

structures and traditions diminish in importance and power, and congregations see their own context as their mission (Guder 2000:7).

4.3. Trinity and the *missio Dei*

4.3.1. Ephesians and a shift in vision

Christians living in a secularized context view God as distant, passive and uninvolved. For many the Christian life becomes a quest to discover certain steps or laws that, when followed, results in spiritual blessing. The hope is that God will protect and bless with material blessings — to keep one safe into old age, and keep His protecting arm around one's children.

The huge number of DRC members who were confirmed yet show almost no church involvement demonstrates that the church is not relevant to their lives. Faith is not only privatized; it is also lived out to one's own standards.

What is needed is a renewed vision of God, a vision that inspires and calls people to a life that breaks out of a self-centred existence into a life of proclamation, community and service. Without a doubt a clear vision of God can bring this about, but this vision is not easily found.

The researcher was captured by this vision of God while preaching through Ephesians. This letter, like many of Paul's other letters, is divided into two main parts. Chapters 1 to 3 are exposition (doctrinal teaching, filled with indicatives), while chapters 4 to 6 are exhortation (application for living, filled with imperatives). It was a sobering but insightful experience to take almost a year to preach through the first three chapters. In these chapters, there is one single command: Eph 2:11 — a call to remember. It is unlikely that a more passive command could be found. Yet, despite the lack of imperatives, these chapters are full of action as they portray God's activity.

Paul sketches an image of God as both powerful and purposeful. God is at work planning, blessing, reconciling, gathering, fulfilling, redeeming and transforming. From the beginning, one can see that there is a merging of divine action with human receptivity. Yet God alone is at work. Ephesians enables a congregation to take a

missional interest in its own context, an interest born of faith and expressed in loving witness, service and interaction.

Ephesians 1 to 3 helped the congregation to see:

- God is a Trinity and at work as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1:3–14);
- We are called to faithful dependence on this Triune God (the prayers in Eph 1:16–23; 3:14–21);
- The kingly authority expressed in Christ (1:10,20–23);
- Salvation through grace (the “but” in 2:4 might be one of the most precious words in the Bible);
- The call to a new life in community (2:11–22; 3:10–21).

This vision of God as Trinity at work does not leave us passive or uninvolved. The vision of God as neither absent nor inactive is a call to faith; to respond with trust and willingness to serve in love.

4.3.2. *Missio Dei*

Bosch (1993:389) states that there has been a subtle but decisive shift towards understanding mission as God’s mission.⁸⁰ Karl Barth and later Karl Hartenstein were some of the first theologians to express missions as an activity of God. Viewing mission as being derived from the very nature of God placed the concept in the context of the Trinity. Whereas mission had previously been conceptualized in terms of ecclesiology or soteriology, this shift redefined missions as having its source⁸¹ in God and therefore being much more than just a church activity.

⁸⁰ This has become more dramatic in the last decades as the “rediscovery” of the Trinity reignited an awareness of mission. See *Trinity and mission – a review of sources*, <http://www.faith2share.net/Resources/Documents/tabid/79/language/en-GB/Default.aspx?EntryId=1428>. Viewed on 14/01/2014.

⁸¹ “Die sending vind sy oorsprong nie in die amptelike kerk nie en ook nie in besondere groepies binne die kerk nie. Dit begin by God self. God is ’n sendende God, ’n God wat grense na die wêreld oorsteek” (Bosch 1979:239).

Guder (ed. 1998:5) understands that this leads to important shifts in our ecclesiology. The church is not “the purpose or goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness”.

“The classic doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include another ‘movement’: Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”
(Bosch 1993:390)

This shift, grounding mission beyond the church, frees the church from a burden it was never meant to carry. It enables one to see weaknesses and brokenness within the church. This is visible where the church accommodated the gospel to its culture and made its own “institutional extension and survival a priority” (ed. Gruder 1998:5). It also awakens a faith in the power, purposes and promises of God to act. As instrument, the church is free to obey and look to God in faith to supply what is needed for the task.

There are those that reject the term *missio Dei* for different reasons. Engelsviken (487) shows how the Dutch missiologist, JC Hoekendijk, was influential in changing the understanding of *missio Dei* during the 1960s. His attack on church-centred missions held sway in certain ecumenical movements and mission was seen as a movement of God beyond and even without the church, focused on the world (see also Bosch 1993:392).

There is a strong connection between the *missio Dei* and the Kingdom of God which will be explored in the next chapter. This means that the way the Kingdom of God is understood will influence how *missio Dei* is seen. The strong use of the term in liberal theology with the ecumenical emphasis away from a spiritual and eschatological understanding of the Kingdom of God is the reason that Wells⁸²

⁸² Wells (1999/2000:201): “Among missiologists, this kind of ecumenical and interreligious thinking has been captured in the notion of *missio Dei*. The component ideas for this new understanding of missions have come from many different sources: from Karl Barth came universalism; from Fredrick Gogarten came the thought that secularization is the way the gospel liberates people today; from Alfred North Whitehead and others came the belief that the being of God is merged in the stuff of creation and together, in dependence on one another, they are in process and evolution; from the WCC itself came the social gospel and the endorsement of other religions. According to this new concept of mission, the trinitarian God is involved as creator, redeemer, and renewer throughout the process of human history. He does not transcend history as a personal, supernatural being. Instead, he is to be identified prophetically as the hidden force in human history that unceasingly drives it toward its final destination: the kingdom of God. Thus all human movements that promote the goal of a new humanity in a world community, including renascent non-Christian religions and theistic

rejects it as unusable for Evangelicals. Does this mean that the term *missio Dei* is unusable for us? Do we either have to discard it or reinterpret it to our own meaning?⁸³

Certainly today it is important to test the content of any phrase, especially one as amorphous as *missio Dei*.

Engelsviken (482) is helpful in providing the parameters we need:

“It seems that it was Karl Hartenstein who, in his report from Willingen, coined the phrase when he spoke of mission as ‘participation in the sending of the Son, in the *missio Dei*, with an inclusive aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole redeemed creation’.⁵ To quote Hartenstein more fully, ‘Mission is not just the conversion of the individual, nor just obedience to the word of the Lord, nor just the obligation to gather the church. It is the taking part in the sending of the Son, the *missio Dei*, with the holistic aim of establishing Christ’s rule over all redeemed creation’.

“In my estimation, however, the emphasis in Willingen on a trinitarian basis of mission is even more important than the somewhat ambiguous phrase *missio Dei*. It is also this that is most clearly brought out in the report itself when it says, ‘The missionary movement of which we are part has its source in the triune God Himself. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father, in that perfect love which is the very nature of God’. It is this trinitarian basis of mission that should form the foundation of any understanding of *missio Dei*. In addition, we may note that Hartenstein only negates the ‘onlys’ and therefore does not deny that mission also is conversion of the individual, obedience to a divine word, and an obligation to gather the church. The emphasis, however, lies on the trinitarian foundation and the universal redemptive purpose of mission.”

As a term closely linked to the Trinity and emphasizing the nature and work of God as the foundation of mission, and one’s calling to be a part of His work, it can serve well as a concept that reminds one of one’s secondary position in one’s primary

ideologies, are to be seen as instruments in the *Missio Dei*. As such the church must treat them as allies in a common mission, for they, too, serve the cosmic Christ, regardless of whether they mention his name.” Stezer discusses “Why are some Evangelicals nervous about the *missio Dei*?” at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2007/august/monday-is-for-missiology-meanings-of-missional-part-2.html>. Viewed on 14/01/2014. See also Newbigin (1995:18) and CJH Wright (2006:63).

⁸³ See “Rethinking *missio Dei*: a conversation with postmodern and African theologies”, *Verbum et Ecclesia* JRG 29(3) 2008, 791 – 818.

calling. This focus on God fuels one's faith and moves one to involvement in his mission.

Bosch (1979:231–238) guides one to view God's involvement in world history as mission, while avoiding the extreme evangelical and ecumenical poles. Whereas evangelical circles view salvation history as being totally separate from world history, under ecumenism, salvation history becomes completely profane. In this view, God's activity is fully taken up within the secular world.

Bosch does not see salvation history as being isolated from world history. Religion, rather than being a private matter, plays out in every sphere of life. God's activity in the world is only visible through the eyes of faith (1979:232), but “through the death and resurrection of Christ and in Pentecost the faithful discern the *Dei poividentia* in the midst of the *hominum confusio*.” While he warns believers not to seek God's hand in the world through a one-dimensional interpretation of history, one must not hold onto a deistic view of a withdrawn God either.

Peterson (2005:138) shows how the Hebrew mindset is reflected in Scripture where there is no view of secular history but rather God penetrates all that happens in the world.

“God was alive, always and everywhere working his will, challenging people with his call, evoking faith and obedience, calling them into a worshiping community, showing his love and compassion, and working out judgements on sin. And none of this ‘in general’ or ‘at large’ but at particular times, in specific places, with named persons: history.” (2005:139)

Peterson shows how Scripture refuses to whitewash any detail of history; all the sin, evil and brokenness of the world is reflected in the biblical narrative. In the midst of this, God is working; Christ comes into this as Saviour. History reflects the need for a saviour and “the death of Jesus confirms and validates our experience that there is, in fact, something terribly wrong ...” (2005:142)

Flett's (2010) recent work on the *missio Dei* looks at the role Barth played in the development of this term. In describing *missio Dei* as a “Rorschach test” he expresses some of the confusion surrounding this term, and finds the reason to be a flawed Trinitarian base (2010:Kindle location 814). Incorrectly attributing Barth as providing the Trinitarian grounding of this term resulted in a deficient development of

the true Trinitarian foundation of the *missio Dei*. Flett then reformulates the Trinitarian ground of mission through the works of Barth (2010:Kindle location 1660). This is very helpful as he shows that there is a dichotomy between church and mission is the result of a theology that views “God’s movement into the world as a second step alongside his eternal being. In other words *missio Dei* theology illustrates well that a cleavage of church from mission derives from a cleavage within God’s own life” (2010:Kindle location 131).

Even though *missio Dei* had a “Trinitarian façade,” it developed at an “express distance from christology” (2010:Kindle location 2021) and “turned to the doctrine of creation, as the universal work of the Father, and to the Spirit’s presence in history and culture” (2010:Kindle location 2027). The result is that: “Despite its Trinitarian language, *missio Dei* never escapes an anthropological grounding for missions. This is the dominant cause of its contemporary problems” (2010:Kindle location 828).

Flett describes *missio Dei* theology as a blend of three elements, the Trinity, an orientation to the Kingdom of God (2010:Kindle location 583) and the affirmation that the church is missionary by its very nature (2010:Kindle location 684). The discussion of the Trinity will follow in this chapter, the Kingdom will be discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will look at the missionary nature of church life.

4.3.3. Trinity

Believers, through their union with Christ, are brought into participation in this Trinitarian life. They are thus taken up into the mission of God who, as the “fountain of sending love” is the deepest source of mission (Bosch 1993:392).

Newbigin (1995:27) accurately notes that, when the ordinary Christian thinks of “God”, they hardly do it in Trinitarian terms. He shows how, from the very beginning of any missionary proclamation, portrayal of Christ calls for a Trinitarian explanation (1963:33, 35), as does the claim to the uniqueness and finality of Christ (1963:31). The Trinity gives a comprehensive understanding of the mission of God, the role of the church, and of who Christ is of whom the Christian witnesses.

In *The Open Secret*, Newbigin (1995) looks at Christian mission in three ways: as proclaiming the Kingdom of God, as sharing the life of the Son and as bearing

witness of the Spirit. He then expounds on these concepts, focusing on the role of the Father (Chapter 4), the Son (Chapter 5) and the Holy Spirit (Chapter 6). The researcher will give a brief summary here of his chapter on the Father, and return to his chapter on the Son under the discussion of the Kingdom of God. His chapter on the Spirit will be discussed under Discipleship.

Mission is a proclamation of the reign of God. The world is not just the arena of human history; it is the framework of God's history. The Bible is, in essence, a history of the cosmos that displays

“... the history of the nations and the history of nature within the large framework of God's history – the carrying forward to its completion of the gracious purpose that has its source in the love of the Father for the Son in the unity of the Spirit. The first announcement of the good news that the reign of God is at hand can be understood only in the context of this biblical sketch of a universal history. The reign of God is his reign over all things.” (1995:31)

Newbigin describes unique elements in this reign of God:

- Even though this reign is cosmic and universal, the Bible shows that it proceeds through a progress of “narrowing” (election).
- Individuals are chosen, but this call is to responsibility, more than for privilege, and they are not just to be beneficiaries, but bearers.
- Blessing is promised to all nations and the vision of the Old Testament is to the consummation of a “restored humanity living in peace and happiness with a renewed creation” (1995:34). In Jesus we see that the process of selection has been narrowed to one “who bears the whole purpose of cosmic salvation in his own person and is hailed as the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased”.
- A further paradox to this reign is that it is achieved through weakness, suffering and the cross.
- The resurrection is a “manifestation of victory”, but is manifested only to some who are chosen. These are called to proclaim this good news of God's reign to all nations.

- This message is not one of private deliverance, but of God's rule, the hidden reality by which all history can be understood.
- This rule has the character of paradox and mystery.⁸⁴ There is a call to suffer and a warning of danger and opposition.

“God's reign is indeed at hand. God is indeed active in history. But his action is hidden within what seems to be its opposite – suffering and tribulation for his people. The secret has been entrusted to those whom God chose. They are to be witnesses of it to all the nations.

“*By faith* they know that the reign of God has conquered the powers of evil. Their calling is to proclaim that fact to all the nations.

“*Mission, seen from this angle, is faith in action.* It is the acting out by proclamation and by endurance through all events of history, of the faith that the kingdom of God has drawn near. It is the acting out of the central prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to use ‘Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven’”. (Newbigin 1995:39, my emphases)

4.3.4. Christocentrism

The growing awareness of the central place of the Trinity in mission can raise the question of the place of Christocentrism in mission. The awareness of the paramount place of the Trinity developed in reaction to a church-focused and church-based missional theory, which was predominantly Christocentric. Does the move to a Trinitarian focus mean that a Christocentric emphasis must be discarded?

Bosch (1979:240–241) reasons that this should not be the case. Through Karl Barth, not just a Trinitarian, but also a specific Christocentric foundation for missions was found. The incarnation, cross and resurrection mean that mission has a clear historical context. It is through the cross that the mission of God is placed in history

⁸⁴ Newbigin (1995:37–38) warns that while the slogan: “God is at work in the world” is both popular and true, “what can and must be disputed is that the apparently successful movements and forces are the work of God Unfortunately the history of Christian attempts to discern the signs of the times makes discouraging reading. At many times and places Christians have been sure that the line of God's action was clearly discernable in the growth and influence of the church, in movements of social and political change. These judgments have often been the occasion of shame and embarrassment for Christians of the next generation.” This brings into question one's ability to do what is often suggested by another popular slogan: “Seek where God is at work and join Him”. As His work is often in suffering and rejection or in the form of a mustard seed, can one be trusted to recognize where He is at work? Might it not be better to seek a simple and trusting obedience to His Word? Of course this is not to dismiss the need for discernment, but to caution against a simplistic and triumphalistic reduction of what one is clearly commanded to do.

and speculative interpretations about the grounds of missions are removed. The cross is a divine act of both salvation and judgement for the world. It is through this cross that the church is sent to the world. When a Trinitarian heart is given to missions, it has a strong Christological concentration. Christology is the movement (mission) of God into the world as his “laaste en definitiewe bemoeyenis”. Jesus is both the foundation and the model of mission.

Newbigin builds on a strong Christology. Christ plays a key role in his understanding of biblical authority (Goheen 2000:126). The Bible story cannot be understood without Christ, as Christ cannot be understood without the story. Goheen (2000:115) traces the development of Newbigin’s understanding of mission. In his earlier thinking (before 1959), his Christocentric emphasis neglected the work of the Father and the Spirit, but his later development of a Trinitarian context did not mean a weakening of his Christocentric focus.

Against a more Christocentric view is a “Cosmocentric-Trinitarian view” that opens the way to acknowledge the providential work of the Father through the Spirit in culture and world history apart from Christ and the church (Goheen 2000:117). This Cosmocentric-Trinitarian view can be viewed as a pendulum swing away from an earlier emphasis on Christocentric church-based missions. As such, it swings too far from the more biblical balance of a Christocentric-Trinitarian view.

Ortland (2009:318) concludes

“... that the NT teaches a kind of Christ-centeredness that is not only compatible with orthodox Trinitarianism but necessitated by it, since we come to know of the Trinity only through Christ and, reciprocally, because the Trinity itself is Christ-centred. We comprehend the Triune God through the lens of Christ (adequately, not exhaustively) and Christ through the lens of the triune God. And Owen has reminded us that it is in Christ’s work, orchestrated by the Father and effectually applied by the Spirit, that the great hope of the Christian faith—fully and freely accomplished redemption—lies.”

Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence in the original Greek. It is a doxology that builds to a climax in 1:10 where God’s “saving purposes, planned from eternity, had as their final goal the uniting of all things in heaven and earth in Christ...” (O’Brian 1999:108)

“The content of the mystery, which is now specified as the high point of the eulogy, is impressively formulated in the explanatory infinitive clause of v.10b: it is ‘to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth’. The increasing consensus among modern scholars is that the unusual verb used here derives from a word meaning the ‘main point’, ‘sum’, or ‘summary’(cf Acts 22:28; Heb 8:1) rather than ‘head’ and that its basic meaning is “to bring something to a main point’ or ‘to sum up’. In connection with Christ’s eschatological relationship to a multitude of entities (including personal beings), the text suggests that God’s “summing up’ of these entities is his act of ‘bringing all things together in (and under) Christ, i.e. his unifying of them in some way in Christ’. (O’Brian 1999:111)

Now in vv. 9 and 10 the stress is placed on the one in whom God’s overarching purposes for the whole of created order are included. The emphasis is now on a universe that is centred and reunited in Christ. The mystery that God has graciously made known refers to the summing up and bringing together of the fragmented and alienated elements of the universe (‘all things’) in Christ as the focal point.” (O’Brian 1999:112)

4.3.5. Pluralism as a dangerous drift

With a very broad definition of *missio Dei*, coupled with a very earthly depiction of the Kingdom of God, it is easy to drift into a pluralistic outlook on the value of world religions and God’s mission. A Christocentric-Trinitarian view maintains the uniqueness and finality of Christ as God’s way of salvation. It is not just the Trinitarian nature of God that differentiates the Christian faith from other religions, but specifically Jesus Christ as God Incarnate.

At the last DRC East Cape Synod (2012), Islam was identified as a challenge to the church in South Africa, which resulted in a call to renew their local missional engagement with Islam.

In an attempt to find common ground with Muslims, it is not unusual for theologians and church leaders to identify Allah with the Christian God.⁸⁵ Whereas Islam rejects both the Trinity and the Deity of Christ, this attempt to find common ground easily becomes a surrender of the central doctrines of Christianity.

The unitary God of Islam is remote and unknowable (Chester 2005:178). Letham (2004:432, 442–446) shows how the Trinitarian form of God as Unity in Diversity

⁸⁵ This is found in Miroslav Volf. *Allah: a Christian response*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011. See the excellent response to this by Mark Durie, <http://markdurie.blogspot.com/2011/09/do-we-worship-same-god-review-by-mark.html>. Viewed on 14/01/2014.

and Diversity in Unity is radically different to the image of God that is formed through Islam's unity without diversity.

While the church has historically gained little ground against Islam and persecution of believers under Islam is growing,⁸⁶ it might seem that this search for common ground is a wise move towards peace. Is the Christian calling not rather to be witnesses and lovingly to reflect the truth to others, especially those of other religions?

"Its doctrine of God is the major weakness of Islam. It is the root of all other problems. It is here that the Christian apologete and evangelist can probe, with sensitivity and wisdom. While the Trinity is one of the major stumbling blocks of Muslims turning to Christ, it must be presented with intelligence and skill.

"Only a God who is triune can be personal. Only the Holy Trinity can be love. Human love cannot possibly reflect the nature of God unless God is a Trinity of persons in union and communion. A solitary monad cannot love and, since it cannot love, neither can it be a person. And if God is not personal, neither can we be — and if we are not persons, we cannot love. This marks a vast, immeasurable divide between those cultures that follow a monotheistic, unitary deity and those that are permeated by the Christian teaching on the Trinity. Trinitarian theology asserts that love is ultimate because God is love, because he is three persons in undivided loving communion. By contrast, Islam asserts that Allah is powerful and that his will is ultimate, before which submission (*Islam*) is required." (Letham 2004:446)

4.4. What is the aim of God's mission?

4.4.1. Towards a biblical metanarrative

Letham (2004:446-457) follows his discussion on Islam in relation to the Trinity with a look at postmodernity in relation to the Trinity. As opposed to Islam, postmodernism allows diversity, but not unity. An important description of postmodern life is "instability, diversity and fragmentation" (2004:451; Chester 2005:182). A world that is arbitrary, without absolutes, raises the need in people to search for meaning. This search takes many forms as entertainment, possessions or a myriad of hobbies are pursued to find meaning.

⁸⁶ See <http://www.thenewamerican.com/culture/faith-and-morals/item/17417-christian-martyrdom-doubled-in-2013-persecution-growing>. Viewed on 14/01/2014.

Wells (2005:125–176) describes how this is expressed through a new spiritual yearning and a rediscovery of an ancient spirituality that has become a very popular movement in Western culture, where the term “spirituality” has replaced religion as the demonstration of this new spiritual quest. He shows how this new spirituality is similar to early Gnosticism in that both arose in contexts that were experienced as inhospitable, they share a comparable understanding of the self and are a strong expression of individualism (2005:145). The challenge that this poses to the church will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Could the biblical narrative provide an answer to the search for meaning to life in a postmodern world? Could it even be accepted as a remedy when it invites those who reject metanarratives into its very own metanarrative? Bauckham (2003:89) ponders if the biblical narrative can be distinguished from the modernistic idea of progress and certainty leading to totalization and if it too must be rejected for a “radical pluralism which can tolerate only local narratives with no pretensions to wider relevance and renounce altogether the desire for meaning that requires some kind of sketch of the meaning of the whole if we are to live meaningful stories of our own” (2003:90).

The biblical story, while a metanarrative, is very different to a modern metanarrative which views the positive outcome of history as a human achievement. For Bauckham (2003:91–93), the biblical story is dissimilar:

- It is not a story of human progress, but of the purpose of God.
- There is human freedom to obey or resist God; success flows from God, from his initiative and from his guidance.
- In many ways, God’s purpose is hidden and inscrutable and works concurrently to human action (and human failings).
- One is not given any mapped-out paths or predetermined patterns. One often feels lost and uncertain, left with nothing but promises of God’s control.
- There is a profusion of untidiness in narrative materials. At times they seem fragmented, leading in opposite directions.

- One is not given blueprints of a clear “your best life now” promise for this life. Much is hidden and uncertain. This calls one to a life of faith.

With this background, one can take comfort in knowing that one is taken up into a narrative that is much broader than one’s own existence. One can witness to the certainty of who God is and invite others to join their uncertainty to life lived in faith amidst this uncertainty.

While many discuss and confirm the *missio Dei*, there is not always clarity on exactly what God is doing. What is this mission that God is on? What is it that he wants to accomplish? What is this story that one is part of and to which one invites others?

Bauckham (2003:93) warns of the dangers of trying to find a summary of the biblical story and robbing it of all its complexity. The summary must never replace what is summarized. Answering the question of what God is up to is to summarize this biblical story.⁸⁷ This can be done fruitfully if one comes to an understanding, filled with faith and joy, of where one stands in this story and why one witnesses of it to others. In a glorious way, this reminds one that one’s life is taken up fully in a story that encompasses all of reality.

An answer to the question of what God is doing can be attempted with humility. What follows is the setting of boundaries and a broad overview. It will be necessary to return to this question in the following chapters, where the answer will be developed. In light of Bauckham’s warning, it would be foolish to attempt an answer that is too short.

Much joy can be found in grasping the full scope of the biblical story, discovering how it fits together over millennia, seeing how it unfolds and how it progresses to a climactic conclusion. Certain keys facilitate the grasp of the big picture.

One such key is the covenant. After a good creation, fall into sin and growing rebellion, one finds God’s initiative in restoring the relationship with man in the form of a covenant. Genesis 12, 15, 17 tells the story of the Abrahamic covenant, with the promise of a blessing to all nations and a restored relationship (“I will be your God, and you will be my people” is the key covenantal promise that starts in Genesis 17:7

⁸⁷ Bauckham does not reject this summarizing, stating that it is essential, but it requires much work and is never finalized.

and echo's through the Bible till its full consummation in Revelation 21:7). The Old Testament develops through the Mosaic and Davidic covenants with a promise of a new covenant. These covenants flow into and are fulfilled in Jesus. Through faith in Christ, Gentiles are included in the new covenant (Gl 3-4; Eph 2:11–22) and become his people. They are called and enabled to be witnesses through their own transformation into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3). They participate in his mission as community till the covenantal promise of God comes to fulfilment (Rv 21:3: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.'").

There are excellent works available that tackle the task of summarizing this biblical narrative. In *The true story of the whole world*, Bartholomew and Goheen (2004:14) adopt NT Wright's metaphor of the Bible as a drama which unfolds in six acts:

1. Creation – God establishes the Kingdom
2. Fall – rebellion in the Kingdom
3. Redemption initiated – the King chooses Israel
 - a. A people for the King
 - b. A land and a king for God's people
4. Redemption accomplished – the coming of the King

Interlude: Intertestamental Period – A Kingdom story waiting for an ending

5. The mission of the church – spreading the news of the King
 - a. From Jerusalem to Rome
 - b. And into all the world
6. Redemption completed – the return of the King.

The subtitle of CJH Wright's *The mission of God* is "Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative". He does this on a grand scale. He uses a missional hermeneutic to describe the God of mission, the people of mission and the arena of mission.

In *The temple and the church's mission*, GK Beale does a sterling job of summarizing the biblical story through the lens of the temple. He starts in the Garden of Eden (the archetypal temple in which man first worshipped God) and traces the symbolism, purposes and end-time expectations of Old Testament temples. Through Christ as the temple of the new creation and the church as emerging new temple, a fuller picture of God's purposes is given through New Testament temple references. This finds its consummation in the glorious completion of God's purposes, when the earth is filled with the glory of God.

Any healthy summary of the biblical narrative would not disregard the role humans are called to play in God's mission. Beale does not disappoint as he concludes: "The main point of this book is that *our task as the covenant community, the church is to be God's temple, so filled with his glorious presence that we expand and fill the earth with that presence until God finally accomplishes the goal completely at the end of time!*" (2004:402, his emphasis).

These helpful summaries all reflect the activity of God in restoration and of this saving work of God encompassing the whole world, so that he can be known as God and mankind can enjoy fellowship with Him.

4.4.2. The glory of God

Is it possible that there can be one unifying theme to the biblical narrative, one eternal, divine purpose that binds it all together? It appears that there could be one theme that, when correctly understood, helps one to understand the purpose and goal of God's mission; one that clearly relates the role of the divine and human in this mission and provides a foundation that is solid enough on which to build this mission in all its cosmic magnitude. It is found in the glory of God.

Schreiner (2010:216) understands the ultimate reason for the Lord's work in salvation and judgement to be for his glory:

“God does everything for his praise, his glory, his honor – for the sake of his great name. I would define the glory of God as the beauty, majesty, and greatness of who he is; therefore, in all he does, whether in salvation or in judgement, the greatness of his being is demonstrated.”

Schreiner traces⁸⁸ the rich Scriptural testimony to the glory of God through Scripture as “the heartbeat of all of biblical revelation” (2010:233).

John Piper (2010:35) famously starts his chapter on the supremacy of God in missions through worship with the following:

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and countless millions of redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

“Worship therefor is the fuel and goal of missions. It’s the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God’s glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God.”

Here he speaks of the “goal of the church”. He continues by showing that glorifying the Name of God is the goal of the church because it is the goal of God. It is God’s desire to be glorified and made much of. Piper understands that there can be resistance to this, as it seems so similar to that which we despise when we see it in others, namely to seek one’s own glory (2010:47–48). This was what the researcher struggled with when he was first exposed to this notion. Piper does a more than admirable job in tracing the fullness of Scriptural testimony about the glory of God and the call to worship him. He shows that God is ultimate and supreme, and that any worship other than of God is idolatry. God’s call to worship is for our full joy and is a call filled with grace, mercy and the goodness of God.⁸⁹

“There is another way to see how God’s passion for his own glory is loving, and here the connection between the supremacy of God and the cause of missions becomes explicit. The connection between missions and the supremacy of God is found in this sentence: *the glory God seeks to magnify is supremely the glory of his mercy*. The key text is Romans 15:8–9. ‘I tell you that Christ became a

⁸⁸ His chapter forms part of a book in tribute to pastor-theologian John Piper who, more than anyone else in this time, brought attention to the theme of God’s glory as the reason for and goal of missions.

⁸⁹ See also Hawthorne 1999:36–37.

servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, *in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*" (2010:52, his emphasis)

This theme does justice to the whole movement of discerning that mission flows from God. Ephesians 1 gives a clear picture of the blessings that flow from our Triune God as he works out his mission:

- His work is a work of restoration (1:10).
- His work is man-ward, focusing on humanity in adoption, forgiveness and redemption (1:5,7,11).
- His mercy undergirds all his actions (1:3,4—5,7—8).
- This work of God is supremely God-ward, leading to worship and the glorifying of his Name (1:6,12,14). Note that the call to praise comes after the different sections in which the distinct work of each of the persons of the Trinity is expounded.
- There is a process of proclamation, hearing and believing (1:13) that brings people into God's eternal purposes.

This is the way that the Trinity is opened up for man's participation with them.

Chester (2005:176) says that

"... we experience the Trinity through the sending of the Son and the Spirit. We participate in the Trinity through the glorification of the Son by the Father as we receive eternal life in his name through the Spirit. God is not only relational, he has opened up the Trinitarian relations to include us. There is an outward movement of sending and a return movement of glorification."

Hawthorne (1999:34—37) shows how the three related ideas of glory, the Name of God and worship are beacons that define the biblical story at every juncture. This raises the gospel story from the Western church's reductionism of it. There is a purpose beyond salvation: the ultimate value of salvation is not seen in what people are saved from, but what they are saved for (1999:36).

This vision of God's glory as the aim of mission lifts our motivation to respond in obedience beyond mere compassion for others. Love for the lost and hurting, one's

neighbours and even brothers and sisters is, unfortunately, often quite deficient. Hawthorne shows how “stepping into the story of his glory” deepens one’s motivation base (1999:46).

Newbigin brings these themes together well:

“There has been a long tradition which sees the mission of the Church primarily as obedience to a command. It has been customary to speak of “the missionary mandate.” This way of putting the matter is certainly not without justification, and yet it seems to me that it misses the point. It tends to make mission a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of the law rather than part of the gospel. If one looks at the New Testament evidence one gets another impression. Mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy. The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive is something that cannot possibly be suppressed. It must be told. Who could be silent about such a fact? The mission of the Church in the pages of the New Testament is more like a fallout which is not lethal but life-giving. One searches in vain through the letters of St. Paul to find any suggestion that he anywhere lays it on the conscience of his reader that they ought to be active in mission. For himself it is inconceivable that he should keep silent. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16). But nowhere do we find him telling his readers that they have a duty to do so.” (1989:116)

“At the heart of mission is thanksgiving and praise. We distort matters when we make mission an enterprise of our own in which we can justify ourselves by our works. I said at the beginning of the chapter that the Church’s mission began as the radioactive fallout from an explosion of joy. When it is true to its nature, it is so to the end. Mission is an acted out doxology. That is its deepest secret. Its purpose is that God may be glorified.” (1989: 127)

As the researcher will show in the next chapter, this theme aids in attaining a clearer definition of the dimensions of mission in dealing with the issues of people groups and the supposed dichotomy between evangelism and social action.

4.5. Conclusion

In this first step to an understanding of missional theology, it is evident that the missions-focused ministry of the congregation could be characterized as resulting from a reduction of the gospel and not necessarily as an expression of its missional identity and calling. The hypothesis can be sustained that *missions-focused* is not the same as *missional*, and that a true missional identity that pervades all of the activities of the church, is required. A missional focus with a clear understanding of

the activity of the Trinity as expressed in the *missio Dei* can help the congregation to navigate the uncertainty and the challenges of change that it faces, and to sustain growth through service. In discovering mission as the very nature of God, and its identity and calling in Christ, the congregation can find its place in God's story.

The Gospel of Luke shows that the incarnation was grounded in a specific place and time within history. This Gospel is filled with historical markers and explains the birth of Christ as fulfilment of the covenant promise of God. It is about the Kingdom of God, not just individual salvation. The clear picture is that of God at work with the goal of bringing everything under the headship of Christ (Eph 1:10).

The congregation has to recognize in which ways it has allowed its faith to be privatized and secularized, leading to a very narrow view of God, his work and salvation. A rediscovery of the Trinity and the *missio Dei* can lead to a revitalized faith, expressed through works of love (Gal 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.").

The researcher has personally experienced a joy and rediscovery of meaning, over the last several years, in spending time explaining the biblical narrative and themes that flow through it to the young people of the confirmation class. Many young people do not grasp the sweeping biblical story. Many of the Bible stories they know are unconnected from any idea of history, continuity or global purpose. They view the stories as nothing more than lessons in morality (do not lie, steal, etc.). This illustrates the importance of the grasp of the full biblical metanarrative as it builds the faith of the believer. A part of this understanding is to grasp the role that the believer and congregation play in the *missio Dei*, as those that are sent. These concepts will be worked out further in the next two chapters.

It will be important to build the congregation's understanding of God as Trinity and as a missionary God. This may be achieved through teaching, baptismal classes and the Sunday services, where there should be a clear focus on preaching and worship. Much can be done to address their fragmented view of Scripture by increasing the amount of Scripture reading in the worship service and ensuring that the context is explained within the full biblical narrative. Faithful biblical teaching assumes a new importance.

A continual effort must be made to show how their “spirituality” is connected to everyday life. This will increase as more opportunities for service and involvement within the community are created.

This faith can move the congregation from a concern for its survival and preservation to an awareness of “the rich blessing with which God has graced them” as they learn to “channel this warmth, love and care to their immediate surroundings”, in the words of the reading report.

The concept of the *missio Dei* leads to the question of what the focus of God’s mission is. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Second Missional Key: Hope and the Kingdom of God

5.1. Introduction

The researcher's study of Ephesians was greatly enriched and deepened as he started to view the letter in the light of the question: "Why did Jesus come to earth?" Even though he knew better, he had also fallen prey to reducing the answer to a comfortable catchphrase.

This question was used widely in sermons, cell groups, youth meetings and Sunday school to gauge the congregation's understanding.

By far the most common answer given was: "He came to die for my sins." It seemed deeply ingrained in the theological understanding of the members of the congregation.⁹⁰ It also seemed difficult for people to abandon this to embrace a fuller and more biblical answer.

One's understanding of Jesus and his mission is reflected in how one follows and serves him. A truncated representation of Jesus' mission will lead to a truncated missional understanding.

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the mission of Jesus (as the expression of the *missio Dei*) in light of the Kingdom of God. The important insights of missional thinking about this concept can aid the congregation in forming a more biblical view of both the present and the future.

The understanding of God's mission in terms of the Kingdom of God entails a broadening of the understanding of salvation from a vertical salvation of souls to heaven, to salvation that includes the horizontal dimension of a renewal and redemption of creation. This chapter will look at ways in which the understanding of the gospel has been reduced, and what a renewed understanding of the Kingdom

⁹⁰ The researcher stands guilty, as he looks at his notes and underlining in Bosch (1979), that was hot off the press when he started his theological training, and realizes how few of these seminal insights he internalized.

would mean for the vision and ministry of the congregation. This chapter will describe the important but sometimes neglected place that church and proclamation should take within such a Kingdom vision. The relationship between Kingdom and church, as well as the place of “missions”, as cross-cultural proclamation, will be explored in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of the missional role that this congregation should play

Only when the congregation embodies and lives out of its full God-given hope that flows from God being King can it be an authentic bearer of hope for the lost and hurting.

5.2. The Kingdom of God

5.2.1. A diminished and watered-down gospel

“The church is the bearer to all the nations of a gospel that announces the Kingdom, the reign, and the sovereignty of God. It calls men to repent of their false loyalty to other powers, to become believers in the one true sovereignty, and so to become corporately a sign, instrument, and foretaste of that sovereignty of the one true and living God over all nature, all nations, and all human lives. It is not meant to call men and women out of the world into a safe religious enclave but to call them out in order to send them back as agents of God’s kingship.” (Newbigin 1986:124)

There are numerous reasons why “He came to die for my sins” is an inadequate answer to the question: “Why did Jesus come to earth?” This answer does not express anything of the kingship of God, doxology or the breadth of his work beyond personal salvation. It makes man ultimate and would suggest that the work of Jesus has now been accomplished, requiring nothing more of the one for whom he came to die. This creates the “safe religious enclave” that Newbigin and missional theology correctly reject so strongly.

Torrance distinguishes between a retrospective and prospective aspect when looking at Christ’s incarnation. “Retrospectively, Christ came to save us from past sin, from guilt, from judgment, from hell. But prospectively he came to bring us to sonship, to communion with God in the kingdom of God” (1996:73).

Evangelicalism has too often limited its view of God's mission to this retrospective aspect. Ephesians supplies a much more extensive answer to the question. Jesus came to do three things:⁹¹

- To *transform* believers. Christians are not just saved, but are transformed into the likeness of Christ (4:15,22–24; 5:1–2). This leads to a life that reflects the calling they have received, expressed in the imperative “to walk” (2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2,8,15).
- To *gather* believers. Christ is gathering a people for himself. The church plays a central role in Ephesians, yet “the epistle is essentially about Christ, and only the church as it fulfils the purposes of Christ” (Mitton as quoted in Komolafe 2007:274). Eph 2:11–22 shows how Christ, through the new covenant promises, gathers a people from all nations to be his own household, a temple to be his dwelling place.
- To *renew* everything. Ephesians sketches God's work in its cosmic dimensions. God's mission is described in much wider terms than just “my sin” and “my salvation”. God is at work to re-establish the cosmic order. “Not only does the existence of the church reveal God's mystery and His plan of reconciliation in the present, there is also an eschatological dimension to the church's revelatory function. The ‘not-yet’ aspect of the grand plan awaits ‘the fullness of the times’ when ‘the things in heaven and on earth’ will be brought together under one head, Christ (1:9–10).” (Komolafe 2007:277)

In the present dispensation, the church appears as “God's pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future” (Komolafe 2007:277, quoting Bruce). The church becomes an agent of revelation (3:10) with access to God's power (1:19–23; 4:8–10) in this cosmic work (1:10) of God's sovereignty and supremacy. Komolafe (2007:277) states: “Although God had already defeated His celestial enemies, this still requires progressive realization in the historical

⁹¹ In Afrikaans, this translates into a good three-point sermon with alliteration when one says that: “Hy kom om ons te *verander*, 'n volk vir Homself te *versamel* en om alles te *vernuwe*.” We find these three purposes in Titus 2:11–14: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

world. Therefore, the church's existence is for this very purpose. That is, through her proclamation and life, God's wise plan will be revealed to the powers and authorities that futilely contend with Him for the allegiance of His own creatures" (2:2; 3:10).

Christ's death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins is not negated by this threefold answer to why Jesus came to earth. His death is essential to the mission of God. Rather than "Why did Jesus come?" it more accurately answers a second question: "How does Jesus do this?" It is through the cross (1:7; 2:1–10) that he transforms man, gathers a people for himself and renews all things. The simplistic answer to the question of what God's *missio* is easily leads to a diminished and watered-down gospel.

Bosch (1979:202) describes some of the characteristics of such a diminished gospel, which is typically found in the evangelical theology of mission. Christ's kingship is seen in terms of the church and not the cosmos, and the world is undervalued. Salvation is considered as being saved from the world, not in terms of the renewal of the world. Sanctification is deemed to be retreating from all that is "worldly". This leads to a despising of the world and "a dualism between spirit and body, eternal and temporary, personal and social, holy and profane that is total and complete" (1979:202–203).

Bosch identifies a root cause of this reductionism in a focus on a very narrow doctrinal orthodoxy (1979:204). The indicatives of the faith become more important than the imperatives, and truth is defended more than it is practised. Evangelism does not challenge anyone to change their lifestyle; its only aim is for people to prepare for the Second Coming. A gospel message that only talks of a personal relationship with God and does not mention racism, injustice and exploitation is a diminished gospel.⁹²

Bosch (1979:212) warns against the ecumenical model of mission as an unhealthy reaction that leads to a "watered-down gospel". At its worst, it views salvation as socio-political liberation. When evangelism is nothing more than political action and salvation becomes social justice, the spiritual meaning of conversion is marginalized

⁹² Bosch (1979:206) adds prophetically: "Die dominee wat tydens huisbesoek by die ryk boer oor sy siel praat maar swyg oor die wyse waarop hy sy plaaswerkers behandel, versuim sy plig."

and the door to universalism is opened. The Kingdom loses its eschatological dimension and is reduced to the “already”. As salvation history is swallowed by world history, any place that the church could hold is downgraded.

When Christ is seen as King of his church and the cosmos, and his ascension to the right hand of God is understood as a position of active reign, the created world and the path of history can be viewed in a different light. Rather than allowing pessimism and fatalism to lead to eschewal of the world, the congregation can rediscover its place in creation and history and live hopefully in the here and now through a renewed encounter with the reign of God.

5.2.2. The reign of God

In his fresh look at evangelism and missions, John Dickson (2010:22) summarizes the gospel as:

“... the announcement that God has revealed his kingdom and opened it up to sinners through the birth, teachings, miracles, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will one day return to overthrow evil and consummate the kingdom of God.”

The reductionism that has taken place in much of Western Christianity has defined the gospel almost exclusively in terms of sin and grace. For Dickson, “monotheism, crystallised in the universal Lordship of Jesus Christ, is the Bible’s most basic doctrine” (2010:27). Monotheism and mission are intimately related, for “if there is one Lord to whom all people belong and owe their allegiance, the people of the Lord must promote this reality everywhere. We promote God’s glory to the ends of the earth not principally because of human *need* but fundamentally because of God’s/Christ’s unique worthiness as the Lord of heaven and earth” (2010:35, his emphasis). He follows this persuasively with a fuller motivation for evangelism: “Why take the gospel to cynical retirees with a lifetime of worldly experience and a fat nest egg to enjoy? Not simply because they will soon face eternity, but because right now they exist for the pleasure of the one true God” (2010:35).

If the gospel message is about the reign of God, it becomes clear that the church in Western culture errs not only in diminishing the gospel, but also by making evangelism the sole “missional” activity of the church.

“The missional community which Jesus intended and which the apostles formed and taught was to testify to the gospel in every dimension of its existence. Its message was never understood as simply a verbal communication about which one might argue, and for which mere mental consent was sought. The gospel of Jesus defines a new reality, under God, in which Jesus Christ has all power in heaven and earth, and his followers are his sent and empowered witnesses.” (Guder 2000:137)

“Proclaiming a gospel about Jesus that is not shaped by the gospel Jesus preached distorts the gospel by proclaiming only part of its meaning. The absence of the gospel Jesus preached in the gospel the church preached has woefully impoverished the church’s sense of missional identity.” (ed. Guder 1998:88)

In his “coming to earth” Jesus has established the church and defined what the mission of the church should be. When the church functions out of a very narrow, “spiritualized” concept of what Jesus came to do, it will misinterpret its missional calling. By looking afresh at the Kingdom of God, the church can grow in its missional enterprise.

5.2.3. Kingdom and church

In some ecumenical quarters, a rediscovery of the Kingdom of God as the focus of God’s mission led to a pendulum swing away from seeing the church as having any role to play in the mission of God. How should the place of the church be understood in terms of the Kingdom of God? In *The open secret*, Newbigin describes the relationship of the church to the rule of God in his chapter focusing on the Son (Chapter 5: “Sharing the life of the Son: mission as love in action”). He denies that the church’s existence as an institution is in any way a contradiction of Jesus’ Kingdom vision (1995:44–46):

“Put briefly, it seems clear that he entrusted the future of his cause to the group of disciples, gave himself completely to them, admitted them into the intimacy of his union with the Father, bound them to himself in the sharing of a meal that, having been part of his shared life with them, would continue after his death, and sent them out to be not only the teachers of his truth but the bearers of that glory which he had from his Father. In them the reign of God would not only be proclaimed: it would be present.” (1995:47)

His insight that the church is sent not only to proclaim the Kingdom, but to bear in its own life the presence of the Kingdom is significant. Just as he underlines the

importance of not separating the Kingdom from the Person of Jesus, so he argues that the Kingdom and the church, though they are not identified, should not be separated (1980:19).

Jesus has come near to his people through the cross. Through the cross, that on the face of it seems to be weakness and foolishness, they can experience the power and wisdom of God. He binds to himself a people he has bought, and he works out his mission through this community.

Newbigin is well known for his description of the church as a sign, foretaste and instrument of the Kingdom. Mission is not a theory or an idea; it is an experience of the presence of the living God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is of this experience that the church is called to witness as a sign, foretaste and instrument of the Kingdom.

The description of the church as a foretaste of the Kingdom does not define the church's call *to witness*, but rather that the church *is witness* of the Kingdom through the presence of the Spirit. The Spirit is the first-fruit or deposit (*arrabon*) of the Kingdom, both a present reality and a pledge of full payment.

“... the Spirit is not separated from the Church, for the Spirit's work is to lead men and women to confess Jesus as Lord, and the Church is the place where that confession is made. On the one hand the Spirit (which is the *arrabon* of the kingdom) is constantly creating and recreating the Church. On the other hand the Church, which is not the author or controller of the Spirit's witness to the Kingdom, is the place where that witness is given and acknowledged. Because of the work of the Spirit, therefore, the Church may become a sign of the Kingdom.” (Newbigin 1980:39–20)

Newbigin (1980:45–70) asks what the church that prays “Let thy Kingdom come” should look like in today's context:

- As a sign of the Kingdom, it does not exist for itself and its own members, for it cannot ignore God's destiny for the nations and the cosmos.
- It needs to break with the ideology of capitalism by rejecting the privatization to which the church has been subjected and move to a life of compassion.

- He seeks forms of church that do not take members out of the world into a private gathering, neither seek centres of power by which the world can be dominated, but that “enable men and women to function within the secular life of the world in ways which reflect the reality of Christ’s passion and thereby make the reality of Christ’s resurrection to the victims of the world’s wrong.”⁹³ (1980:58).
- While there is a need for openness to the world, flexibility in structure and new styles of leadership, with it comes the need “to stress the centrality and finality of Jesus Christ for everything in the life of the Church.”⁹⁴ (1980:68).

The church is a sign of the Kingdom only insofar as it points men and women to Jesus (1980:69).

It has become clear, then, that the church is a part of the reign of God, having received grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. The reign of God is greater than the salvation of individuals, though it does not exclude that. Those that are saved are taken up into a community that is a foretaste, sign and instrument of the Kingdom.

This reign of God is communicated in the full biblical narrative, and has a very clear focus in the incarnation of Jesus, through his ministry, teaching, calling, death and resurrection. In a culture filled with broken, empty, unfulfilled people, the church has a living hope through its inclusion in God’s reign and sharing the past, present and assured future of the Triune God. This hope should strengthen the church in its daily life, and should be held out to others as the church witnesses to this Kingdom reign of God. The reign of God becomes the missional perspective whereby the congregation becomes an instrument of the Kingdom in the hands of God.

Guder (ed. 1998:93–94) show that the New Testament does not use the words “to build” or “to extend”, but “to receive” and “to enter” when talking of the Kingdom of God. The church is taken up in God’s mission. Therefore it is the fruit of the Kingdom

⁹³ This will be considered in more detail in the next chapter under the subheading “Discipleship and the ordinary”.

⁹⁴ His words (1980:68) about the boundaries of the church are a fitting reminder for today: “The Church is an entity which is properly defined by its centre. It is impossible to define exactly the boundaries of the Church, and the attempt to do so always ends in an unevangelical legalism. But it is always possible and necessary to define the centre. The Church is its proper self, and is a sign of the Kingdom, only insofar as it continually points men and women beyond itself to Jesus and invites them to personal conversion and commitment to him.”

of God, called to represent the reign of God. The church receives and then participates in the mission. This is a call to action. Even though they “receive” and “enter”, they then “represent” the Kingdom in both the active and passive sense of the word.

For Guder (ed. 1998:103–109), this means living as representatives under the authority of Jesus in which the calling is lived out in *community*. The reign of God is further represented by the church as its *servant* through compassion and as *messenger*, through proclamation. The next chapter will deal with the question of community; service and proclamation will be considered in the rest of this chapter. I will borrow from Guder for the next two subheadings. In essence the church, representing the reign of God as both its servant and its messenger, finds the complete expression of hope being in both word and deed.

5.3. Representing the reign of God as its servant

Christian hope, for Western Christians, has generally been built on the future expectation of their final deliverance. The resurrection gives a certain hope of this, but

“... when the New Testament strikes the great Easter bell, the great resonances it sets up are not simply about ourselves and about whatever future world God is ultimately going to make, when heaven and earth are joined together and renewed at last from top to bottom. Precisely because the resurrection has happened as an event within our world, its implications and effects are to be felt *within our world*, here and now.” (NT Wright 2008:191, his emphasis)

For NT Wright, then, this future hope that we have in Christ leads to a present hope that sustains the mission of the church. He shows how the resurrection can break through this diminished gospel that is so much part of Western Christianity. Salvation needs to be redefined as being more than going to heaven when you die (2008:194). Salvation, as declared in the New Testament, is God’s promise of new heavens and earth, of a resurrection to a “new and gloriously embodied reality”, and this demands that the mission of the church be rethought in these terms. NT Wright states that the work of God through Christ and the Spirit is not designed to take us away from earth, but to make us agents of the “transformation” of this earth (2008:201).

Similarly to Newbigin’s (1995:32) description of election, NT Wright says:

“... he did not want to rescue humans *from* creation any more than he wanted to rescue Israel *from* the Gentiles. He wanted to rescue Israel *in order that Israel might be a light to the Gentiles*, and he wanted to rescue humans *in order that humans might be his rescuing stewards over creation*.” (2008:203, his emphases)

These insights challenge the church to a radical rethink of its relationship to this world and its missional calling to its own culture. Due to an individualistic and reduced view of salvation, together with a strong dualism between the secular and spiritual, the church must re-evaluate its missional calling to creation, culture, and the immediate context of the congregation.

Wittmer (2004) traces the roots of a misplaced metaphysical dualism that leads so many Western believers to undervalue creation and their own material existence. The early church was threatened by Gnosticism that taught that creation and the fall were a single event, that earth was sprinkled with “sparks of divinity” (souls) that were trapped in material (evil) bodies. The goal of life was thus to escape from the physical and rejoin the high God in heaven (2004:55). Jesus was considered by some to possess secret knowledge (*gnosis*), and it was believed that enlightenment was attainable through this knowledge and a renunciation of the physical.

When, freed from a “gnostic suspicion”, the church can see that “the problem is not this earth, but our sin, then the solution is to remain engaged in the world, leading fully human lives as we follow the perfect human, Jesus Christ, who came to this world to cross out our sins and save the planet” (2004:61). A similar Platonic spirit-body dualism was carried into the church (2004:126). Some of Wittmer’s suggested responses to this situation, especially in terms of vocation, will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The way forward then is to rediscover a groundedness in the here and the now: to rediscover one’s own *belonging* to creation and to see how one’s spiritual rebirth grows and flourishes in this life as one moves along in time; *becoming* more like Jesus in his love and “lived-out” humanity (the call to reflect Jesus is always in terms of human actions and attitudes, as man does not share in his divinity), and *being* a good neighbour, brother, colleague, spouse, employee, and whatever other descriptor one lives in.

The researcher found Peterson's *Christ plays in ten thousand places* and his description of creation as a "gift of time" (2005:65) and a "gift of place" (2005:71) to be one of the most helpful insights for a practical grasp of this understanding.

"I gradually realized that ordinary time is not what biblical people endure or put up with or hurry through as we wait around for the end time and its rocket launch into eternity. It is a gift through which we participate in the present and daily work of God. I finally got it: end time influences present ordinary time, not by diminishing or denigrating it but by charging it, filling it with purpose and significance. The end time is not a future we wait for but the gift of the fullness of time that we receive in adoration and obedience as it flows into the present." (2005:67)

"What we often consider to be the concerns of the spiritual life – ideas, truths, prayers, promises, beliefs – are never in the Christian gospel permitted to have a life of their own apart from particular persons and actual places. Biblical spirituality/religion has a low tolerance for 'great ideas' or 'sublime truths' or 'inspirational thoughts' apart from the people and places in which they occur. God's great love and purposes for us are all worked out in messes in our kitchens and backyards, in storms and sins, blue skies, the daily work and dreams of our common lives. God works with us where we are and not as we should be or think we should be. God deals with us where we are and not where we would like to be." (2005:75)

Part of Peterson's understanding is that all of life is grounded in a particular time and place. God works with this reality and calls his church not to live apart from this, neither in some enclave nor in an idealized utopia. A primary task for the congregation and its leaders is to discover a sense of the time and place in which it lives, and how to live as witnesses and servants in this time and place.

Together with this loss of understanding of time and place as filled with spiritual significance and the arena where one's faith is played out, many church members hold a secularized view of time and place.

The Afrikaans church has traditionally viewed life through an Old Testament lens. The Old Testament taught very clearly that God was holy and could not be approached, except through a given mediator. There was a clear differentiation between what was holy, common and unclean. The mediated approach to God required that certain people, objects, places and times be set apart to be holy. God could then be approached through the use of holy people, clothes and objects, holy

places and days. People lived life in the common and would only approach God at special times and on special occasions. Life in the common was filled with rules and regulations, especially to prevent defilement that would render one unclean.

While it is a generalization, it is the researcher's experience that members of the DRC often carry this sense of "holy" and "common" with them into their religious practice. True spiritual work is done by the pastor; he is the one meant to pray, and his prayers are deemed to be more powerful than those of lay members. The church is a separated space, a building that is holy. There is a need for holy clothing, the pulpit is a particularly holy place, and the gathering on a Sunday⁹⁵ is a holy time. Even though this viewpoint has softened to varying degrees in different congregations, it still reflects a huge divide between the sacred and secular that is present in the minds of the majority of members. The sacred is still an escape from "true" life, the life of everyday activity. There is little sense of the sacred filling life with vision, joy and calling.

What is lacking is an understanding of the way in which Jesus radically altered the way in which one relates to God. He came as a radical fulfilment and replacement of the old covenant. In the Old Testament, the temple was the place of God's presence, where heaven and earth met. Jesus is the new temple and indicates that he is the true replacement of a temple that has become old and obsolete (Beale 2004:176, 192). In the same way, Jesus challenges the perceptions of Old Testament life before God: the Sabbath, offerings, clean/unclean are all fulfilled in him.

A "rediscovery" of who Jesus is, is needed for the wonderfully fresh grasp of place, time and matter⁹⁶ to be understood missionally. In the Gospel of Luke, we see Jesus break through the holy/common and clean/unclean distinctions while enjoying life to the full. His acceptance of all people, especially those rejected and on the sidelines, is a strong theme in Luke. This has helped the congregation to gain a deeper

⁹⁵ The researcher has noted that 20 years ago, he had to preach and work hard to change a very legalistic view of Sunday as the Sabbath, and what was not allowed on this day. There was a clear difference in actions and attitudes between Sunday and Monday, and the aim was to bridge this divide and help people to see weekdays as a place to live out their calling and convictions. Today there is no need for sermons against legalism, as there is total liberty. This does not mean that the sacred has now spread to the whole of life, but rather that it has diminished further. Peterson has helpful insights on the importance of Sabbath keeping (2005:108), and NT Wright on retaining some sense of sacred space in today's life, through church buildings (2008:258).

⁹⁶ NT Wright includes "matter" when talking of space and time (2008:257).

understanding of what missional should mean in terms of representing the reign of God as servant:

- The 2013 Pentecost services were on the theme of meals⁹⁷ in the book of Luke. This very rich theme helped especially in a better understanding of:
 - the sacredness of meals (and of life in the here and now);
 - the way people who are different are accepted by Jesus and are in need of care, compassion or companionship;
 - how meals can help to cross boundaries to people in need;
 - one's wealth, seen in the abundance of one's possessions and the richness of one's meals, and the need to relate that to the inequality and poverty in South Africa, especially in the Eastern Cape.
- Jesus' interaction with the outcasts (Lk 15:1–2) led to the parables of the lost sheep, coin and son.
- His parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16:20) sees punishment in terms of injustice and compassion.
- Jesus breaks through the clean/unclean distinction by touching and healing lepers and the dead, especially the bier of the widow's dead son (Lk 7:14).
- Jesus' power and grace are shown in the story of the healing of the woman with the discharge of blood; she is immediately healed when she touches the fringe of his garment (Lk 8:44). Under the old dispensation, this would have resulted in immediate death (see Uzzah and the ark – 2 Sm 6). Jesus is the mediator of the new dispensation, giving direct access to God.

⁹⁷ Tim Chester's book, *A meal with Jesus: discovering grace, community and mission around the table*, was particularly insightful: "There are three ways the New Testament completes the sentence, 'The Son of Man came ...' 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45); 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost' (Luke 19:10); 'The Son of Man has come eating and drinking ...' (Luke 7:34). The first two are statements of purpose. Why did Jesus come? He came to serve, to give his life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost. The third is a statement of method. How did Jesus come? He came eating and drinking" (2011:12).

As servants representing the reign of God, this calls a congregation to show compassion to people in need through their deeds and service. It calls for an understanding of the brokenness of the world and working for justice, peace and righteousness. The congregation should see the need in the community and context in which it lives and wisely discern where it can make a difference and become an instrument of change and of hope.

Stetzer and Putman (2006) describe the importance for the congregation to step back and view the secular post-Christian society and local context in which it is situated in the same way that missionaries have strived to understand their host culture.

It starts with an acknowledgement that there is a “code” to be broken, so that cultural barriers that hinder the hearing of the gospel are removed (2006:4). Breaking the code means recognizing those characteristics within a community that will make people either resistant or responsive to the church and gospel (2006:5), and then responding missionally as “servant” and “messenger”.

“If a church does not regularly examine its culture, it ends up as a culture unto itself.

“So breaking the code is missionary work, and it is best seen as a missionary process. A commitment to the integrity and authority of Scripture, combined with a passion for reaching people to whom you are called, requires a commitment to prayerfully create a plan and strategy to reach your community.” (2006:28)

This means that each congregation should discover contextual ways of thinking about and expressing their faith, and not just cloning models that have worked in other times or places.⁹⁸ For Grasvoëlkop, this will mean discerning what a culturally appropriate expression of church would look like and what changes might be required for the congregation to move away from a more traditional Afrikaans expression of church. A move into being missional might mean that comforts and preferences would have to be set aside. Missionaries in a cross-cultural situation know that the only hope of fruit is to be contextual (2006:89). This is a giving away of preferences, traditions and comfort zones. This is, by definition, what it means to be

⁹⁸ Since the hugely successful Jeug-tot-Jeugaksie in the 70s, the DRC has been pining for a repeat of this initiative. Many programmes are adopted from the United States and are implemented without the needed contextualization, often to be discarded in favour of a newer or more popular program.

a servant. Christians are servants who have received grace upon grace and therefore work eagerly for a grace-filled consummation of the Kingdom of God (Lk 12:37: “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.”).

Stetzer and Putman (2006:137) show that, when change is needed, it should start in loving people, and not one’s own traditions. Their suggestions of a congregation that connects with a community and with the “disconnected” of the immediate context are important and would serve well as a guideline for this congregation.⁹⁹

“The church carries Jesus’ mantle as the people of God ‘under authority.’ Our responses of compassion and service, like our actions for peace and justice, are deeds of authority and therefore signs that the reign of God is present now in our world and is on the way as its future. Our responses may be small and personal: a cup of cold water, a warm blanket, or a visit with cookies and cakes. They may be bold: ‘Rise up and walk’, or the expulsion of evil spirits in the name of Jesus. They may engage the complexities of corporate living: pressuring governments and corporations for the sake of the disadvantaged or the ravaged earth, lobbying for laws, solidarity with oppressed peoples, initiatives to cease hostilities among nations, care for the marginalized peoples and the creation, or compassionate remolding of socioeconomic structures. Whatever our responses may be, they bring wholeness and dignity to the world and thereby provide a taste of a future in the reign of God under the rule and authority of Christ’s Lordship. These are signs that invite people to ‘enter and taste more, to eat and be full.’” (ed. Guder 1998:106)

The Kingdom resonates with hope. This is a hope for a better world, because the Kingdom will come in its fullness; Christians wait faithfully for the heavenly city (Heb 11:10). There is also hope for today, for this time and place, for here and now, because the Kingdom is here and now and will take up this reality into the new heavens and earth. Christians are called to this hope, and they bring this hope to a broken world (Eph 1:18; 4:4).

⁹⁹ They describe this process as: 1) finding worship that honours God and connects with the disconnected; 2) partnering with believers and seekers to reach the disconnected in a safe place, and 3) connecting new disconnected people to a faith process.

5.3.1. Social justice

Moving from a mission-minded focus to a missional mindset would mean that the DRC Grasvoëlkop rediscovers the calling to social justice. This is especially important in the light of the history of the country and the denomination, and the indispensable but sluggish move towards church unity in the DRC family.

Billings (2010:Kindle location 1783) discusses the role of the DRC as an advocate of apartheid and the decision in 1857 for separate celebrations of communion based on race, which led to the establishment of a separate, racially based denomination.

While generally very positive about the Belhar Confession, Billings suggests that it has a weakness in the much debated line of Article 4: “that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged” (2010:Kindle location 1934). Some of the problems he notes are that:

- 1) Due to the language of God’s ownership, the discussion around this article too easily slips into “identity politics rather than a thoughtful concern for justice” (2010:Kindle location 1949).
- 2) This description of the poor is fixed in a more “modern, sociological sense” than the “dialectical flexibility” of biblical language that, at times, includes a metaphorical sense (2010:Kindle location 1951).
- 3) The article lacks the covenantal context that is found in many of the supporting biblical references and can again, therefore, be misread in “flat sociological ways suggestive of God’s preference for one socioeconomic group over another” (2010:Kindle location 1972).
- 4) The article can lead to a “colonial-type attitude” at a congregational level, where congregations are content to give handouts, rather than a fully developed “neighbour-love that seeks culmination in mutual fellowship at the banquet table of the Lord” (2010:Kindle location 1978).

Billings then grounds the biblical exhortations to justice (as expressed in Article 4 of the Belhar Confession) in the concept of union with Christ and shows that this reflects a stronger eucharistic theology:

“... the gospel leads into communion with three bodies: first, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, to whom believers are united in the Spirit; second, emerging from the first, the body of fellow believers united to Christ; and third, also emerging from union with Christ, the body of the neighbor in need – what I will call the ‘wounded body.’ In speaking of article 4 categories of the wronged, the poor, the destitute, I would claim that we should have special regard for those with ‘wounded bodies’ precisely because we love all neighbors. Thus, rather than making the language of justice and special regard dependent on God ‘owning’ a particular group of people (apart from the biblical-covenantal context of God’s ownership), I seek to ground the language of justice in union with Christ. We encounter these three bodies at the Table, which is a means of grace by which God reshapes us for communion with Christ’s body and the wounded bodies in the world.” (2010:Kindle location 1985)

When the gospel is understood as more than just forgiveness of sins, but also as a participation in the righteousness of Christ and his Kingdom, the life of faith is comprehended as receiving both forgiveness and new life by the Spirit. “This new life in union with Christ displays itself as a life of justice, a life formed by the God-focused, Christ-centered gospel” (2010:Kindle location 2023). The living out of justice is thus part and parcel of our incorporation into Christ’s life.

Billings shows how Calvin understood that the importance of neighbour-love flows from Christians’ calling to live in Christ, not in themselves, and therefore to consider their neighbours “in relationship to God” and not merely “in themselves” (2010:Kindle location 2062). This love should be universal, including enemies and especially those whom Billings calls “the wounded bodies”.

5.4. Representing the reign of God as its messenger

5.4.1. Evangelism

“Jesus believed it to be his mission to announce the presence of the reign of God and its implications and call ... If his own presence was a *sign* of the reign of God, and his deeds were *signposts* pointing to it, his verbal proclamation of the meaning of his presence and deeds added the *signature*. Jesus is saying with his speech, ‘These things you see and hear mean that the reign of God has come among you. Receive it. Enter it.’

“The church shares this missional role as well.” (ed. Guder 1998:106–7, their emphases)

The representation of the Kingdom lies in being, doing and speaking. As one's being and doing reflect something of the Kingdom reign of God, and if this reign is seen and experienced by the world, there is also the clear need to express this reign in proclamation.

Guder (2000:25–26) quotes David Bosch¹⁰⁰ when he observes that “evangelism is the core, heart or center of mission; it consists in the proclamation of salvation in Christ to nonbelievers, in announcing forgiveness of sins, in calling people to repentance and faith in Christ, inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life in the Holy Spirit.”

Guder contends that evangelism must be more than just proclamation to unbelievers and should include the ministry to believers. Evangelization can only truly be at the heart of ministry if there is “the continuing conversion of the church” (2000:27).

Bosch (1993:409–422) speaks of the “plethora of definitions” when it comes to evangelism, and the different focuses that have applied over time. Evangelism should not be identified with mission, but should be seen as something distinct from mission. He gives some important distinctions for a helpful understanding of evangelism:

- Mission (the church being sent into the world to love, serve, preach, teach, heal, liberate) is wider than evangelism, and evangelism should therefore not be equated with mission.
- Evangelism as witnessing to what God has done, is doing and will do is an “essential dimension of the total activity of the church”.
- Evangelism is witness and invitation, and aims at a response; as such, it is an indispensable ministry.
- Evangelism is aimed at people and offers salvation as a gift, with assurance of eternal bliss.

¹⁰⁰ *Evangelism: theological currents and cross-currents today* (100).

- Evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelizes – the church – is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle.
- Evangelism is distinctly verbal, but is not only proclamation and should never be separated from the Christian deed. It should neither be separated from the preaching and practice of justice.

Dickson does well to show how evangelism fits into the promotion of the glory of God and is the calling of the church, not primarily because of any human need, but because of Christ's unique worthiness as Lord of heaven and earth (2010:35). The heart of the gospel message is God's rule as King; evangelism means calling people to return to the One to whom they belong. "To put it in simple and practical terms, the goal of gospel preaching – and of gospel promoting – is to help our neighbours realise and submit to God's kingship or lordship over their lives" (2010:115). Dickson's book is a practical and encouraging exhortation of the church to an evangelistic lifestyle.

5.4.2. The relationship between evangelism and social responsibility

Representing God as both *messenger* and *servant* has often seemed irreconcilable, as seen in the ecumenical and evangelical poles of what mission entails. Bosch (1993:403) briefly discusses what he calls the "enigma" of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, and the history of bringing these two concepts together within missional understanding. One of the most common ways of understanding this relationship was to view them as two mandates: a commission to proclaim the good news, and a call to social responsibility in human society. He traces this back, in North American Protestantism, to Jonathan Edwards, who viewed them as inseparable. This continued through the Evangelical Awakenings, when a shift to the primacy of the evangelical mandate became discernible. Between the 1900s and 1930s, this developed into a situation where the focus was exclusively on proclamation; this continues today in more fundamentalist circles.

In the main body of evangelicalism, a viewpoint developed from Carl Henry¹⁰¹ that evangelism, which remains primary, generates social involvement and improved social conditions. John Stott is well known for his change of stance to accept both mandates and view mission as evangelism plus social responsibility, whereas he had previously accepted only the task of evangelism. Bosch shows that:

“The moment one regards mission as consisting of two separate components one has, in principle, conceded that each of the two has a life of its own. One is then by implication saying that it is possible to have evangelism without a social dimension and Christian social involvement without an evangelistic dimension. What is more, if one suggests that one component is primary and the other secondary, one implies that the one is essential and the other optional. This is precisely what happened.” (Bosch 1993:405)

Bosch notes that 1983 was the first time that an official statement emanating from an international evangelical conference¹⁰² showed that “the perennial dichotomy was over”.

There has generally been hesitancy among evangelicals to accept the place of social responsibility within the mission of the church because “the last two times that Christians ‘discovered’ social justice, it did not end well”.¹⁰³ The first is well known as the Social Gospel (see Bosch 1993:321) together with the early *missio Dei* movement. There is a sense of apprehension among evangelicals that the more liberal wing of the emergent movement has also ended here. The relationship between evangelism and social justice is still very much a topic of discussion.

In his address at Lausanne III, John Piper said: “As believers, we are concerned about all human suffering, especially eternal suffering.”¹⁰⁴ This caused much controversy and debate.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ “There is no room ... for a gospel that is indifferent to the needs of the total man nor of the global man” from *The uneasy conscience of modern fundamentalism* (1947) quoted in Bosch (1993:404).

¹⁰² Wheaton 1983: “Evil is not only in human hearts but also in social structures ... The mission of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration. We must therefore evangelize, respond to immediate human needs, and press for social transformation.”

¹⁰³ Ed Stezer, from his blog <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2010/april/musings-on-missiology-theological-approaches-to-social.html>, viewed 22 /01/2014.

¹⁰⁴ See http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/10970#.Ut_a_9L8LIU. Viewed 22/01/2014.

¹⁰⁵ See also the publication of Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert. *What is the mission of the church? Making sense of social justice, shalom, and the great commission* as a call to the primacy of

CJH Wright takes up this challenge of how to understand the place of proclamation in a holistic view of mission and offers a helpful way forward in his discussion in the chapter “New Testament and holistic mission” (2006:303):

- Holistic mission flows from applying the whole Bible. While affirming the clear command to proclamation, evangelism should not rule out doing justice in obedience to the Old Testament, nor should the Great Commission obscure the Great Commandment (2006:304).
- Jesus and the early church presented a radical political challenge. This helps one break out of the “spiritualizing mode in which we think of the Kingdom of God”. There was a political price to following Jesus, and the new community that he formed had a wide political impact.
- The cross, as the unavoidable cost but also the purpose of God’s mission, was for the redemption of his whole creation. “A full understanding of the atoning work of Christ on the cross goes far beyond (though of course it includes) the matter of personal guilt and individual forgiveness.” (2006:314)
- Can one talk of the priority or primacy of evangelism? CJH Wright (2006:317) shows how this can lead to “uncomfortable consequences” and suggests the term “ultimacy” to define the place of proclamation: “Mission may not always begin with evangelism. But mission that does not ultimately include declaring the Word and the name of Christ, the call to repentance, and faith and obedience has not completed its task. It is defective mission, not holistic mission” (2006:319).

The church has a clear calling to proclaim the gospel. With the renewed understanding of the responsibility for social justice as part of the mission of the church, the danger of a swing away from proclamation is real. Scot McKnight, who readily identifies with the emergent movement, states that there is a stream within

proclamation, as well as the discussion generated on blogs and in reviews. See <http://thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/review/what-is-the-mission-of-the-church-making-sense-of-social-justice-shalo>; <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2011/november/deyoung-and-gilberts-iwhat-is-mission-of-churchi--some.html>; <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevinwax/2011/11/08/5-nagging-questions-about-deyoung-gilberts-mission-of-the-church/> and <http://www.hornes.org/mark/2011/11/training-inducting-not-just-transmitting-verbal-information/>. Viewed on 24/01/2014.

post-evangelicalism that rejects what has become known as the “in versus out” mentality of evangelicalism.

“This emerging ambivalence about who is in and who is out creates a serious problem for evangelism. The emerging movement is not known for it, but I wish it were. Unless you proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, there is no good news at all—and if there is no Good News, then there is no Christianity, emerging or evangelical.

“So I offer here a warning to the emerging movement: Any movement that is not evangelistic is failing the Lord. We may be humble about what we believe, and we may be careful to make the gospel and its commitments clear, but we must always keep the proper goal in mind: summoning everyone to follow Jesus Christ and to discover the redemptive work of God in Christ through the Spirit of God.” (McKnight 2007)

5.4.3. Incarnational ministry as a dangerous drift

Proclamation and social concern most definitely belong together as the task of the church in the mission of God.¹⁰⁶ It is doubtful, however, if true harmony and the correct balance will ever be possible or if both tasks will find their full expression within congregations and denominations. The researcher suspects that, at different times, one will be more prominent than the other, and that a pendulum swing between them will, in all likelihood, continue.

The researcher surmises that churches, like people, are naturally right-handed or left-handed and give easier expression to either proclamation or social justice. It should never be a choice of which hand to use: we need both hands. Likewise, churches should work for proclamation and social concern. The one will more naturally be emphasized or preferred, and care must be taken for the body to be in proportion, as a person doing weight training takes extra care that his weaker hand is not neglected in his muscular development.

The Cape Town Commitment (CTC)¹⁰⁷ (from Lausanne III) is a beautifully written document that uses love as a unifying theme in the description of the mission of the

¹⁰⁶ The Missional Manifesto speaks of a duality and does not suggest any primacy of one above the other.

¹⁰⁷ See <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/ctcommitment.html>. Viewed on 23/01/2014.

church and finds a striking balance in a portrayal of love of the Word, the gospel and the world, with a clear call to live and proclaim the truth.

The researcher sees the DRC Grasvoëlkop express well its calling to represent the reign of God as its servant within the congregation, with wonderful displays of charity and concern. However, there is a need to develop a fuller social awareness and involvement in the community, the city, and the country as a whole. The strong missions-minded focus can be perceived as leading to an unbalanced missional concern within the congregation. When the congregation moves to greater balance, the question arises as to the place that missions should have in the calling of the congregation. There is a danger that the development of a social concern could lead to a pendulum swing away from proclamation, so that it loses its central place in the calling of the church. The researcher would warn against this pendulum swing away from proclamation, as is sometimes expressed in “incarnational ministry”. An example of this dangerous drift will be examined below, and the place of congregational participation in proclamation, specifically as cross-cultural missions, will be defended.

There are many reasons why the church’s task of proclamation has come under pressure in the West, and this seems particularly true of the DRC in South Africa.¹⁰⁸ Proclamation is bound to a declaration of truth and a view of man as “lost” and under judgment, which goes against the postmodern mindset. Coupled with a sense of guilt and uncertainty about its place in society, the church feels a renewed call to service and humility, in which proclamation is neither comfortable nor effective.

The emergent critique of Western Christianity has received a wide hearing and has a growing influence in the denomination as the more conservative voices remain relatively quiet. This emergent message focuses strongly on social concern in the here and now, and there is a strong moving away from doctrine and therefore also a questioning of the place of proclamation in mission (DeYoung & Kluck 2008:183; Wittmer 2008:32).

¹⁰⁸ At the last General Synod, held in Port Elizabeth (October 2013), a full day was used to discuss the question: “How do you make a moral person?” During the discussions, I never heard mention of any consideration being given to the task of proclamation or the transforming power of the gospel.

This is being expressed more and more in the call to an “incarnational ministry”. An incarnational model of ministry moves away from the focus of speaking the truth to an emphasis on living the truth, especially in the light of John 20:21 and 17:18.

Hesselgrave (2005:144, quoting Köstenberger) says:

“The incarnational model ... sees Christ as present in the church so that the church can fashion its ministry after the model provided by Jesus during his earthly ministry. According to this view, the church is not representing Jesus – it is Jesus working through his church today. The implication of this model appears to focus on the continuity between Jesus’ mission and the church’s mission.”

Billings finds much that is commendable in incarnational ministry, such as a renewed awareness of the importance of discipling relationships against a purely programme-driven ministry, a crossing of boundaries and welcoming of strangers, and a moving away from the cultural isolation of many missionaries working in a cross-cultural context (2010:Kindle location 2315). However, he rejects the central assumption that the incarnation can act as a model for ministry.¹⁰⁹ Rather than being an “ongoing process’ to be repeated or a ‘model’ to be copied in Christian ministry,” the incarnation is a “unique and unrepeatable event” (2010:Kindle location 2301). In following the example of Christ, our action is never “inherently redemptive. In a theology of union with Christ, there is a fundamental asymmetry between Christ and his people ... between Christ’s redemptive work on the cross and the Christian’s carrying of the cross, which does not redeem others” (2010:Kindle location 2767).

Billings notes that the identification of ministry with the incarnation has led to wide practical and theological problems: “[T]he tendency of practitioners of incarnational ministry to see their own presence as inherently redemptive is one of the fatal flaws that penetrates many forms of incarnational ministry” (2010:Kindle location 2333).

In showing that missional thought underlines the importance of believers being sent into the world, Billings notes that the theme of sending so central in the Gospel of John does not provide the grounds for imitating the act of becoming incarnate. “The way we are sent as the Son is sent is ‘not the way in which Jesus came into the

¹⁰⁹ This in no way lessens the understanding that believers are called to a life of transformation in which the cruciform life of Christ is a clear pattern to be followed. Billings (2010:Kindle location 2764) shows that “our participation in Jesus Christ entails nothing less than entering into humble service that reflects the obedient servanthood of Christ.” See also Hesselgrave (2005:160) who says that we are all incarnationalists in the sense that we look to Christ as the model for life and work. This will be developed further in Chapter 6.

world (i.e. the incarnation), but *the nature of Jesus' relationship with his sender* (i.e. one of obedience and utter dependence)" (Köstenberger as quoted in Billings 2010:Kindle location 2353 emphasis in the original).

"Instead of seeing the incarnation as a process we undergo, we should seek to be very clear about a central doctrinal point: the power of the incarnation is precisely its uniqueness – that Jesus Christ is God's incarnate one and no other. Apart from the incarnation, Christ's obedient life, death, resurrection, and ascension would be of no use to us. Because of the incarnation, we know that it is none other than God who has sought us out, cleansed us from our sins, and given us new life by the Spirit. Since Christ is the Word incarnate and no other, we know and have fellowship with God in Christ. If God and humanity were not united in Jesus Christ, then being in Christ would not be a locus of our communion with God. In terms of advocating incarnational ministry for cross-cultural mission, there are aspects of the incarnational ministry discussion that can be affirmed, such as the need for self-sacrificial work in culture-learning and identifying with the other culture as one seeks to 'become all things to all people' (1 Cor 9:19–23). Yet for both doctrinal and practical reasons, the central claim that missionaries should imitate God's act of becoming incarnate needs to be denied." (2010:Kindle location 2520)

An article in *Die Burger*, "Sending Afrika: herkolonisasie of transformasie?"¹¹⁰ illustrates a move to incarnational ministry that rejects any need for proclamation and why the researcher describes it as a "dangerous drift".

"Schoeman¹¹¹ het besef sy sendingwerk beteken nie mense moet doktrines aanvaar nie, maar eerder dat hy hulle wil leer van vergifnis, om lief te hê, om nie te veroordeel nie – die dinge wat Jesus gepredik het. Sy Godsbegrip het verander en hy het begin glo in 'n God wat liefde is en ook in almal is. Van toe was sy benadering holisties. 'Ek het eers gegaan om sending te doen deur oogsorg, maar ek het teruggegaan om mense te help met oogsorg.' Hy en sy vrou het hulle heeltemal in die plaaslike kultuur ingeleef. Hulle het die taal Pasjtoe leer praat en sy het 'n boerka begin dra.

"Sodra mens God in ander mense sien, dan sien jy hulle nie meer as objekte of teikens om te bekeer nie. Dan kan jy hulle ernstig opneem, dit wat hulle sê belangrik ag en is daar 'n dieper empatie en 'n groter samewerking.

¹¹⁰ See <http://www.dieburger.com/bylae/2013-10-25-sending-afrika>, 25 October 2013. Viewed on 23/01/2014.

¹¹¹ The researcher knows Bernard Schoeman personally, and it was in his lounge that Bernard sensed a calling to go to Afghanistan. Bernard is a young man of integrity and a strong desire to serve God. The researcher experienced his "drift" away from proclamation over many conversations.

“Dit was nie meer nodig om mense te oortuig dat ek reg is of die waarheid het nie; ek het nie meer gefokus op die kognitiewe oordra van doktrines nie. Dit was eerder 'n vorm van heelmaak deur oogsorg en omgee. Só het Christene in Afganistan groot waarde toegevoeg. Maar Christene wat net tyd spandeer het deur plaaslike mense te probeer oortuig om die evangeliese boodskap kognitief te erken, se impak was minimaal.’

“Schoeman se benadering het toe só van koloniale evangelisme na post-evangelisme geswaai.”

There are many men of straw in this article, which could be the result of the writer’s selection of quotations rather than Schoeman’s true convictions. What is important to note, however, is the role that the example of Jesus plays, and how this new focus is termed “holistic”, even though it is a dramatic pendulum swing away from mission as a spiritual work and as proclamation.

Hesselgrave (2005:150) says that “Scripture and the history of missions offer an alternative model for missions theory and practice – the representational model”. This model sees a discontinuity between the mission of Jesus, which was unique in many respects, and the primary task of his disciples to witness to Jesus.

Schoeman clearly shifted away from the representational model to an incarnational model. Christians are called to witness to Jesus Christ as God’s way of salvation, redemption, deliverance and adoption. While the witness should most surely reflect conformity to the life of Jesus, when he no longer sees the need to proclaim Christ, he has lost a clear biblical mandate.

Newbigin (1995:40–44) makes an interesting comment that is relevant to this discussion when he reviews the claim that the early church lost the message of the “real Jesus” and therefore the Kingdom focus of the gospel, as is deemed to be reflected in the Gospel of John against the synoptic gospels. He counters this claim on the basis that Jesus did not just proclaim the Kingdom, but that the Kingdom was actually present in him. When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom, the early church could speak of Jesus. With regard to the fourth Gospel, he says:

“My point is that if it is true that the mission of Jesus was not only to proclaim the Kingdom of God but also to embody the presence of the Kingdom in his own person, then it is understandable that the switch from a Judaic to a Greek

environment should have *entailed a switch from proclaiming the Kingdom to proclaiming Jesus.*" (1995:41, my emphasis)

Newbigin's strong Christological understanding seems to pave the way to acceptance of the representational model. He shows how the invitation of Jesus in Matthew 11:25–30 is an invitation to find the blessings of the reign of God *in him* as the embodiment of the Kingdom (1995:43), and the acceptance or rejection of Jesus is the key to the Kingdom (1995:42). Because the Kingdom is present in Jesus (Lk 10:23–24), it is understood that the church is to witness to Jesus; as messengers that carry the gospel message of Jesus (1 Cor 15:1–3), they are representatives of him and of the reign of God.

The focus of incarnational ministry pits the ministry of Jesus against that of Paul.¹¹² According to this model, Jesus displayed attitudes, a lifestyle, activities and methods that should be emulated in mission today (Hesselgrave 2005:150). Hesselgrave (2005:152–158) builds a strong case for representational ministry in which there is a clear understanding that "there would be no gospel, no church, no mission apart from Christ, but it was Paul, acting as Christ's ambassador (from Greek *presbeuō*, 'to act as representative'), who explained the gospel, extended the church, and exemplified the mission" (2005:155). An incarnational ministry that loses the discontinuity between Christ and his followers, as well as the calling to witness to His uniqueness, could actually "*obscure* his identity and *detract* from his mission" (2005:153 his emphasis).

The January/February 2014 issue of *Christianity Today* reported on a research paper of great importance based on sociologist Robert Woodberry's 14 years of research into the effect of missionaries on the health of nations. It makes for fascinating reading and brings a vital insight into the discussion. The article gives personal insight into the study, building up to the discovery:

"'I was shocked,' says Woodberry. 'It was like an atomic bomb. The impact of missions on global democracy was huge. I kept adding variables to the model—factors that people had been studying and writing about for the past 40 years—and they all got wiped out. It was amazing. I knew, then, I was on to something really important.'" (38)

¹¹² See "Jesus vs. Paul" by Scot McKnight in *Christianity Today*, December 2010, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/december/9.25.html>. Viewed on 23/01/2014.

“Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations.” (39)

“There is one important nuance to all this: The positive effect of missionaries on democracy applies only to ‘conversionary Protestants.’¹¹³ Protestant clergy financed by the state, as well as Catholic missionaries prior to the 1960s, had no comparable effect in areas where they worked.” (40)

This should not come as a surprise, yet it is probably an unexpected outcome for many people. History is full of stories of the amazing social transformation that has taken place where the gospel has been preached and people have been changed.¹¹⁴

The article shows that much good flowed from the missionary presence as they often campaigned against abuse, loved people and sought to right wrongs, challenged old hierarchies and built literacy and education into people’s lives.

The study speaks to what is probably a common caricature of cross-cultural missions, that there is no real concern for anything other than people’s “souls”.¹¹⁵

Proclamation should always be motivated by love; true love cannot turn its back on physical hardship.¹¹⁶ William Carey’s influence on Indian society has been described

¹¹³ “Conversionary Protestants (1) actively attempt to persuade others of their beliefs, (2) emphasize lay vernacular Bible reading, and (3) believe that grace/faith/choice saves people, not group membership or sacraments. CPs are not necessarily orthodox or conservative.” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 106, No. 2 May 2012, 244.

¹¹⁴ A clear example of this is found in the biography of John Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides*. This is a gripping autobiography of a missionary to a tribe of cannibals in an incredibly hostile environment. His colonial prejudices are very clear to see and even taint his mission, yet through his desire to proclaim Christ, this people and many surrounding tribes are transformed. This leads to huge social change for the better. This is seen in similar stories with similar results throughout the jungles of South America, the Pacific Islands, Asia and Africa.

¹¹⁵ Don Richardson: “In our work, medicine, hygiene, economics, introducing new crops and education progressed hand-in-hand with the work of church planting. This was largely true of all the ministries carried out by evangelicals in what was then Irian Jaya, now Papua. Eventually, though, if the missionary stays too long, he generates a dependency syndrome which hinders both the growth of the church and the social and economic development of the society. People have to be given space and time to apply what they have been taught, thereby claiming ownership of it by fitting it to their own culture and environment.” *Mission Frontiers*, September-October 2011.

¹¹⁶ “While studying the Congo, Woodberry made one of his most dramatic early discoveries. Congo’s colonial-era exploitation was well known: Colonists in both French and Belgian Congo had forced villagers to extract rubber from the jungle. As punishment for not complying, they burned down villages, castrated men, and cut off children’s limbs. In French Congo, the atrocities passed without comment or protest, aside from one report in a Marxist newspaper in France. But in Belgian Congo, the abuses aroused the largest international protest movement since the abolition of slavery.

as spectacular. Scott Allen says of him: “He looked outward across the land and asked himself, ‘If Jesus were the Lord of India, what would it look like? What would be different?’ This question set his agenda and led to his involvement in a remarkable variety of activities aimed at glorifying God and advancing His Kingdom.”¹¹⁷

There is a direct and indirect impact on a social level that is much greater than supposed. It is accepted that there is a general element of “proclamation” in doing good works; it would seem that there could be an even stronger element of social transformation within the practice of proclamation that only becomes clear when viewed from a distance.

5.4.4. Cross-cultural missions as part of mission

The researcher is not contending that the status quo regarding “missions” at Grasvoëlkop be maintained, but for an appreciation of the importance of cross-cultural proclamation of the gospel as a vital component of the *missio Dei*. In a time when the swing is away from doctrine, truth and proclamation, it is important to preserve these biblical distinctions and not allow an unhealthy accommodation to postmodern culture. The way forward lies in using both hands, not tying one arm behind the back.

There should also be an understanding that the proclamation entrusted to the church is about individual salvation but must be more than that. Newbigin (1989:128–129) encapsulates this well:

“... by proclaiming Christ the Christian world mission offers to all people the possibility of understanding what God is doing in history. By its witness – in word and deed and common life – to the centrality of the work of Jesus in his ministry, death, and resurrection it offers to all people the possibility of understanding that the meaning and goal of history are not to be found in any of the projects,

“Why the difference? Working on a hunch, Woodberry charted mission stations all across the Congo. Protestant missionaries, it turned out, were allowed only in the Belgian Congo. Among those missionaries were two British Baptists named John and Alice Harris who took photographs of the atrocities—including a now-famous picture of a father gazing at his daughter’s remains—and then smuggled the photographs out of the country. With evidence in hand, they traveled through the United States and Britain to stir up public pressure and, along with other missionaries, helped raise an outcry against the abuses” (*Christianity Today*, January/February 2014:37)

¹¹⁷ Scott Allen, “William Carey: a missionary who transformed a nation”, *Mission Frontiers*, September-October 2011.

programs, ideologies, and utopias which offer themselves in competition with one another; the rise and decline of movements promising happiness in the future ... but that it is to be found in a person and a history which breaks decisively through this endless succession by breaching the final barrier of death and opening a new horizon for all those human affairs, a hope which on the one hand affirms and energizes all those human hopes which correspond to God's purpose as revealed in Christ, but yet on the other hand transcends them all.

“The Church, reaching out to every human community, living a life which is centered in the continual remembrance and re-enactment of that central revelation, offers to all people a vision of the goal of human history in which its good is affirmed and its evil is forgiven and taken away, a vision which makes it possible to act hopefully when there is no earthly hope, and to find the way when everything is dark and there are no earthly landmarks. This is what I have called the proclaiming aspect of the Church's world mission as it relates to universal history.”

In the biblical narrative of God's glory, there is a clear thread that focuses on the nations. Starting in the promise of blessing in Genesis 12:3, it flows through the Old Testament (for example Is 25:6–7), filling the Psalms, finding renewed focus in Matthew 28:19, forming the mission of Paul and the church (Ac 2:5; 10:35; 14:16; 15:16–17; Rm 1:5; 2 Tm 4:17), and finding fulfilment around the throne of God (Rv 5:9; 7:9–10; 14:6–7; 15:4; 21:3).

John Piper (2010:177–226) builds a case for reaching all nations as the mandate of the church to proclaim the gospel. Because of the unfinished nature of the work, there should be a special focus on those nations that are yet unreached and unengaged.

“But the fact that there is a distinct calling on the church to do frontier missionary work amongst all the remaining unreached people groups is crystal clear from the New Testament. Our question should be: What persons or agencies in the various churches and denominations should pick up this unique Paul-type mission? It is not the *only* work of the church. Timothy-type ministries are also important. He was a foreigner working at Ephesus, continuing what Paul had begun. But Paul had to move on because he was driven by a special commission and by a grasp of God's worldwide mission purpose as revealed in the Old Testament. There is no reason to think that God's purpose has changed today.

“Who then is to pick up the mantle of the apostle's unique missionary task of reaching more and more peoples? Shouldn't every denomination and church

have some vital group that is recruiting, equipping, sending, and supporting Paul-type missionaries to more and more unreached peoples? Shouldn't every church and denomination have a group of people (a missions agency or board) who sees its special and primary task as not merely to win as many individuals to Christ as possible but to win some individuals (i.e. plant a church) among all the unreached peoples of the earth?" (Piper 2010:219, his emphasis)

It is in this light that it makes sense to listen to CJH Wright's talk of the "ultimacy" of proclamation and Piper's call to be concerned with all human suffering, *especially* eternal suffering.

"It will be clear from what I have said about Paul's eschatological vision of salvation that I am not placing at the center of the argument the question of the salvation or the perdition of the individual. Clearly that is part of what is involved, but my contention is that the biblical picture is distorted if this is put in the center. But it may be asked: if it is true that those who die without faith in Christ are not necessarily lost, and if it is also true that those who are baptized Christians are not necessarily saved, what is the point of missions? Why not leave events to take their course?" (Newbigin 1989:127)

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ephesians contains the grand, sweeping description of the *missio Dei*. The proclamation of the gospel is clearly included as an instrument in God's hand (Eph 1:13; 3:6–7; 6:15,19). While the Kingdom of God allows one's vision of the mission of God to be broadened to a fuller biblical understanding, it should not lose this component of proclamation.

5.5. Conclusion

There is much here that challenges the congregation to broaden and deepen its participation in the *missio Dei*. An understanding of the biblical narrative should be constantly fortified through teaching and preaching. Newbigin (1989:128) encourages one to understand the meaning of one's own personal life in the light of the Bible as a unique interpretation of human and cosmic history. A narrow, individualistic view of salvation is then exchanged for a fuller understanding of the salvation of God in Christ that Ephesians demonstrates as encompassing the individual, church and cosmos.

The reign of God fills every believer with hope. This is a hope for meaning, salvation and a secure and glorified future. This hope is expressed in the witness of the church, in word, deed and its communal life. It is essential that the importance of the

church as sign, foretaste and instrument should be grasped and taught. The missional calling to communal life will be developed in the following chapter.

Peterson has opened up a fresh appreciation of creation by displaying the joy and the calling to be found in “time and place” that breaks through the debilitating sacred/secular divide that negates the impact that a congregation can have in its immediate context and in the world. The Kingdom is to be displayed and proclaimed by the church as a witness to the reign of God. This chapter has also shown that the full missional impact of a congregation can be lost when the place of the church and of proclamation is nullified, as happens in certain extremes of missional thinking.

The congregation has been at fault in allowing reductionism in its view of the mission of God through Jesus, and thus also of its focus on its own missional role. Many members are satisfied that they have “found Christ”, but are not integrated into his body or his mission. This entails a discovery of the congregation’s “missional vocation”.¹¹⁸ This call to discipleship will be discussed in the next chapter.

The SAPMC reading report shows that there are “positive calls to a missional vision that can move the congregation towards its God-ordained and hopeful future. The changing context in which the congregation finds itself must be noted, because the traditional existence of the congregation as a Dutch Reformed Church serving the Afrikaner cannot be sustained and brings no hopeful future. It is surely only through looking outward and crossing boundaries that the Lord’s ‘preferred future’ will be found.”

This would entail an understanding of the local context and discernment of how best to witness through hope and love to the local community following the process suggested by Stetzer and Putman (2006). There is openness to outsiders, a willingness to cross boundaries and a desire to be used by God. Older members have not shown resistance to change or a move away from tradition. This needs to be given channels of expression through wise leadership within the congregation.

¹¹⁸ Barret *et al* (2004:36): “Being a missional church is all about a sense of identity, shared pervasively in a congregation that knows it is caught up into God’s intent for the world. It comes from having heard, one way or another, the still small voice that says: ‘You are mine. I have called you to me. I join you to my compassionate approach to the whole world for its healing. You are witnesses to what I have done and what I will yet do.’ We are calling this ‘missional vocation’.”

The task of representing the reign of God as servant and messenger challenges the congregation to give expression to both these components in its missional calling. It is important for the congregation to discern how this will be displayed within its immediate context as it engages with and grows in understanding the needs of the community.

The biblical understanding of time, place and matter must be taught and modelled by the leadership. A rediscovery of its own time and place is important for the congregation. Luke 17:20–21 could be a key for the congregation to grow in its missional vision and ministry: “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.’” While the good work being done “at a distance” can be validated and appreciated, there is a strong need for God’s love in mission to be expressed in the “here and now” of the congregation’s immediate context.

The work that is done “at a distance” can be extended fruitfully to the local context:

- The support of the work in the Transkei is growing and could be extended to the local context. The youth involvement over the past years could grow into a local ministry of outreach and involvement with Xhosa young people in Port Elizabeth.
- The congregation needs to face the reality of poverty, unemployment and inequality that is so endemic to life in the Eastern Cape. The vision of 25:40¹¹⁹, and its involvement with poverty and vulnerable children could be extended to the Port Elizabeth area.
- The missions’ vision of the congregation could be developed and used to encourage other congregations.

¹¹⁹ See <http://www.2540.org>. 25:40 is an NGO that was started by a couple from the USA. The NGO is centred in Canzibe, Transkei in close partnership with the ministry that the congregation supports there. The congregation’s involvement with 25:40 has developed as the support of the work in Canzibe has grown over the last several years. Viewed on 26/01/2014.

- The congregation should also ask itself how it could engage with foreigners and unreached people who live locally. In the globalized world, the unreached are no longer just “far away”.

This chapter has sketched the hope that is central to the *missio Dei* as expressed through the reign of God, and of which the church is a foretaste, sign and instrument. This hope, when built on faith in the Triune God, finds expression through love. It is to this love that the last chapter turns as a final missional key for congregational formation.

CHAPTER 6

Third Missional Key: Love and the Call to Discipleship

6.1. Introduction

“I didn’t come to the conviction easily, but finally there was no getting around it: there can be no maturity in spiritual life, no obedience in following Jesus, no wholeness in the Christian life apart from an immersion and embrace of community. I am not by myself. Community, not the highly valued individualism of our culture, is the setting in which Christ is at play.” (Peterson 2005:226)

Having looked at God as the *Sender* of mission, and at the task – the *sending for* – of mission, the focus now is on those *sent*, the instruments of mission. For a fuller understanding of what it means to be the sent, this chapter will look at discipleship as part of the missional calling to love and community.

The purpose of this chapter will be to determine in which ways the individualism and self-centredness of Western culture can inhibit congregations in their missional calling and how this can be addressed through an understanding of discipleship as it is expressed in community and life. This study will build on the contribution of small groups in developing a missional character in the congregation by looking at the role that small groups should play and how this can be improved in the communal life of DRC Grasvoëlkop.

While many Western Christians see discipleship as an optional further step for truly committed believers, a study of the role that vocation plays in the life of a Christian and the process of spiritual formation will help to develop the insight that discipleship is a calling for all believers and is therefore the required expression of the ordinary life of the believer. The first step to achieving this is to understand that belonging to the community of believers is fundamental to Christian life, and that this is grounded in the character of the Trinity.

The Missional Manifesto declares in a seventh affirmation:

“We believe that discipling of the nations is the essential aspect of the mission of God (Matthew 28:18–20). The gospel calls people to respond in faith and repentance to the good news of the Kingdom in and by the gospel’s power. The

maturing of believers is inherent to the work of the church ushering those who place faith in Jesus from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity (Colossians 1:28). This means the church trains its members to be leaders in deeds of justice and ministry to the poor, as well as live out the implications of their faith in business, the arts, in politics, the academy, the home, and in all of life. As the church makes disciples, it equips them to bring their faith to bear on every area of their lives, private and public.”

A renewed faith and hope in the congregation will be displayed through a deepening love that flows in three directions: towards God; other believers – the body of Christ; and the world – one’s neighbours. It would be a mistake suddenly to start thinking in terms of what should be done, and forget that the mission belongs to God as the *missio Dei*, and that it is his work.

Newbigin has previously described the mission as the “proclaiming” of God’s kingship over history and cosmos and as the “presence” of God and kingship in Jesus and the church. He then speaks of the “prevenience”, the previousness of the Kingdom (1995:56). “Mission is not something that the church does; it is something that is done by the Spirit, who is himself the witness, who changes both the world and the church, who always goes before the church in its missionary journey.”

Acts 1:8 is much more a promise than a command. The Spirit will be given, not the Kingdom in its fullness, because the disciples are tasked to be witnesses; this they do in their “being” as much as in the “doing” – they are formed to be instruments of the Kingdom. Jesus’ incarnation, ministry in word and deed, and resurrection are accomplished through the power of the Spirit. This Spirit launches the church in mission. Acts shows a working of the Spirit in the world and the church. The church often displays weakness and brokenness, but it is in this that the working of God is present, not in human strength. Newbigin (1995:61) shows that the church is not in control of the mission and can therefore only witness insofar as it follows obediently where the Spirit leads.

At its core, discipleship means to follow. This “following” includes a believer into the mission of God. In one of his blogs, Stetzer¹²⁰ quotes Alan Hirsch:

¹²⁰ From <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2011/june/musings-on-manifesto-part-7-disciple-making.html>. Viewed on 28/01/2014.

“The church must become missional or fade into increasing irrelevance in the 21st Century. But we simply cannot get there from here without factoring discipleship into the equation. We can’t have one without the other: if there be no mission there can be no discipleship, and if there is no discipleship there will be no mission. And there can be no missional church if there is no disciple-making church—it’s as simple as that. If ever there was a time to recover the true meaning of the Great Commission to make disciples of the nations it is now.”

In the same blog Stetzer states: “The elephant in evangelicalism is this: We have focused our energies on our corporate worship gatherings, sermons, and organization – while we have struggled to produce disciples.” This is the great need in the church today, especially in the DRC and particularly in the Grasvoëlkop congregation. The task of raising disciples must be tackled with great urgency, but with much humility and dependence, with the awareness that many Western attempts have shown little growth and have been limited by a very cognitive, programmatic approach.

Discipleship grows from fellowship and service, which then leads to community and good works. Does the chicken come first, or the egg? As a process of “becoming”, discipleship is not programmatic, where the outcomes can be predicted. It is highly dependent on the Spirit, hence Paul’s many prayers for the different congregations.

In a congregation where there is a core of strong, committed believers, there must be an awareness of many members who are unconnected to each other and “stagnant” in their spiritual growth. This is a huge challenge for the congregation and needs urgent attention. In a culture of strong individualism, many do not see the need for fellowship or commitment to a local body. In a secularized world, many are happy that they are “right with God” and do not see the need for any further expression of faith, or to be part of God’s mission.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Ephesians is divided into two sections. In the first three chapters, there is a strong focus on who God is and what he is doing – the indicatives of faith. Chapters 4 to 6 are filled with imperatives, with “walk” being the first and the most common. This gives an excellent overview of the Christian life:

- 4:1: “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called ...”

- 4:17: “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.”
- 5:2: “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
- 5:8: “... for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ...”
- 5:15: “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise ...”

There are two verses in which “walk” is not in the imperative:

- 2:2: “... in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience ...”
- 2:10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Martin Lloyd-Jones (1979) brings a wonderful missional insight to Ephesians 2:10:

“These New Testament Christians are constantly being encouraged to consider their privileged position. They are a small group in a great pagan society but they are being told to rejoice, to consider their wonderful destiny; they are being reminded of who they are and what they are, and they are told to lift up their heads and to go forward in a triumphant manner. They are in the privileged position of being taken up into a great plan.

“It is God who is the Workman. It is God who is active ... the Bible is nothing but the activity of God. And yet, even we who are Christians tend to forget that, and to think often of our Christian life, and of our being Christian at all, in terms of something we have done, or something we have attained.

“We will persist in thinking of God as being more or less passive and simply ready to respond to what we do and what we desire. But the very term the apostle uses here should make such thoughts quite impossible. God is the workman. God is the One fashioning. It is a wonderful picture of God as a kind of Artist, as some kind of Artificer.” (1979:142–143)

Indeed, we can take heart. Discipleship belongs to the realm and reign of God. He creates us as his workmanship and he creates good works for us to walk in.

6.2. Discipleship and community

“I trust that none of my readers is that grotesque anomaly, an unchurched Christian. The New Testament knows nothing of such a person. For the church lies at the very centre of the eternal purpose of God.” (John Stott, as quoted in DeYoung & Kluck 2009:159)

Ephesians, according to Komolafe (2007:273ff), is an epistle essentially about Christ and his work of cosmic reconciliation, and about the church as it fulfils the purposes of Christ. The nature of the church is missional and believers are taken up into the household of God, as expressed in the church.

A rough count found 93 uses of the second person pronoun “you” in the letter, of which only four were singular; those four were all quotations from the Old Testament. In Afrikaans, unlike in English, there is a clear differentiation between the second person singular and plural (“jy” and “julle”), yet it seems as if most members read this letter and the Bible with almost total blindness and disregard for the plural. It is as Peterson says: “Getting saved is easy; becoming a community is difficult, damnably difficult” (2005:250).

The fullness of what the church is comes to the fore so clearly in this letter. There is much richness in the description of the church as:

- “body” of Christ – 1:22–23, 2:16, 4:4, 4:15–16;
- “one new man” – 2:15;
- “fellow citizens with the saints” – 2:19;
- “members of the household of God” – 2:19;
- “temple”, “dwelling place for God” – 2:21–22;
- “mystery” to the Gentiles – 3:2–6, 10–11;
- new self in Christ – 4:24, and
- bride – 5:25–32.

It is in the church that God's plan, his mission, becomes visible. The gospel that is preached is the message of Christ, of his "unsearchable riches", and reveals a mystery, that all people can partake of God's promises so that "through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:6–10).

The call to discipleship is a call to community because the call to discipleship is a call to love. The love for God is truly expressed as love for one's brothers (1 Jn 4:7–8,20–21).

"Belief and behaviour are essential, but as the defining mark of the Christian they lack one thing – relationship." (Peterson 2005:313)

"No matter how right we are in what we believe about God, no matter how accurately we phrase our belief or how magnificently and persuasively we preach or write or act, we falsify the creed, we confess a lie. Believing without loving is what gives religion a bad name." (Peterson 2005:261)

It is important to recall the discussion in the introduction to Chapter 5 and the insight of Torrance (1996:73) on the prospective aspect of the incarnation in which Christ came to bring man to communion with God and each other. It is incumbent on the congregation to discard an institutional view of the church in order to be formed into a body that participates in the mission of God.

The strong individualism of Western culture with its emphasis on personal freedom and choice is often expressed in fragmentation and isolation that, when coupled with an institutional view of the church, leads to an undervaluing of relationships within a congregation. Paying tithes and church attendance become the standard for gauging a member's spiritual standing. Caring for each other, building relationships and service are viewed as optional extras. An understanding of the Trinity and the *missio Dei* challenges the church to rediscover not only faith and hope, but also love, which is the full expression of faith and hope (Gl 5:6; Col 1:5; 1 Jn 4:8).

Chester (2005:159–173) shows how the image of God as a triune community is reflected in both man's creation and recreation.

"But the Trinity is more than a close family. The persons of the Trinity share one divine nature. It is a community of *being*.

“... As we have seen, the Cappadocian Fathers developed the idea of perichoresis to express this. Each person of the Trinity shares the life of the other two so in each person the being of God is fully manifested. The eternal God-in-himself is a mutually indwelling, loving community.” (2005:160 his emphasis).

Chester makes the important point that the Trinity is more than just a pattern for Christian life in community. They participate in the Trinitarian community through the Spirit (2005:178). When they participate in Christ through faith, they come to participate in the divine community (2005:167). The church is the new humanity being remade in the image of God. “Viewing God primarily as a monarchy of one will tend towards a hierarchical view of the church. But a Trinitarian view of the divine persons in perichoretic relationship will tend towards a communitarian view of the church” (2005:169).

Torrance agrees with Chester that:

“It is in this Trinitarian way we have to see worship, as the fulfillment of God’s purposes in creation and redemption, to bring us into a life of communion with himself and one another. The triune God is in the business of creating community, in such a way that we are never more truly human, never more truly persons, than when we find our true being-in-communion.” (1996:72).

Flett shows that a true Trinitarian understanding of the *missio Dei* must break through any disjunction of church from mission:

“Mission is not a second step in addition to some other more proper being of the church, because, as the living one, God’s relationship to the world belongs to his eternal being. The Christian community is, as such, a missionary community, or she is not a community that lives in fellowship with the triune God as he lives his own proper life.” (2010:Kindle location 421).

Clearly then, if the church shares the life of God and exists for God, it must then also exist for the world (2010:Kindle location 3159). The church cannot exist apart from its commission.

The understanding of the church as community, both participating in and reflecting the triune community, fills the church with missional vibrancy. M Scott Boren (2007) gets the place of the church beautifully right when he says:

“The community shared by the godhead is missional in nature, self-giving in such a way that God invites people to participate in the God life, sharing in the community in which God exists. As the church enters into this communion with God, sitting at his table with him, his people share community with one another. As the church practices life as community it becomes contagious, sharing life with those who have yet to participate in communion with God.

“Communion with God, community with one another and contagion of life overflowing from the nature of the relational God comprise the three aspects of what it means to live as a relational way of being the church.” (2007:18)

He calls this “relational kingdom living”. This is the very real challenge facing the congregation: to cultivate this way of life in a time when the church is marginalized, life is privatized and lived under pressure, everyone appears to be in a constant rush and relationships have become commodified.

6.2.1. Small groups

Small groups have often been suggested as the all-encompassing answer to congregational problems. Boren (2007) shows that this is an unrealistic expectation of the impact that small groups can have. He identifies 10 assumptions that are usually made when congregations strive to build relationships through small groups and then proposes alternatives that, as “relational truth,” help to make the role of small groups more effective.

These 10 insights are beacons that can help the congregation chart a different course. A summary of the 10 myths and relational truths will be used to analyze the congregation.

1) Prioritize the way of relationship (2007:23–44)

Myth: Doing the right thing without consideration of the right way will produce community.

Relational truth: God’s relational Kingdom is a product of leaders who establish a way of living that stands in contrast to the culture.

The church in the West often sees small groups as a solution, then focuses on programme and structure, tailoring it to individual needs and then implements this in a way that accommodates as many people as possible. This is a programmatic

approach; a system is bought, or bought into, and the hope is that “success” will flow from it. But this does not automatically lead to the building of relationships. A pattern of pragmatic, individualistic life is not broken.

What is needed is to learn relationships. There needs to be a sharing of life, people connecting through love, care and breaking out of their isolation. Jesus spent so much time building into the life of his disciples. Yet today pastors, in their busyness, are often the most isolated people in the church.

This relational approach is a call for dramatic change, starting with how one views oneself, one’s pastor and brothers and sisters.

The Grasvoëlkop congregation also “bought into” small groups as a solution, following a programme and expecting results. Even though there is much togetherness and sharing in the congregation, it is not part of its DNA.

2) Gather around the presence (2007:45–66)

Myth: Groups will succeed if they are built around a specific practical strategy or method.

Relational truth: Relational Kingdom groups are based on the reality of Christ’s presence within those groups.

The key to growth is often sought in leaders, training or the right material. What is often not central is the presence of Christ. Jesus is the head of his church and is present. Groups may gather for many good reasons, without expecting to be in his presence and hear from him. For that, silence, listening and waiting are important. It is not up to the leader to make the group work: “The job of the group leader is to take people to Jesus and to take Jesus to people. Jesus is the authority and only his keys matter. He is the one who causes people to share honestly. He is the one who touches lives and changes people. He is the one who moves through the group to reach out to the un-churched” (2007:60).

Jesus’ presence is seen when someone opens up to share a need, weakness is admitted, a sin confessed, restoration sought, care expressed; often in small movements that break the “programme”. People gather with different needs. Each

group should have at least a couple of co-leaders who are committed to meeting in the Name of Jesus and who will seek his presence and point to him as centre.

This happens at times, but it is not intentional. Leaders need to be equipped with this vision.

3) Seeking God's relationship Kingdom (2007:67–90)

Myth: Meeting in small groups is the central source of biblical community.

Relational truth: Relational Kingdom life requires the church to address how people do life, not just how they do small groups.

The success of small groups is not in meeting as small groups, but in a way of living in relationship with others. Small groups grow and function when they are not part of an individualistic view of salvation, but become part of a Kingdom vision.

“The kingdom of God is the reign of God, the rule of God where people operate according to the order of the King. Jesus came announcing the kingdom, inviting people to a way of life that would result in the return of God's people from exile, the return of God's presence to Zion, and the defeat of Israel's enemies. His call to the kingdom did not involve the annihilation of competing kingdoms. Instead, Jesus called people to a new way of living in the midst of a world that would not recognize their validity as a people. He called them to live as a chosen people, even though they had no land or officials in positions of power. He called them to a different life, a life that would establish a parallel kingdom in the midst of the kingdoms of this world. This is God's relational kingdom, one where the people of God relate to God and to one another in communion. He did not call them to a private religion of personal beliefs. He called them to a corporate life as chosen people.” (2007:77)

More than meetings are required; what is needed are true “life connections”. This calls for a more balanced and simplified lifestyle.

The researcher sees some of this happening as more members connect informally with others in situations outside the normal group gatherings and friendship and fellowship are being built by a group who regularly visit the Transkei to support and minister. There is some excitement and expectation within the congregation to see this coming to fruition.

4) Write a new story of mission (2007:91–116)

Myth: *Building a new small group ministry structure on old stories of church will transform and build community.*

Relational truth: *Relational Kingdom life through small groups is founded on a missional base which compels a church to write a new story of being the people of God.*

The church needs to see itself within God's grand narrative and to understand its part in the *missio Dei*. Often churches have groups, each with their own aims, the pastor has a vision for the congregation, and members see themselves in their own "story" of the congregation, with certain fixed traditions and patterns of expectation. Each congregation needs to discover its place and calling and to become contextual (in terms expressed in Stetzer and Putman's *Breaking the missional code*). The church needs to re-imagine what it means to be church and, through listening to God, write a new story.

"The mission is much greater than a church's effort for growth and evangelism. To be the sent people of God on mission is to be a missionary people, not just a group of people who gather for worship and attend small group. To be the sent people of God is to manifest the character and compassion of God's heart in tangible ways in a particular time and a specific location. With this understanding of the church on mission, the vocation of church changes from simply attracting and feeding spiritual consumers. Its goal is not to get as many of these consumers into small groups as possible. Instead, the mission of the church is to allow the Spirit of God to redeem spiritual consumers and transform them into a kingdom people who live as an alternative society. The church is the local manifestation of God's kingdom." (Boren 2007:101)

This sits well with a new understanding of time and place. The congregation has been rethinking its story. The story of the congregation is being told and people are seeing themselves as part of a story in which God is working. What is needed is faith that God will move forward with them, will open new doors and opportunities, and the realization that they are to live this story in the here and the now.

The importance of developing leaders is also discussed. This remains key, yet challenging. Leaders have been stepping forward, but have experienced much personal hardships and challenges. Prayer is needed.

5) Create contagious relationships (2007:117–144)

Myth: Small group community is best fostered in a context in which group members focus solely on ministering to the needs of one another.

Relational truth: Relational Kingdom groups follow Jesus' mission to the world and develop deep, contagious fellowship.

The small group becomes the means of outreach for a congregation as Christ leads his followers outwards into the lives of outsiders.

“The presence of Christ creates groups that have contagious community that are on mission with him. This concept means that the mission of groups is not limited to the experience of community by believers. Bruno Bettelheim makes the point by stating, ‘I am convinced communal life can flourish only if it exists for an aim outside itself. Community is viable if it is the outgrowth of a deep involvement in a purpose which is other than, or above, that of being a community.’ Groups must have a mission that looks outside of the group in order to propagate life in Christ.” (2007:119)

Evangelism becomes something that flows out of one's life as one connects one's life with others, as one lives before the world in love and unity, and as small groups include outsiders. Small groups have unique gifts and situations that can be discerned and used to serve in mission. A sharing of life can take many different shapes, leading to inclusion of the outsider.

The researcher suspects that the groups in Grasvoëlkop are still very far from this. Their gathering is seen as being for their own edification and is quite comfortable. A missional vision, sense of calling and understanding of the self-giving of Christ will have to be built.

6) Embrace the relational dance (2007:145–172)

Myth: Small groups can develop biblical community without an overt dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Relational truth: Relational Kingdom groups are a product of the dynamic life of the Holy Spirit.

“Early church theologians often described the Trinity by using the image of perichoresis, or a holy dance. Perichoresis is a metaphor that ‘suggests moving around, making room, relating to one another without losing identity.’ In this

dance, the one God—who is tri-personal—is a life of self-giving love, as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dance together in perfect love and unity. Our participation in the Holy Spirit is the invitation to dance with God in his life of love and unity. True fellowship occurs when beings who are different share something in common, when they dance the dance of life together. The Holy Spirit comes to sweep us up into the life of God.” (2007:149)

The Spirit is gifted to the church and works in power, order and sharing (where his working is experienced in community with others and not just through an individualistic spirituality). The *koinonia* of the Spirit can be sought to enrich small group life in the dimensions of edification, gifts, reconciliation, creativity, risk-taking and prayer. Boren concludes as follows: “To say that there is a night and day difference between groups that are drawn into the dance of the Holy Spirit and those that don’t would be an understatement. When the Spirit of God is quenched in a group, life is absent. But when a group seeks the Holy Spirit, freedom, joy and peace takes residence in the midst of the group and then empowers the members to participate in God’s mission in this world” (2007:171).

As a traditional, conservative and Reformed congregation, it would be an understatement to say that the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the congregation and the believer has been seriously undervalued. Through challenges, sermons and testimonies, there is a growing awareness of a need to “make room” for the Spirit in congregational life and to seek God’s face for this to happen.

7) Connect relationships on four levels (2007:173–192)

Myth: The small group/large group structure is all that is needed to develop community in a church.

Relational truth: God’s relational Kingdom connects people on four levels.

There are four spaces or distances that determine how a person relates to others. First, there is *public belonging*. The second level of belonging is called the *social level*. Connecting on this level occurs in smaller groupings than those of the public level, usually in groups of 70 to 120 people. These are neighbour relationships. On the third level, people connect in the *personal space*. This is where people share private thoughts, personal dreams and feelings in a smaller group of 10 or 12.

The final level is called the *intimate space*.

Churches generally think only in terms of large group and small group ministry. There is a lot of pressure on small groups to “perform” in a congregation. Often there is a desire to see many more people involved and the level of commitment required is lowered to accommodate more people. There is often also pressure on the leader to strive for a deep level of intimacy from each of the members. This is unrealistic and places too much of a burden on the small group. Midsized social groups build community, and intimate groups of two or three meet for accountability or prayer for each other at a deeper level.

The congregation has had some success at connecting people in the social space. This can be further encouraged with intentional focus. At times, prayer triplets have succeeded in connecting people at an intimate level, but this has stopped recently. It would be wise to explain this concept to small groups and to allow those deeper relationships to develop in subgroups within the small group setting.

8) Invest relationally in group leaders (2007:193–216)

Myth: Small group leaders will flourish when they are managed properly by coaches and pastors.

Relational truth: In God’s relational Kingdom, small group leaders need someone who invests in them to empower them for mission.

“Why is such relational investment so crucial? Small group leaders will care for their people in the same way that they are being cared for. If the pastor trains and appoints leaders and only talks with them when they see a problem, how do you think those leaders will care for their groups? Barring exceptions they will lead their groups every week, perform their minimal duties and only address issues of concern as they arise. They won’t be actively involved in the lives of their group members, because no one in leadership is actively involved in their lives.”
(2007:197)

This has been one of the real weaknesses of the small group system in the congregation. The role of the pastor needs to be seriously considered, as well as members’ expectations. Relational investment is required and needs to be considered and implemented within the clear biblical framework.

9) Equip the people for Kingdom relationships (2007:217–241)

Myth: Equipping that solely addresses “right Christian thinking” will adequately prepare people for relational Kingdom living and fruitful small group life.

Relational truth: In God’s relational Kingdom, equipping the people must prepare them to walk as aliens and strangers in this world.

In the traditional church system, there is much emphasis on doctrine and right thinking. The emphasis is on preaching and teaching. There is an unhealthy expectation that the small group will “deliver” in shaping lives to practical Christ-conformity. Churches need to “break free from cognitive patterns of discipleship” (2007:235). The process of discipleship is to form people to live counter-culturally as citizens of heaven.

It is encouraging to see that some of Boren’s suggestions are functioning well:

- Using small groups for discussing and forming application rather than more teaching;
- Equipping and involvement in needs in the community and province is growing;
- A focused 40 Day Adventure has been planned for later in 2014.

It will be good to build these activities intentionally and to design involvement around sermon series that focus on practical living.

10) Mobilize for war (2007:241–266)

Myth: Small groups will grow and multiply if they simply serve as a place to discuss the Bible and connect people in relationships.

Relational truth: In God’s relational Kingdom, groups and individuals are mobilized into units for spiritual warfare.

“Spiritual warfare is a biblical perspective of what is transpiring on the earth.

“Satan’s strategy to undermine the Western church has been to quietly and subversively weave the lie into the church’s self-understanding, that the battle

against evil is much smaller in Western culture than it is in countries around the world.

“Believing such a lie results in a life of spiritual mediocrity and below-average small groups. People gather every week to help each other feel better about their lives, but there is no call to war, no call to enter into the spiritual battle to lead men and women from captivity. Instead, small groups become enclaves for what Eugene Peterson calls the spirituality of narcissism.” (2007:244–245)

While there is much here that is true, especially with regard to the connection of both prayer and the mission of God to spiritual warfare, this section of Boren’s book is less practical and difficult to follow with some muddled insights.¹²¹

Boren does not give a “programme” for discipleship or developing community. He does, however, show what true discipleship and community should look like. There is a call to a radically different way of thinking about community and for change in congregations. Through his understanding of God as Trinity and the place of the church in the mission of God, his insights provide an important challenge for the congregation to implement as it reflects on its community life.

These insights are deeply challenging and reflect the need for what Guder terms the continual conversion of the church. For the congregation to move in this direction, much change will be needed, flowing from a conviction of where their own sinfulness and selfishness is a barrier to such change and a sense of calling to be open to the formation of new community through the Triune God.

6.3. Discipleship and the ordinary

Genie: It’s all part and parcel, the whole “genie gig”. [grows to a gigantic size]
PHENOMENAL COSMIC POWERS! [shrinks down inside the lamp]
Itty-bitty living space!

This scene from Disney’s *Aladdin*¹²² demonstrates something of the dramatic shift that takes place from Ephesians 1 to 3 to Ephesians 4 to 6. The change from the first half of the letter to the second is not just from indicative to imperative; it is a shift

¹²¹ A more balanced and practical view is found in Chuck Lowe, *Territorial spirits and world evangelism?*, Brian Borgman and Rob Ventura, *Spiritual warfare: A biblical and balanced perspective* and Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer, *Spiritual warfare and missions: The battle for God’s glory among the nations*.

¹²² From <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0103639/quotes>. Viewed on 25/01/2014.

from all that is high, transcendent, lofty and filled with grandeur to that which is small and mundane.

In the first half of the epistle, there is a spectacular cosmic vision: highest heaven, Triune God, Christ filling all in all, the work of grace. In the second half, there is a dramatic shift to the ordinary lives of workers, slaves, parents and people, living their ordinary day-to-day lives.

Unlike the genie in *Aladdin*, we are not prisoners; we are just very, very tiny. God fills us with his presence, with his heavenly blessings and his cosmic purposes. Unlike the genie, Christians do not desire release from this smallness. They find satisfaction in God's plan to redeem them, renew them and fill them. This is their hope: they have Christ in them. They are anointed with the Spirit and are taken up in the mission of the Father. It is through the resurrection that the world is opened up to the new creation and it is through the resurrection that they are opened up to a new life (Eph 2:1–10), new possibilities (Eph 1:19–20; 2:6) and to community (Peterson 2005:232). They await glorification in a new physical body in the consummation of God's purposes in the new heavens and earth. Discipleship, then, is a calling to love that flows from the faith and joy found in their hope.

6.3.1. The ordinary

There is a danger that one can overlook the place of the ordinariness of everyday life in the life of a believer and the role that it plays within the mission of God. The previous chapter underlined the work of God and the calling of the church in the profane. Here it is important to see the work of God and the missional calling that is found in the mundane.

Tim Chester discusses the place of washing dishes in the Christian life in a message titled "A theology of washing up"¹²³ that shows the missional opportunities of such a mundane task. He describes how this can be a God-like activity that creates order from chaos, an act of service, and an opportunity to build relationships and friendships in a missional context. This theme is taken up in a blog by Tish Harrison

¹²³ From <http://www.theologynetwork.org/theology-of-everything/a-theology-of-washing-up.htm>. Viewed on 25/01/2014.

Warren,¹²⁴ who describes her earlier breakaway from “comfortable Christianity” as giving her “some ‘ordinary radical’ street cred”, but now being challenged by the difficulties of an ‘ordinary’ life.

“Now, I’m a thirty-something with two kids living a more or less ordinary life. And what I’m slowly realizing is that, for me, being in the house all day with a baby and a two-year-old is a lot more scary and a lot harder than being in a war-torn African village. What I need courage for is the ordinary, the daily every-dayness of life. Caring for a homeless kid is a lot more thrilling to me than listening well to the people in my home. Giving away clothes and seeking out edgy Christian communities requires less of me than being kind to my husband on an average Wednesday morning or calling my mother back when I don’t feel like it.

“... We were part of a young, Christian movement that encouraged us to live bold, meaningful lives of discipleship, which baptized this world-changing impetus as the way to really follow after Jesus. We were challenged to impact and serve the world in radical ways, but we never learned how to be an average person living an average life in a beautiful way.

“... I still want to live radically for Jesus and be part of him changing the world. I still think mediocrity is dull, and I still fret about settling.

“But I’ve come to the point where I’m not sure anymore just what God counts as radical. And I suspect that for me, getting up and doing the dishes when I’m short on sleep and patience is far more costly and necessitates more of a revolution in my heart than some of the more outwardly risky ways I’ve lived in the past. And so this is what I need now: the courage to face an ordinary day — an afternoon with a colicky baby where I’m probably going to snap at my two-year old and get annoyed with my noisy neighbor — without despair, the bravery it takes to believe that a small life is still a meaningful life, and the grace to know that even when I’ve done nothing that is powerful or bold or even interesting that the Lord notices me and is fond of me and that that is enough.”

Discipleship is usually associated with concepts of sacrifice, commitment, suffering and devotion. A call to discipleship is expressed in these terms, and while this is not incorrect, it can lead to a further divide in which areas of ordinary life are seen as nothing more than a necessary hindrance to a life of discipleship.

A call to discipleship in and through the “ordinary” of life should not be seen as a diluting of discipleship. “Ordinary” should not be equated with the life that many

¹²⁴ “Courage in the ordinary” by Tish Harrison Warren, from <http://thewell.intervarsity.org/blog/courage-ordinary>. Viewed on 25/01/2014.

church members lead that exhibits materialism, worldliness, a lack of community and holiness and little reflection on what is important in life. It is rather a call to find and follow Christ in all areas of life, including the most mundane. The researcher will use the term “ordinary Christian” to express this calling to discipleship in the everyday and the mundane.

The missional call of the church should not only be expressed in projects organized in the name of the church. DeYoung and Kluck (2009:42) do well to consider the role that individual Christians play as part of the missional expression of the church.

“To be sure, more can and should be done, but many Christians are already involved in salt-and-light activities – as they run their business according to Christian principals, serve the less fortunate through Community Mental Health, bring their faith to bear in movies and television, and disciple young people as public school teachers. It simply boggles my mind when I read George Barna conclude based on his research that ‘local churches have virtually no influence in our culture ... The local church appears among entities that have little or no influence on society.’”

The researcher recalls previous attempts to motivate the congregation to action by asking if anyone would miss the congregation if it were somehow to disappear overnight. Of course, in terms of projects and outreach to the community, there is much lacking, but this question misses the huge influence of ordinary Christian living in marriages and homes, schools and communities. There is much empathy, compassion and charity within the community that is not done in the “name of the church”, but in the Name of Christ.

Unwarranted feelings of guilt can unwittingly be placed on believers when there is a continual call to be involved in a stream of activities and outreaches in the church without acknowledging the importance of the vocational calling that each believer has or the appreciation for the compassion and service that is often lived out abundantly behind the scenes. It is freeing and empowering to hear that the ordinary running of the household, ordinary school meetings, and the ordinary day-to-day grind do not stand in competition to a life of discipleship or a calling to commitment, but are the arena in which the Christian life can be lived fruitfully. There are seasons of life when the profane and the mundane seem to be overtaxing; this should not be seen as precluding a life of discipleship.

A slew of books on radical Christian discipleship have been published in evangelical circles over the last several years. The fact that some authors have spoken at huge conferences has gained them a slight status and raised this issue to a heightened level. There have been different responses, including those who, with cautious disagreement, stress the place of the ordinary in discipleship.

Anthony Bradley¹²⁵ sees this coming from a Revivalist Christian understanding that reads the Bible's chief narrative in terms of sin, repentance, faith, and disciple-making, against the Reformed understanding of the biblical story in terms of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. A too narrow focus on discipleship does not allow one to see that "the redemption in Christ reaches as far as the fall in terms of culture and the arts, business, education, politics, law, entertainment and so on".

It is worth repeating: a call to discipleship in the ordinary is not a call to reflect the standards of Western living. Compared to the cultural lifestyle, an ordinary life lived for Christ should look very different, even extraordinary. It should be a life of:

- *Balance.* Western society feeds individualism, consumerism and materialism and steers people into an unbalanced life in which they focus much time, effort and money on one specific area at the cost of balance. This may be work, entertainment, hobbies, children or possessions and gives rise to idolatry, the besetting sin of our time. An ordinary discipleship will understand the danger of an unbalanced life and see the opportunity to represent God in all of life.
- *Community.* Many Christians have a very low commitment to church. There is a strong calling to unity and involvement within the body of Christ and the ordinary Christian life should include loyalty to the local body of believers, faithfulness in attendance and involvement with the understanding that there are seasons to life and spiritual giftings which mitigate this involvement.

¹²⁵ Anthony Bradley, "If Platt's *Radical* was radical", 12 May 2010, from http://www.worldmag.com/2010/05/if_platt_s_radical_was_radical. Viewed on 31/01/2014. Also see ML Anderson, "Here come the Radicals!" *Christianity Today* March 2013, from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/march/here-come-radicals.html>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

- *Compassion*. An ordinary Christian life is a life involved with other people. A life that includes service, crossing boundaries, hospitality and sacrifice so that there can be witness to the reign of God.

Rather than experiencing what a well-known hymn¹²⁶ commends, when we turn our eyes upon Jesus, we should see the things of earth more clearly defined rather than “strangely dimmed” as Christ plays in creation, history and community. Wittmer (2004:96) argues that “temporal earthly endeavors are opportunities to pursue kingdom values”. It is not a case of giving our greatest effort to spiritual things and then using what resources are left for secular matters.

“But what if, rather than view God’s preeminence as an obligation to rank everything else as a distant second and below, we recognize that giving God first place demands that we remain active in every area of life? Then seeking first the kingdom of God will not mean that in every area of life we passionately strive to honor God. This view recognizes that because God the Creator has made every area of life, his preeminence necessarily includes rather than excludes each aspect of our existence. Rather than think that God’s primacy means nothing else matters, it is precisely because God is number one that everything else does matter.” (2004:97)

Wittmer contends (2004:99) that there is a necessary balance to this lifestyle that is difficult to achieve by showing how Bavinck¹²⁷ describes the dual responsibility of the Christian life. One parable of the Kingdom pictures it as hidden treasure, which is worthy of the sacrifice of everything. On the other hand, the Kingdom is like yeast that leavens an entire lump of dough. This cautions against shunning the world. “God’s preeminence means that nothing can be elevated to his level. But his preeminence also means that nothing can be dismissed. Nothing is as valuable as God, but because of God, everything is now valuable” (2004:100).

An understanding of how this recognition of the ordinary can be seen as representing the reign of God can be explained by looking at the decision of the Eastern Cape Synod to play a greater role in the area of education, something that is greatly needed in this province, where the education department has been placed

¹²⁶ “Turn your eyes upon Jesus”, Helen Howarth Lemmel (1863–1961).

¹²⁷ Herman Bavinck, “The catholicity of Christianity and the church”. *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 November 1992, pp. 223–224, 236, 248.

under administration in terms of section 100(1)(b) of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996.

The Synod desires that congregations take up the cause of education and develop strategies to support schools, learners and educators to function more effectively. This is to be commended and Grasvoëlkop has played its role over the last couple of years in inviting the local schools and community to join in prayer on the Sunday earmarked as a day of prayer for education. This vision must certainly be communicated through the church and creative programmes can have a significant influence.

What needs to be added, however, is the insight that hundreds of educators and thousands of learners can be encouraged to make a difference through a clear calling to discipleship in their ordinary lives. There is also a calling on Christians to take up this challenge in the public sphere. The government is the biggest role-player in education, and should be called to account for their inability to function well. A member of the congregation is a human rights lawyer and, through a series of court cases against the government, has been able to have a significant impact on education and the lives of educators, learners and their families.

When someone like this, in a high-pressured job, does not have the capacity to serve in the soup kitchen or on the church council, they must surely not be made to feel guilty. A kingdom vision and an understanding of God's creation of time, space and matter precludes that.

6.3.2. Vocation as discipleship

A significant part of understanding discipleship in the ordinary is a biblical understanding of vocation. This is connected to the understanding of the priesthood of all believers. Often, when ministers want to encourage an end to the clergy/laity divide, they speak easily of the calling of teachers and nurses and (maybe) lawyers, but what of the janitor, the dock worker, the mechanic, the plumber or the secretary?

The Reformation broke the Platonic influence that caused celibacy to be valued more highly than marriage, poverty above possessions and monastic contemplation above sweaty brows and dirty hands. Especially important was the rediscovery of

vocation as a calling from God. This calling was true for all biblically legitimate jobs, not just ministers or teachers and nurses. The Reformers saw vocations as being wider than just one employ, and included all spheres in which one held a specific responsibility (Wittmer 2004:128). These vocations include being a child; a sibling; a spouse; a parent; a student, or a teacher; an employee, or an employer; a citizen of this country, and a member of a church. Each of these roles has certain responsibilities of service to God and to others.

Martin Luther said:

“To serve God simply means to do what God has commanded and not to do what God has forbidden. And if only we would accustom ourselves properly to this view, the entire world would be full of service to God, not only the churches but also the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop, and the field of townsfolk and farmers. For it is certain that God would have not only the church and world order but also the house order established and upheld. All, therefore, who serve the latter purpose—father and mother first, then the children, and finally the servants and neighbors—are jointly serving God; for so He wills and commands.

“In the light of this view of the matter a poor maid should have the joy in her heart of being able to say: Now I am cooking, making the bed, sweeping the house. Who has commanded me to do these things? My master and mistress have. What has given them authority over me? God has. Very well, then it must be true that I am serving not them alone but also God in heaven and that God must be pleased with my service. How could I not possibly be more blessed? Why, my service is equal to cooking for God in heaven!

“In this way a man could be happy and of good cheer in all his trouble and labor; and if he accustomed himself to look at his service and calling in this way, nothing would be distasteful to him. But the devil opposes this point of view tooth and nail, to keep one from coming to this joy and to cause everybody to have a special dislike for what he should do and is commanded to do. So the devil operates in order to make sure that people do not love their work and no service be rendered to God.” (Quoted in Wittmer 2004:135)

This insight was underlined for the researcher when he preached on the Lord’s Prayer in Luke 11:3, specifically the supplication for “our daily bread”.¹²⁸ Bread is not

¹²⁸ The researcher does not remember where he gained this insight. It is worth reading Luther’s extended quotation on this verse found at <http://trinity-pres.net/audio/Work-GlorifyingGodontheJob.pdf>. Viewed on 05/02/2014.

plucked from a tree; it requires cultivating, processing and production. The Lord's provision of bread is through the hands and processes of this earth.

A plumber is not a disciple because he hands out tracts, or a teacher because she runs the Student Christian Association, but because they strive to glorify God in their attitudes and application. Christianity in the workplace does not entail holding Bible studies over lunch, but seeking to be fair, honest, careful and committed. Luther saw work as the "mask of God" because God, although hidden, was in the work. It made no difference what type of work the Christian did; it could all be to the glory of God. All work was of equal value to God (Schmidt 2004:197).

Schmidt (2004:215) demonstrates how the Reformers rediscovered the dignity and honour of labour that led to the presence of a middle class in Western society, resulting in reduced poverty and disease and growing political and economic freedom.

The renewed impact of understanding vocation as discipleship in the ordinary should not be underestimated. It can renew the vision of those who plod to work daily experiencing much frustration. Peterson (2005:126) says: "I'm prepared to contend that the primary location for spiritual formation is the workplace."¹²⁹

This can even renew a country.

"When John Wesley was born in 1703, four million out of Britain's five million people lived in absolute poverty—unless they found enough food for that day, they would begin to starve to death.

"When John Wesley launched a Church Planting Movement in this context, he not only changed the eternal destinies of an estimated one million people who came to Christ through his ministry, he changed their economic status as well. Not only did the Methodists he led get saved, they got out of poverty and became a powerful influence in disciplining their nation. Wilberforce and other 'spiritual sons' of Wesley honored him as the 'greatest man of his time.'

"The Methodists made such an impact on their nation that in 1962 historian Élie Halévy theorized that the Wesleyan revival created England's middle class and saved England from the kind of bloody revolution that crippled France. Other historians, building on his work, go further to suggest that God used Methodism to show all the oppressed peoples of the world that feeding their souls on the

¹²⁹ See also his insights on frustration in the workplace and the danger of idolatry (2005:123–127).

heavenly bread of the lordship of Christ is the path to providing the daily bread their bodies also need.” (White & Butler 2011:6)

This came about through a rediscovery of Christianity in the ordinary. Those that came to faith under Wesley were instructed to obey God in all areas of their lives, under three rules: 1) do no harm; 2) do as much good as you can; and 3) use all the means of grace that God has provided. White and Butler (2001:6–9) show that this led to: 1) an abandoning of sinful habits which had previously ruined their lives; 2) they began a new life of holiness which led to health and wealth; 3) by going to the Methodist meetings they learned to read, which gave them upward mobility, and 4) they developed a new view on money, which enabled them to profit from the technological innovations of their age.

6.4. Discipleship and spiritual formation

This call to a life of discipleship in the ordinary is a call to an integrated Christian lifestyle. It is a call to follow Christ in all areas of life. Wittmer (2004:96–98) helpfully shows that a misunderstanding of the preeminence of God leads to a view of life as a triangle with our obligation to God uppermost and all other aspects of life, including family, friends, work, art, sport and recreation ranked a distant second below.

A healthier view is to see these aspects of life arranged as segments of a circle, with God in the centre, connected to each segment. A life of discipleship does not translate into a focus exclusively on God and “spiritual” matters, discounting daily matters as inconsequential, but recognizes that God has created the different spheres of life; a life of discipleship means “that in every area of life we passionately strive to honor God” (2004:97).

This insight is beneficial because it helps to break the compartmentalized spiritual life of many members and opens up an understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. The Lordship of Christ means that he is to be served and obeyed in all spheres of life.

Discipleship as the following of Christ also contains a strong component of discipleship as transformation; of becoming more like Christ. This is clearly expressed in Ephesians, where the call to Christ-like transformation is directed at both the church (4:13–16) and the individual believer (4:24; 5:1–2). This call to

transformation into the likeness of Christ is clearly understood in the New Testament as a continuing process of sanctification (2 Cor 3:18), grounded in the purposes of God (Rm 8:29) that will be completed when Christ returns and all believers are glorified (Rm 8:30; 1 Jn 3:2). These verses show that this transformation into Christlikeness belongs to the purposes of God, as part of the *missio Dei*, and leads to a distinct call to believers to express this in their daily lives (Col 3:8–17; 1 Jn 3:3). The Old Testament call to be holy because the Lord is holy (Lv 19:2) is given fuller expression in the New Testament, where the life of Christ is held as exemplary for his followers (Lk 6:35; Jn 13:15–17,34–35; Phlp 2:5; 1 Pt 2:21–23).

This call to follow Christ is a call to a life of sacrifice, suffering and service. It is a call to spiritual growth through spiritual formation. Dallas Willard (1991:1) opens his book with a quotation from Chesterton: “Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried.” Willard acknowledges the cost of discipleship, but emphasizes the cost of non-discipleship: “The ‘cost of discipleship’, though it may take all we have, is small compared to the lot of those who don’t accept Christ’s invitation to be a part of his company in The Way of life” (1991:2). While making the point that the call to discipleship is not accomplished in one’s own strength and is not “overwhelmingly burdensome” because one is called to Jesus whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light (Mt 11:29–30), he is clear that discipleship is a call to follow him in this life (1991:3). This is a life that is “practised” by following Christ in his overall lifestyle and does not just take clues from his public life of service.

“So we should be perfectly clear about one thing: Jesus never expected us simply to turn the other cheek, go the second mile, bless those that persecute us, give unto them that ask, and so forth. These responses, generally and rightly understood to be characters of Christlikeness, were set forth by him as illustrative of what might be expected of a new kind of person – one who intelligently and steadfastly seeks, above all else, to live within the rule of God and be possessed by the kind of righteousness that God himself has, as Matthew 6:33 portrays.

“Instead, Jesus did invite people to follow him into that sort of life from which behavior such as loving one’s enemies will seem like the only sensible and happy thing to do. For a person living that life, the hard thing to do would be to hate the enemy, to turn the supplicant away, or to curse the curser, just as it was

for Christ. True Christlikeness, true companionship with Christ, comes at the point where it is not hard to respond as he would.” (Willard 1991:8)

His call is for an integrated spiritual lifestyle in which spiritual disciplines are practised so that transformation into Christlikeness becomes a daily reality.

“The disciplines promised to give our lives a form that would serve as a receptacle for the substance of the Christ-life in God’s present Kingdom. To undertake the disciplines was to take our activities – our lives – seriously and to suppose that the following of Christ was at least as big a challenge as playing the violin or jogging.

“And so it was, more than anything else, the religious seriousness the spiritual disciplines injected into the whole of our lives that made them attractive.” (Willard 1991:24)

Willard (1991:68) sees the disciplines as “activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order”. These disciplines enable believers to grow in Christlikeness and to experience the power of God as a new lifestyle takes form, enabling believers to be instruments of the *missio Dei*. It is important to understand that this is a process of growth (1991:70–74) that involves training, discipline and effort (1991:98–100).

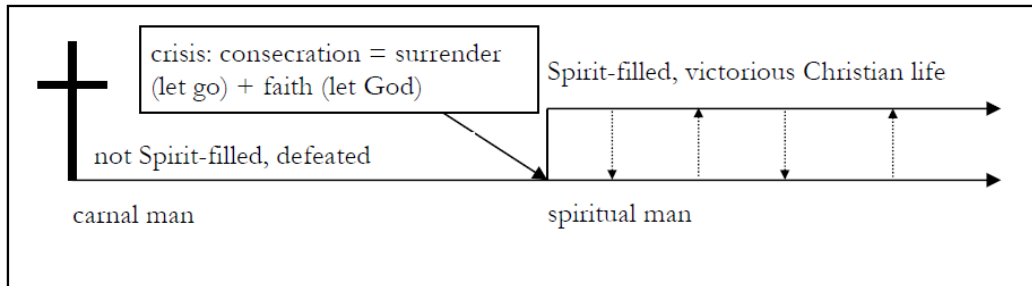
6.4.1. Spiritual formation as active obedience

The researcher recalls a time in his own spiritual journey when he was strongly influenced by Andrew Murray as expressed in the “higher life” movement that is also referred to as the Keswick movement. Though there is much in the life of Andrew Murray to emulate and though there are strengths within this movement (Packer 2005:122), there are many errors and dangers.¹³⁰ A large part of this teaching is the classification of Christians into two distinct categories, namely carnal and spiritual.

This results in a view of sanctification that emphasizes surrender and receiving, rather than personal exertion. Sanctification is not seen as a process but as a work

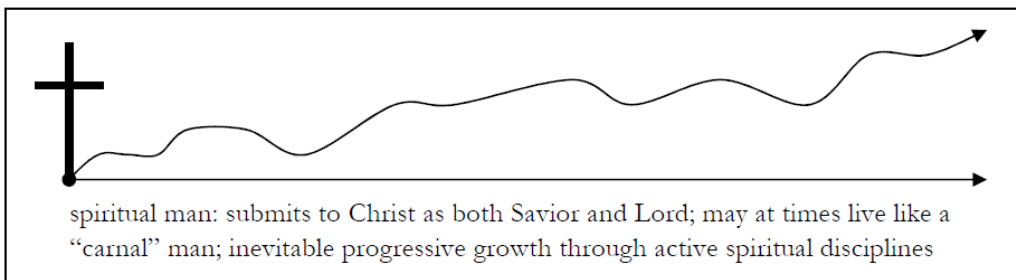
¹³⁰ A very thorough analysis is found in Andrew Naselli’s, *Let go and let God? A survey and analysis of Keswick theology*, as well as his “Keswick theology: A survey and analysis of the doctrine of sanctification in the early Keswick movement” in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 13 (2008), pp. 17–67. A good critique from 1912 is found in HA Ironside, *Holiness: The false and the true*. *Holiness* by JC Ryle was first published in 1879 as a response to this teaching.

of God, a “second blessing”, which can only be received after a complete consecration or surrender, as expressed in this diagram:¹³¹



This leads to an under appreciation of the new life found in Christ through justification. Many of the sins and shortcomings that describe the carnal man in this scheme can rather be seen as a description of the unregenerate. Regeneration does not lead to a life of perfection, but rather to a life of struggle against sin, of effort and exertion as the call to active obedience is lived out. The wonderful truths expressed in the indicatives of the faith are received through justification. These truths are furthermore a calling to which each Christian must respond as he lives out the imperatives of the faith in a life of sanctification.

This is a life filled with the riches of a new life in Christ, but also of struggle, disappointment and even failure, as the challenges of the faith are lived out in the here and the now. This is illustrated in the following diagram:¹³²



The researcher realizes that, unwittingly, he had found the process of waiting and surrender either too idealistic or too unachievable to follow to its conclusion; without consciously rejecting this teaching, he did not adhere to it completely. The effect of this teaching does, however, have a negative influence in a consistent sense of

¹³¹ From Naselli, A., 2008, 'Keswick theology: A survey and analysis of the doctrine of sanctification in the early Keswick movement', *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 13, 66.

¹³² From Naselli, A., 2008, 'Keswick theology: A survey and analysis of the doctrine of sanctification in the early Keswick movement', *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 13, 67.

disappointment in one's own spiritual life, a constant longing for greater fulfilment and passivity that characterizes much of this movement (see Packer 2005:127). An understanding of the critiques of this movement, together with a grasp of the "Holy Spirit's ordinary way of working in us ... through the working of our minds and wills" (Packer 2005:127) and a new understanding of the biblical call to action and struggle¹³³ led to a more conscious rejection of this teaching in 2011 and a much stronger embracing of the imperatives of the faith as the necessary exertion that believers are called to: encompassing heart, mind, will and affections.

6.4.2. Mysticism as a dangerous drift

Each chapter of Part II has described necessary shifts that need to take place for a Western congregation to express fully a missional vision. Each of these shifts holds the danger of drifting too far from the biblical balance and thereby moving into a position that is again unbiblical and becomes an over-accommodation to postmodern culture. This drift can happen easily because, as an expression of the spirit of postmodern society, it is acceptable to many within and outside the church.

In the DRC, there is a growing appreciation of spiritual formation, which is a reaction to a cold formalism and traditionalism that characterized much of church spirituality in previous decades. While much of this renewal is taking the form of contemplative spirituality, the question must be asked if this is indeed a healthy biblical form of spirituality. This investigation will be undertaken by looking at the growth of a new Western spirituality and a study of the roots of this contemplative spirituality, especially as practised in centering prayer.

Gibbs and Bolger (2006:218) describe current Western culture as a time when interest in religion has waned but interest in spirituality has never been higher. Postmodernity is expressed in this pervasive practice of spirituality in which the fact/value divide of modernity, that undervalued art, music and religion, is being rejected. They describe new expressions of church that are incorporating a spirituality that connects with all of life and furthermore acts as a witness to people within the culture who are searching for spiritual fulfilment.

¹³³ John Piper (2010) reflects on a "wartime lifestyle" as an illustration of the effort that is required from Christians as they express the biblical call to fight and struggle (Greek *agōnizesthai*) through a life of prayer (Chapter 2) and suffering (Chapter 3).

“Spirituality is something of a buzzword throughout the Western world. In part, it represents a reaction to the soul-starved secularization that has permeated culture. It represents a longing to experience both the transcendent and the immanent in all realms and to give a sense of intrinsic worth and cosmic significance to the individual. It also serves to integrate body and soul, the internal and the external world. In a society characterized by fast-paced living, increasing uncertainty, growing demands in the workplace, and family pressures, spirituality is valued as providing coping mechanisms.” (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:218)

Wells (2005:109–176) gives a comprehensive description of what he calls the new spiritual quest that was born in the 1960s and blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s.¹³⁴ Against religion as “organized belief in its public form”, spirituality has come to stand for what is private and internal. Against doctrine and structure, the new spirituality stands as a suspicion of what is organized and an inclination to a more mystical encounter (2005:110). He finds a “deep sense of frustration with organized religion today which is merging with a renewed yearning for the sacred, and the result is an explosion in these personalized, customized spiritualities” (2005:112).

Many segments of the Western church have rediscovered an “ancient spirituality”; this is also true of the Dutch Reformed Church, which shows a growing appreciation of a contemplative spirituality. This is found in the following:

- The writings of Willem Nicol, a now retired but still influential minister of the DRC.
- Many congregations holding alternative contemplative services on a Sunday.
- The influence of the Centre for Christian Spirituality.¹³⁵
- Initiatives like the forming of a Sentrum vir Spiritualiteit, Christelike Meditasie en Gebed¹³⁶ in Pretoria by three DRC congregations, the Sentrum vir Geloofsvorming,¹³⁷ and in material distributed by the General Synod.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Albert Mohler gives an insightful commentary on the growth of spirituality as described in a *Newsweek* article (29/08/2005) on his blog from <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/08/23/newsweeks-search-for-spirituality/>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹³⁵ See <http://christianspirit.co.za/>. Based in Cape Town, with a former DRC minister as director and a candidate minister on the staff. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹³⁶ From www.ssmg.stellastraat.co.za. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

- Contemplative spirituality constitutes a large part of the module on spiritual formation that forms part of this MTh study.¹³⁹
- In the Eastern Cape, a very popular course on spiritual growth was developed by Deon Loots, a local DRC minister. This “process in spiritual guidance” consists of seven modules. Modules 5 and 6 are generally done in a third year and focus exclusively on contemplative spirituality,¹⁴⁰ although there is a strong contemplative bent to all the modules.
- Much of the required “further ministerial training” within the synod offers courses in contemplative spirituality.

While there is much to be recommended in the seriousness with which spiritual formation is being rediscovered and promulgated within the church, one needs to consider if there is not a dangerous drift away from biblical spirituality in this rediscovery of a predominantly Catholic mysticism. This study will briefly consider mysticism with a focus on centering prayer as an expression thereof and as representative of this renewed focus on contemplative spirituality in an attempt to establish if this is a healthy biblical spirituality.

6.4.2.1. Western spirituality as mysticism

Many scholars comment on the wide-ranging definitions of mysticism that exist.¹⁴¹ Barnes (2003:279) works with what he calls a widely accepted definition in classifying mystical experiences as “‘unitary’ or ‘unitive’ states which are noetic or perception like, but lack specific empirical content”. He differentiates between a union of identity experienced with the external world of the senses and union that is “achieved within the human self, when the mind of the mystic is emptied of sensory and (ordinary) conceptual content” (2003:280). While both exterior and interior

¹³⁷ From <http://geloofsvorming.co.za/>. Viewed on 31/01/2014. This was started in the Western Cape Synod and is now involved in ministering to three other synods. Its programme shows a strong contemplative influence.

¹³⁸ For example, *Beyond expression: Approaching the divine on spiritual guidance for and by pastors* by Gideon van Dam. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹³⁹ From <http://communitas.co.za/taakspanne/vbo/kursusse/bedieningspraktyk-volledig/>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁴⁰ From <http://www.dissipelskap.co.za/DissipelskapReis/Kursus.aspx>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁴¹ Hughes (2003:306) says: “Defining mysticism is not an easy task. Already at the end of the nineteenth century Dean Inge listed twenty-six definitions. A century later the number of definitions has multiplied as mysticism has become a popular subject on the information superhighway ...”

mysticism express a sense of unity and overcoming of separation, “the latter is regarded by mystics as more important in terms of religious and philosophical significance” (2003:281). Against nature mysticism, that can occur spontaneously, “interior mystical experience occurs, with very few exceptions, only after a long period of spiritual training and mental preparation” (2003:288). Mysticism is, in its essence, a path of technique and human effort towards a clear goal that, when achieved, has a form of a unitive experience.

Evelyn Underhill (1911:169) outlines five phases of the “Mystic Way”. These stages are universally accepted as the stages of Christian mysticism, though there may be differences in approach.

- 1) Awakening – to a consciousness of Divine Reality;
- 2) Purgation – a realization of finiteness and imperfection, and an attempt to eliminate that which stands in the way of union with God;
- 3) Illumination – results from having purged oneself of attachments to the things of the senses and having substituted for them an attachment to the transcendent. This phase may be understood to have different stages of contemplation within it. “Illumination brings a certain apprehension of the Absolute, a sense of the Divine Presence: but not true union with it” (1911:169);
- 4) Purification – or the “Dark Night of the Soul”. This is a purification process within the centre of one’s existence, a time of desolation and feeling of abandonment in which the self surrenders itself of all into a state of passivity;
- 5) Union – mystical and ecstatic oneness with the divine. “Union [is] the true goal of the mystic quest. In this state the Absolute Life is not merely perceived and enjoyed by the Self, as in Illumination: but is *one* with it. This is the end towards which all the previous oscillations of consciousness have tended. It is a state of equilibrium, of purely spiritual life; characterized by peaceful joy, by enhanced powers, by intense certitude” (1911:170, her emphasis).

This path can be described as upward (reaching towards God) and inward, an interior experience deeper than knowledge, teaching or doctrine. Horton

(1996:Kindle location 1575) posits that, when one is not anchored to God's self-revelation in Scripture, there can be a pendulum swing away from an over-emphasis of the transcendence of God (as found in the secularism that follows in the wake of Deism) to an "over-emphasis of divine nearness (immanence) so that we regard everything as divine or part of the divine. Everything is viewed as a miracle, and every person is believed to have a 'divine spark' as part of his or her inner self. Pantheism represents this tendency, along with the mysticism and magic that follows in its wake" (1996:Kindle location 1586).

Through his description of Luther's theology of the cross against a theology of glory, Horton (1996) helps to identify the dangers present in the new Western spirituality that are also discernible in mysticism.

"Martin Luther had devoted his energies to spiritual ascent until he could climb no longer. In retrospect, he said that there were three 'ladders' devoted saints sought to climb in order to experience nearness to God: the ladder of mysticism, the ladder of merit, and the ladder of speculation. He eventually came to despair of them all.

"Above all the monk ascended by mysticism. Stanford's Lewis Spitz describes this late medieval mysticism in terms that remind one of contemporary approaches to 'spirituality.' 'Mysticism is based on the assumption that the ultimate nature of reality or the divine essence may be known by the mystic through immediate apprehension, insight, or intuition.'

"The mystic believes that God cannot be known chiefly through normal channels of thought. In other words, he is so far beyond the individual's understanding that even the Bible's teaching falls short of truly unveiling him to our eyes. Mystics refer to this as the 'ineffable quality' of God, the inexplicable glory and wonder of his majesty. But this inability to put words to God's essence does not put the mystic off; rather, it seems to justify a short-cut. Instead of trying to understand God exclusively through the study of Scripture and theology, the mystic is convinced of a higher sort of knowledge.

"... Spitz explains, 'Within the Western Christian tradition all mystics agree that true beatitude consists of union with God and that this union is attained through ecstatic contemplation. The nature of this contemplation is love, and this love is made possible by a life of discipline and order regulated to that end.'" (Horton 1996:Kindle location 1510)

Luther understood that this unmediated climb to God was impossible due to man's unrighteousness and that this encounter with God could only lead to damnation. He

described his efforts to see God as an attempt to see God “in the nude”. This attempt to see God directly is what he called a theology of glory.¹⁴² Christianity stands against any forms of human ascent to God as it is essentially described as divine descent. A theology of the cross was a theology of God’s own self-revelation (Horton 1996:Kindle location 1620). Christianity is about God becoming man and opening the way to God through the cross. “To seek God apart from Christ is devastating, for Christ is God. It is not only devastating because Christ provides information about God or because he was closer to God than the rest of us, but because he is God in person! Outside of Christ there is no accurate knowledge of God or of his salvation” (1996:Kindle location 1681). The key concern regarding Western spirituality and forms of mysticism is that they are an attempt at unmediated access to God. Horton (1996:Kindle location 1493) connects Jesus statement in John 1:15 with Jacob’s dream of a ladder to heaven: “Jesus was announcing that he was Jacob’s Ladder! He is ‘Bet El,’ ‘The House of God,’ the ‘Gate of Heaven,’ the ‘Portal between Heaven and Earth.’ Jesus is the ziggurat, the temple-tower, the stairway from heaven to earth.”

In similar vein, Wells (2005:158) describes contemporary spirituality as a contrasting way of looking at life and God and says that: “This casual embrace of what is postmodern has increasingly led to an embrace of its spiritual yearning without noticing that this embrace carries within it the seeds of destruction for evangelical faith.”

He describes two different worldviews behind the new Western spirituality and biblical spirituality using concepts derived from a book of Anders Nygren, namely “Eros” and “Agape”. Eros has self at the centre and its movement is upward in a drive to experience God. Agape has God at the centre and the movement is downward:

“Eros spirituality is the kind of spirituality which arises from human nature and it builds on the presumption that it can forge its own salvation. Agape arises in God, was incarnate in Christ, and reaches us through the work of the Holy Spirit opening lives to receive the gospel of Christ’s saving death.” (Wells 2005:159)

¹⁴² See Veith (2010:71) and Horton (2011:605) for a description of the theology of glory vs a theology of the cross.

Importantly, Wells concludes that this Eros spirituality seeks an unmediated experience of the divine. The premise that underlies this is:

“... that sin has not intruded upon the relationship between the sacred and human nature, that human nature itself offers access – indeed, we assume unblemished access – to God, that human nature itself mediates the divine. Gone are the days when people understood that an avalanche had fallen between God and human beings, that human nature retains its shape as made in the image of God but has lost its relationship to God and stands in pained alienation from him.”¹⁴³ (2005:164)

6.4.2.2. Christian mysticism

The question that looms large is if there is a unique Christian mysticism that does not succumb to what has been described above as a theology of glory or Eros spirituality. It is often found that Dutch Reformed proponents of mystical practices deny any similarity with Eastern forms of mysticism.¹⁴⁴ However, an issue is not negated by denying it. What seems to be lacking is a thorough theological reflection on these practices in the light of statements made by key proponents from whom these practices are learned. This will be discussed further under the following subheading.

Barnes (2003:278ff) says that it is not uncommon for Christian theologians to distinguish between monistic and theistic forms of mysticism, but argues that there is “a single cross-cultural, cross-religious mystical experience” (2003:286). He builds this case by showing that there is a remarkable similarity between descriptions of the mystical experience, with no disagreement (2003:287). He argues that a distinction between mystical experience and doctrinal interpretations of that experience can and should be made (2003:282). This similarity in mystical experience is found when attention is given to the actual experience, while it is possible that “doctrinal

¹⁴³ The following paragraph shows an astounding insight into our context when he continues: “It is no small anomaly that we have arrived at this point. How can we be so knowledgeable about evil in the world and so innocent about sin in ourselves?”

¹⁴⁴ Deon Loots, in an unpublished article, “Gebed van die hart – historiese agtergrond en ontwikkeling” says: “Daar is vandag baie kinders van die Here wat baie agterdogtig is oor hierdie gebedsvorm. Sommige is van mening dat dit ‘Oosterse wortels’ het (bedoelende vanuit die Oosterse godsdienste). Daarom is mense bang dat hulle hulle kan blootstel aan allerhande ‘magte’ wat op hulle geestelike lewe kan inwerk. Die enigste betekenisvolle Oosterse wortels wat die gebed in der waarheid het, is vanuit die Oosters Ortodokse Kerk, of ook vanuit die woestynvaders wat hulleself gaan afsonder het om God intiem te leer ken.” Nicol (2002:126) says: “Jou gebedswoord is dus nie ’n tegniek of ’n mantra nie maar net ’n hulp om te bly waar jy deur jou geloof in God kan rus.”

interpretations ... are read into the experience which incorporate beliefs and assumptions that are strictly speaking extraneous to it" (2003:284). Barnes finds grounds for this unanimity thesis that all mystical experiences are phenomenologically the same in that mystics report of a unitive experience that transcends sensory and conceptual content. The goal of union with the divine is similarly achieved when the mind is empty and devoid of all distractions. There is a similar path, that is broadly agreed upon, which is to be followed with the aim of detachment for progress to be made. These mystical experiences occur only after a long period of spiritual training and mental preparation (2003:288, 295). Barnes concludes that the unanimity thesis is supported by "the testimony of mystics who have entered into dialogue with mystics of other religious traditions" (2003:292).

Geaves (2003:30) finds 11 features that are held in common within mystical communities, even though the forms of the disciplines may vary between differing traditions and concludes that "the process that leads to the end-product [in Terapanthi Jainism] demonstrates marked similarities with the lifestyles of committed followers of Sufi *tariqas* of contemplative Christian orders not to mention other non-theistic systems such as Zen Buddhists or practitioners of Yogic systems" (2003:30). He concurs with WT Stace that "the mystical experience has enough common features in spite of the obvious differences arising from a multiplicity of religious traditions with diverse soteriological and eschatological doctrines and an awesome range of practices, to be defined as universal" (2003:19).

Whereas the influence of Thomas Merton in the development of a contemplative Christian spirituality within the Dutch Reformed Church has been pervasive, the researcher has been unable to find the necessary circumspection in the reliance on his thoughts. It appears that Merton would unhesitatingly subscribe to the unanimity thesis. While he unquestionably cherished his Christian faith,¹⁴⁵ it is undeniable that he found a unity within the different mystical expressions of all other religions that negated the uniqueness and exclusivity of Christ in his witness.

"Merton thought it was the contemplative Buddhist and the contemplative

¹⁴⁵ While Altany (b) states that: "Gandhi was also influential upon Merton in saying that one can find the deeper roots of one's own religious tradition by becoming immersed in other religions—and then returning 'home' to see one's own heritage in a transformed way, with a transformed consciousness," it is clear that Merton's life and practice show the universality of goal, path and experience within different mystic traditions.

Christian who could best make contact with the other. He would even come to say that he felt more in common with such Buddhists than with noncontemplative Christians. It was Zen's concentration upon direct experience instead of doctrinal formulations and its sometimes brutal rejection of the false self, or ego, that spoke directly to Merton, who believed God was experienced in the center of the true self.

"The dialogue would therefore include a focus upon points of contact between the Buddhist teaching of *anatta* (no self) and what Merton understood by the true self in the context of his idea that 'Zen is perfectly compatible with Christian belief and indeed with Christian mysticism (if we understood Zen in its pure state, as metaphysical intuition)' (*Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, p. 47)." (Altany b)

Merton was very clear on the correspondence that he found in the mystic traditions of Sufi Muslims,¹⁴⁶ Buddhism,¹⁴⁷ and Hinduism.¹⁴⁸ A clear example of this is the enlightenment he experienced before a Buddhist idol:

¹⁴⁶ "My prayer tends very much toward what you call *fana*. ... It is not 'thinking about' anything, but a direct seeing of the Face of the Invisible, which cannot be found unless we become lost in Him who is Invisible. I do not ordinarily write about such things ... But I write this as a testimony of confidence and friendship. It will show you how much I appreciate the tradition of Sufism." From <http://www.thomasmertonsociety.org/erlinda.htm>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁴⁷ "We started talking about dzogchen and Nyingmapa meditaion and 'direct realization' and soon saw that we agreed very well. We must have talked for two hours ... taking in some points of Christian doctrine compared with Buddhist: dharmakaya ... the risen Christ, suffering, compassion for all creatures, motives for 'helping others' – but all leading back to dzogchen, the ultimate emptiness, the unity of sunyata and karuna, going 'beyond the dharmakaya' and 'beyond God' to ultimate emptiness." From <http://books.google.co.za/books?id=IAwnuOXQK48C&pg=PA143>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

"His letter of 1959 to Englishman John Harris about the presence of God to ourselves and to all creation(sic) in ways which very much reflect Eastern thought. He spoke of God in Zen-like fashion as a "vast emptiness" into which we sink and settle. "The great thing is not things but God Himself Who is not things but ourselves, and the world, and everything, lost in Him Who so fully IS that we come closer to Him by imagining He is not. The Being of all and my own Being is a vast emptiness containing nothing: I have but to sink in it and be carried away in it to see that this nothing is All. This too may be a distracting way of putting it: but everything is really very simple and do not let yourselves be disturbed by appearances of complication and multiplicity. Omnia in omnibus Christus. Let His Spirit carry you where He will, and do not be disturbed if I sometimes talk like Eckhart ..." (Harris, John 5.5.59 HGL 390), quoted in PW Collins, "Merton uncensored: On spirituality", p4, from <http://www.vatican2.org/patrickcollins/Merton%20Uncensored%2003%20Spirituality.pdf>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁴⁸ "Among the religious scriptures of Asia, it was the Bhagavad-Gita with its ideal of karma-yoga (union with God in action) that especially influenced Merton's quest for an integrated life of contemplation and action. He thought that it should have a place in the Western college curriculum side-by-side with the works of Homer and Plato. Merton was particularly impressed by the power of the Gita on Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, a disciple of Gandhi and a saintly scholar who walked the length and breadth of India advocating his land reform movement. Merton had read Bhave's Talks on the Gita with much interest and attention. In the copy of Bhave's book which Merton read (found in the Merton Studies Center, Louisville), all the passages on karma-yoga are heavily underlined. It is significant that Merton's notion of contemplation as having an active dimension begins to unfold in his Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation, where he copied passages from the

“During his trip to Asia he had a profound experience which he described in his journal. It happened in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) less that (*sic*) a week before his death and describes a powerful insight. He was visiting a Buddhist shrine at Plonnaruwa where there are huge statues of the Buddha. Merton, barefooted, approached the Buddhas through the wet grass: ‘Then the smile of the extraordinary faces. The great smiles. Huge and yet subtle. Filled with every possibility, questioning nothing, knowing everything, rejecting nothing ... Looking at these figures I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half-tied vision of things, and an inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and obvious ... The thing about all this is that there is no puzzle, no problem, and really no “mystery.” All problems are resolved and everything is clear, simply because what matters is clear ... everything is emptiness and everything is compassion. I don’t know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination ... I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for. I don’t know what else remains but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise.’” (Altany (a) n.d.)

6.4.2.3. Centering prayer

Centering prayer is one of the most common contemplative disciplines practised within the Dutch Reformed Church today. While many would practise this as one of several different spiritual disciplines, for a few it is part of a greater contemplative lifestyle.¹⁴⁹ Father Thomas Keating is credited with popularizing this form of prayer. Keating tells the story in the first chapter of *Intimacy with God: An introduction to centering prayer*¹⁵⁰ and in an online interview.¹⁵¹

Bhagavad-Gita into the typescript in support of his views. He thought that active contemplation was the heart of the message of the Gita: The Gita preaches a contemplative way of serenity, detachment and personal devotion to God under the form of the Lord Krishna and is expressed most of all in detached activity work done without concern for results but with the pure intention of fulfilling the will of God”. P Veliyathil, “East-West dialogue: Thomas Merton: A modern Arjuna”, *Spirituality Today* Winter 1987, 39, p. 293, from <http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/873941veliyathil.html>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁴⁹ “The practice of Centering Prayer, therefore, is not contemplation in the strict sense of the term but a preparation for it. In the broad sense of the term, it might be called the first step on the ladder of contemplative prayer.” Keating, *Intimacy with God*, from <http://web.archive.org/web/20060509184258/http://www.centeringprayer.com/intimacy/intimacy06a.htm>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁵⁰From <http://web.archive.org/web/20060509184542/http://www.centeringprayer.com/intimacy/intimacy01a.htm>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁵¹ Anne A Simpson, “Resting In God ... An interview with Fr. Thomas Keating, OSCO”. *Common Boundary* September-October 1997, from <http://www.livingrosaries.org/interview.htm>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

As abbot of St Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, from 1961 to 1981, Keating was exposed, over a period of 10 years, to visits from a Zen master who held sesshins (week-long intensive retreats) once or twice a year. Instruction in Transcendental Meditation raised a desire to "harmonize the wisdom of the East with the contemplative tradition of Christianity that I had been studying and trying to practice for thirty years" (*Intimacy with God*).¹⁵² He had come to realize that even the cloistered monks and nuns were not reaching contemplative states of prayer that were described by medieval mystical writings. He saw "young disciples of Eastern gurus, Zen roshis, and teachers of TM, who were coming to the abbey in the 1970s for dialogue, experiencing significant spiritual experiences without having gone through the penitential exercises that the Trappist order required."

He desired to form something in the Christian tradition that many had found within Eastern mysticism and turned to a fourteenth-century spiritual classic, *The cloud of unknowing*, through prayer in which a single word was used to "expresses one's 'naked intent directed to God.'" Through a reading of Thomas Merton it was decided to use the term "Centering Prayer" to describe the practice. Basil Pennington played an important role to promote this form of prayer.

Nicol (2002:39) credits Keating with his own personal shift to contemplative prayer in 1999. Centering prayer is a 20-minute session where one sits comfortably and quiets the mind with the use of a sacred word. The aim is to achieve stillness without thoughts. The sacred word may disappear, but is used to gently quiet any thoughts that may arise.¹⁵³ Keating differentiates this from the meditation of John Main, who would use the sacred word consciously for the whole time of prayer,¹⁵⁴ and acknowledges that "both go in the same direction: moving beyond dependence on

¹⁵² From

<http://web.archive.org/web/20060509184542/http://www.centeringprayer.com/intimacy/intimacy01a.htm>, unpagued. All quotes following are from this site. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁵³ From <http://www.cpt.org/files/WS%20-%20Centering%20Prayer.pdf>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁵⁴ It is important to see that Keating has no qualms about calling the use of this word a mantra and noting that it is borrowed directly from the East. While Keating differentiates his use of the sacred word in centering prayer from a mantra, it seems only to be in the intent that there is differentiation. A New Age website that promotes Higher-Self development and liberation using a specially designed programme of spiritual development organized around the Yogic chakra system along with modern transpersonal psychology recommends centering prayer. "Although it is called prayer, centering prayer is basically meditation. And it is meditation in the same sense as meditation in Yoga or Buddhism. One gets quiet and allows the mind to present the contents of the unconscious which, over time, clears the mind and allows it to open up to the inner teacher. This is a process of psychospiritual purification." From <http://www.spiritsong.org/unit4-6.htm>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

concepts and words to a direct encounter with God on the level of faith and interior silence". In centering prayer: "The sacred word is not the object of the attention but rather the expression of the intention of the will."¹⁵⁵

Dreher dismisses centering prayer as a break from Catholic tradition, due to the overwhelming Eastern influence.

"Centering prayer differs from Christian prayer in that the intent of the technique is to bring the practitioner to the center of his *own being*. There he is, supposedly, to experience the presence of the God who indwells him. Christian prayer, on the contrary, centers upon God in a *relational* way, as someone apart from oneself. The Christian knows a God who is personal, yet who, as Creator, infinitely transcends his creature. God is wholly other than man. It is also crucial to Christian prayer that God engages man's whole being in response, not just his interior life. In the view of centering prayer, the immanence of God somehow makes the transcendence of God available to human techniques and experience." (1997, his emphases)

It is beyond the scope of this study to do more than raise some serious doubts about the use of centering prayer as a form of spiritual formation. Briefly, these concerns are:

- 1) Warnings that accompany the propagation of this practice. Practitioners of centering prayer are often warned of dangers that accompany this style of prayer. Nicol (2002:90) warns of painful thoughts, feelings of dislocation and of losing control. He suggests pushing through these painful experiences and trusting the Lord, unless it becomes unbearable, in which case a psychologist should be seen. (See also 2002:164–165). In *Open mind, open heart*, Keating prepares readers to expect "parapsychological phenomena", but they should not be focused on; one should simply wait for them to pass and only practise them under an approved master (Keating 2007:10–11). The researcher finds it difficult to understand how Keating can describe these occultic manifestations¹⁵⁶ as mere "frosting on the cake" with the worst consequence being a lack of humility.

¹⁵⁵ From <http://www.livingrosaries.org/interview.htm>. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

¹⁵⁶ "The third thing that contemplative prayer is not is parapsychological phenomena such as precognition, knowledge of events at a distance, control over bodily processes such as heartbeat and breathing, out-of-body experiences, levitation, and other extraordinary sensory or psychic

St. Romain (1991) describes the power that he experienced as fulfilment of the path of contemplative prayer as being what in Hinduism is known as kundalini power.¹⁵⁷ The foreword to this book is written by Thomas Keating, whose only warning is to beware of using this force for selfish motives, thereby causing serious harm, and that “all the Eastern traditions concur that this energy should not be awakened except under the guidance of a qualified teacher. Since this energy can arise through the practice of ordinary Christian prayer forms, the need of spiritual directors who are at least knowledgeable in this area is evident” (St. Romain 1991: Foreword).

- 2) Confusion of the “True Self” with biblical teaching. The teaching of one having a true self vs a false self is part and parcel of the theology underlying centering prayer. An example of this is found with Nicol (2002:152–157).

In essence, the teaching of true self/false self belongs to the monism of Hinduism.¹⁵⁸ Within this monistic pantheistic worldview, man possesses a divine soul. This is his true self, Atman – the spark of divinity within everyone. The ultimate reality is Brahmin, the divine essence that is in, with and through all reality. Therefore Atman is Brahmin. The true self is God, while the false

phenomena. The psychic level of consciousness is one level above the mental egoic stage, which is the general level of present human development.”

“In any case, psychic phenomena are like the frosting on a cake and we cannot survive on frosting alone. We should not overestimate psychic gifts, therefore, or think that holiness manifests itself in extraordinary psychic phenomena. Such manifestations, including levitation, locutions, and visions of various kinds, have been sensational in the lives of some of the saints. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, for example, had these experiences. The Christian tradition has consistently counseled avoiding extraordinary gifts when possible because it is difficult to remain humble when you have them. Experience teaches that the more extraordinary the gifts, the harder it is to be detached from them. It is easy to take secret satisfaction in the fact that God is giving you special gifts, especially when they are obvious to others. I have noticed a significant increase in the number of persons experiencing psychic gifts in recent years. In one year alone, I met six people with out-of-body experiences.” (Keating 2007:10–11)

¹⁵⁷ “The term means the ‘curl of the hair of the beloved.’ It is described as a very powerful form of psycho-spiritual energy that is curled, or coiled, at the base of the spine in the first chakra. When awakened through the disciplines of yoga, this energy uncoils and moves up through the spinal canal (the sushumna nadi), piercing the chakras and eventually entering the brain. Great energy, power, and insight accompany the experience of kundalini in the brain. For many, this is a short-lived experience: after entering the brain, kundalini slowly begins falling, eventually coiling again in the first chakra. It is said that yogis have the ability to keep the kundalini current flowing up to the seventh chakra, giving them experiences of extraordinary knowledge, power, and bliss. Since the spring of 1986, I have been experiencing various psychological and physiological phenomena such as those attributed to kundalini in the Hindu and Taoist literature. Through the years, the process has intensified, bringing many positive and painful experiences. All this has happened to me in the context of Christian, contemplative prayer.” (St Romaine 1991: Introduction)

¹⁵⁸ Audio message “Pantheistic monism: An Eastern mystic point of view” by Ken Samples, from <http://links.christreformed.org/realaudio/20070601a.mp3>, from 13:00 on. Viewed on 31/01/2014.

self is illusionary. This sense that man is distinct and separate from the divine is due to the false self. This forgetfulness (*maya*) or self-deception must be overthrown to reach a new state of consciousness. It seems that the concepts of the true/false self that Merton and Keating use are much closer to this worldview than a biblical worldview. Altany (a) shows:

“Merton’s mysticism is centered upon the union of the true self with God and the transformation which both fosters that union and is a fruit of it. He says that there is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God. If I find Him I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him.”

Keating gives principles that are to act as a “conceptual background for the practice of Centering Prayer”, some of which are:

“2. Our basic core of goodness is our true Self. Its center of gravity is God. The acceptance of our basic goodness is a quantum leap in the spiritual journey.

“3. God and our true Self are not separate. Though we are not God, God and our true Self are the same thing.

“13. Our basic core of goodness is dynamic and tends to grow of itself. This growth is hindered by the illusions and emotional hang-ups of the false self, by the negative influences coming from our cultural conditioning, and by personal sin.

“17. The experience of being loved by God enables us to accept our false self as it is, and then to let go of it and journey to our true Self. The inward journey to our true Self is the way to divine love.” (2007:108–110)

As one would expect, Nicol’s Reformed background tempers his description of the true self, yet he is willing to describe it as one’s true nature that could not be destroyed by sin. In essence, this leaves centering prayer as a theology of glory, an upward and inward striving for that which is already present. Merton and Keating find such a close relationship with other mystic traditions because of this acceptance of an unmediated path to God, a path that is wholly interior.

The biblical concept of the old self vs new self is intrinsically different; they are not both present within unredeemed humanity. Humanity does not possess an inherent goodness that deems us acceptable to God, nor is it something that

can be discovered or developed. Through Christ, there is a dramatic change of the old into the new.

- 3) Union with God. For Keating, centering prayer is not only a finding of God's presence within, but also a move to union with the "Ultimate Mystery" (2007:96). Through silence or emptiness one can find union with God. "The innate tendency to hang on, to possess, is the biggest obstacle to union with God. The reason that we are possessive is that we feel separated from God" (2007:77).

Rather than being a goal to which believers are called to strive, union with God is achieved through faith in Christ and becomes the foundation from which one lives the Christian life. Horton (1996:Kindle location 2521) explains that when one is united to Christ, one is immediately made heir of his righteous life. "In this union, Christ's life is not only his active obedience imputed, but his holy life imparted" (1996:Kindle location 2524).

Horton shows how the concept of union with Christ can be corrupted when it is influenced by Platonism. "[T]he economy of dying-and-rising with Christ became allegorized into the soul's ascent into the body and history to intellectual-mystical contemplation in which the soul finally became one with God" (2011:592).

"Thus, union with God-in-Christ is not the goal to which the soul aspires in its striving ascent, but the freely-given communion that every believer enjoys from the very beginning. Believers live from this union, not toward it, it is a forensic and relational reality: a communion of persons and their gifts rather than an exchange (much less fusion) of essences." (Horton 2011:603)

Billings shows how Calvin saw that believers are gathered into participation through Christ and the Spirit, and that this union, which is the perfection of human happiness, takes place in redemption (2011:Kindle location 1272).

A theology of the cross builds a spirituality where God is sought outside oneself; God is not found outside his revelation but in Christ and through Scripture. It is not a moving towards union with God, but a move to transformation through the union with Christ that is already experienced

through conversion. Union with Christ is a key biblical concept that Billings (2011) introduces as a stimulus to sanctification.

“While the metaphor of adoption begins as a legal act, it does not end there: it ends with membership in the household of God (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19), with a calling to act into the reality of this new identity. God’s legal act of adopting into the family of God results in a new identity, in an eschatologically conditioned way. Thus, when we are given an identity in Christ, we are called to live into it.

“In contrast to some theologians who have associated adoption only with justification, Paul’s overall usage of the adoption metaphor describes both the legal dimension of being transferred into God’s family and the transformative dimension of growing in God’s family. By associating adoption only with justification, theologians have sometimes tended to emphasize the legal at the expense of the transformative side of adoption.

“But the forensic sense of becoming adopted does not exhaust the meaning of Paul’s metaphor, because the result of that act is that one is adopted to be a son or daughter of God, placed in the security of God’s family, and given a new identity to live into in an eschatologically conditioned way. Some theologians have thus been too quick to assume that the meaning of ‘adoption’ is exhausted by the act of becoming adopted.

“Calvin uses the image of adoption as a way to describe the double grace of justification and sanctification received in union with Christ. Calvin understood that as an image for salvation, the act of becoming adopted is a legal, forensic action, but it has another dimension as well: as an image for the way Christians are to act as children of the Father who promises ‘to nourish us throughout the course of our life.’ Indeed, the Spirit gives new life, displayed in love of God and neighbor, which shows that the Spirit of adoption has been given to us (cf. Romans 8:15).” (2011:Kindle location 457)

Trueman (2008:3) finds good reasons to read the medieval mystics, not least because there is a “sense of God’s holiness and transcendence in these works that is significantly absent from much modern writing and thinking about God”. He concludes:

“These are the books that many read and that shape their spiritual aspirations and provide the grid through which they will critique contemporary church life. If you are doing your job properly, these are the kind of people with whom you will be striking up conversations, inviting to church, talking about spiritual things. An

acquaintance with the medieval mystics will not just enhance your knowledge of the Middle Ages; it may also equip you better to reach out to the lost souls of the current generation.” (2008:4)

This new emphasis on contemplative spirituality in the Dutch Reformed Church is a commendable desire to grow in faith and knowledge of God through a life consecrated to him. It is different from the modern trends of Western spirituality that display “a tendency to use the language of ‘union’ and ‘communion’ with God in a way that displaces God’s transcendence, identifying God with the world, or, more specifically, with ourselves and our own desires” (Billings 2011:Kindle location 1300).

For the mystic, however, this transcendence of God is expressed as being unknowable and is therefore only experienced in the silence that is beyond thoughts or concepts. Keating finds that

“The root of prayer is interior silence. We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words, but this is only one of its forms. ‘Prayer,’ according to Evagrius, ‘is the laying aside of thoughts’. This definition presupposes that there are thoughts. Contemplative prayer is not so much the absence of thoughts as detachment from them. It is the opening of mind and heart, body and emotions—our whole being—to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond words, thoughts and emotions.” (2007:15)

“Denial of our inmost self includes detachment from the habitual functioning of our intellect and will, which are our inmost faculties. This may require letting go not only of ordinary thoughts during prayer, but also of our most devout reflections and aspirations insofar as we treat them as indispensable means of going to God.” (2007:16)

The rediscovery of and the emphasis on the transcendence of God is an important component of a healthy biblical spirituality. The question is just if the contemplative path is the best way to explore this transcendence.

It is difficult to reject the contemplative lifestyle because many dear brothers, sisters and fellow workers find fulfilment in these practices. Their sincere desire for God’s glory, for growth and an integrated lifestyle of discipleship must be commended and emulated. The question remains, however, whether the contemplative way is the best expression of this.

Billings turns to Calvin to show that Calvin’s

“... negative theology claims, first and foremost, that while God may be known only partially by creatures, he cannot be comprehended. But interestingly, Calvin’s theology of transcendence does not contradict the claims of union ... Rather, this theology of divine incomprehensibility is intimately tied to his notion of union and communion with God. Calvin makes both moves simultaneously by retrieving a category from patristic theology: accommodation.” (2011:Kindle location 1304)

Billings (2011:Kindle location 1363) shows that, while all human knowledge of God is incomplete and has been accommodated to human weakness, it has been revealed by God in an act of “condescending love that seeks fellowship” (2011:Kindle location 1375). God makes himself known; he is not an object to be observed by humans. This again fits well with a theology of the cross, an Agape spirituality against an Eros spirituality which strives upwards towards God.¹⁵⁹

“Yes, God is mysterious; yes, our own theology is not adequate to the great glory and majesty of God; but precisely in this mystery, God has made himself known by stooping over in accommodation to us in our weakness. Emphasizing divine transcendence, then, does not make God distant. Divine transcendence and immanence do not point in opposite directions; they are not principles to be ‘balanced’ by a golden mean. Rather, in the matrix of accommodation, emphasizing transcendence makes God’s closeness and intimacy with us possible, because it is none other than the Holy One of Israel who has accommodated himself to us in Jesus Christ.” (2007:Kindle location 1320)

Union in Christ is a deeply covenantal term that is closely connected in the New Testament with faith, baptism and the Spirit (Horton 2011:603). Any true knowledge and experience of God is always mediated and is therefore only possible in and

¹⁵⁹ It is revealing to note that a New Age website which promotes an Eastern spirituality describes the experience of God with the term “unknowingness”, a description similar to that used by Keating and many other contemplatives: “Finally, in total surrender of every strategy of attention, worldly or spiritual, one simply abides in an open, empty/full, relaxed, alert stillness. This is the unconditioned mode of ‘just being.’ It is a radical interior ‘stopping’ (Taoist non-forcing, or wu-wei) of all forms of attention motivated by egoic seeking. It is an intuition of the nondual Divine that is ‘always already the case’ (Ramana Maharshi) as one’s real nature or Original ‘No-Face’ underneath or prior to the entire egocentric act. Free of any desire to grasp and know objects (Yoga Vasishtha: ‘Enlightenment is the realization that there are fundamentally no objects, only infinite Awareness’), this spiritual intuition can only be denoted as ‘unknowingness,’ the ‘Divine ignorance’ before/beyond the busy-ness of the mind caught in its conditioned forms of ignorance. (Kena Upanishad: ‘Brahman [Absolute Spiritual Reality] is not known by those who know It; It is known by those who do not know it.’ II.3) One abides as simple, spontaneous radiance of boundless love and perfect peace, like a flower effortlessly exuding natural fragrance.” From “Meditation: Trends, styles and stages” by Timothy Conway, viewed on 18/02/2014, from http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/meditation_trends_and_styles.html.

through Christ. Christian mysticism has been shown to have the same roots, practices and results as Eastern forms. They should therefore be rejected.

6.4.3. A rediscovery of Puritan spirituality

Beeke (2004:vii) may have hit the nail on the head: after describing much of modern Western spirituality as not being moored to Scripture and therefore degenerating into unbiblical mysticism, he recognizes that part of the problem is a dry Reformed orthodoxy which lacks emphasis on vibrant godly living. It is indeed true that the growth of contemplative spirituality in the DRC is a reaction against this very situation. What is needed is “a dual emphasis of nurturing both the mind and the soul” (2004:viii), but what must be cautioned against is a drift away from biblical doctrine. Packer is in agreement when he describes Puritan meditation as preaching to yourself by applying truth to yourself and turning the truth into praise:

“In much current teaching about prayer, contemplation is ‘in’ and talking to yourself before God is ‘out’. I am Puritan enough to think that this contemplative fashion is largely a reaction against devotional formalism, and that owes much to twentieth-century anti-intellectualism and interest in non-Christian mysticism as it does to Scripture, and that in cutting loose from the meditative manner of the Psalms, the Fathers, and specially the Augustinian heritage of which the Puritans are part, it loses without gaining.” (1990:13)

Beeke (2012:Kindle location 344) uses the definition of Coffey and Lim to describe the Puritanism of the 1500s as “a distinctive and particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism which originated within the Church of England”. Even though there were theological differences, the vast majority of Puritans were part of Reformed orthodoxy. They were a movement that sought further reformation of the Church of England (2012:Kindle location 386). The Puritan age lasted into the 1660s¹⁶⁰ but then declined.

“Puritans had a dynamic fellowship with God that shaped their minds, affected their emotions and penetrated their souls. They were grounded in something and someone outside of themselves: the triune God of the Scriptures. Second, Puritans embraced a shared system of beliefs grounded in the Scriptures. Today we refer to this system as Reformed orthodoxy. Third, on the basis of their

¹⁶⁰ Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is not described as a Puritan in the historical sense, though he is regarded as such in theology and piety.

common spiritual experience and unity of faith, the Puritans established a network of relationships among believers and ministers.

“... The distinctive character of Puritanism was its quest for a life reformed by the Word of God. The Puritans were committed to search the Scriptures, organize and analyze their findings, and then apply them to all areas of life. They had a confessional, theological and Trinitarian approach that urged conversion and communion with God in personal, family, church, and national life.” (2012:Kindle location 414)

It is richly challenging to read their precepts for cultivating holiness (Beeke 2004:400–424) and on meditation (2004:73–100), and to grasp how they included heart and affections in an integrated spirituality of life. The last eight chapters of *A Puritan theology: Doctrine for life* makes very rich reading and suggests an answer to the lack of zeal, challenges of catechizing, low affections, impatience in suffering, lack of a faith community in home and church, neglect of doctrine, lack of basic Bible knowledge, and the dryness of soul that describe much of the experience of the average DRC member.

Packer (1990:21-34) makes a strong case for why the church needs the Puritans. They teach us lessons that “we badly need to learn” (1990:29). Alongside the Puritans we are but “spiritual dwarfs” and the Western church living in ease, luxury and affluence often lacks the maturity displayed by the Puritans that was formed in hardship, struggle and conflict. Furthermore they are an example in the integration of their daily lives, in which all aspects were seen as having the single purpose of honouring God. “There was no disjunction between sacred and secular; all creation, so far as they were concerned were sacred, and all activities, of whatever kind, must be sanctified, that is, done to the glory of God” (1990:24).

Packer holds the Puritans forth as worthy examples in the quality of their spiritual experiences, their passion for effective action to influence society, a clear program for family stability, their sense of human worth and a clear vision for church renewal (1990:24-27). In distinguishing the Puritans from contemporary Christianity, Packer may sound harsh, but his words should be taken to heart:

“Today, however, Christians in the West are found to be on the whole passionless, passive, and, one fears, prayerless; cultivating an ethos which endorses personal piety in a pietistic cocoon, they leave public affairs to go their own way and neither expect nor for the most part seek influence beyond their

own Christian circle. Where the Puritans prayed and laboured for a holy England and New England, sensing that where privilege is neglected and faithfulness reigns national judgement threatens, modern Christians gladly settle for conventional social responsibility and, having done so, look no further. Surely it is obvious that at this point the Puritans have a great deal to teach us.”(1990:25)

It is suggested that Grasvoëlkop dips into the well of Puritan spirituality to drink deeply from these refreshing waters as they show a way to integrate spiritual disciplines into a missional identity and ministry.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter has described Christian community, deriving from the character of the Trinity and the believer's union with Christ, as indispensable to faith. The congregation is built as a community through the care, charity and good works of each member as expressions of love. This acts as a witness to the reign of God. This love overflows to those outside the community as the congregation expresses love with an expectation that they will be added to the community of faith.

The concept of discipleship in the ordinary through vocation is a necessary missional insight to equip believers to live their daily lives for Christ. It should be balanced by the insight that discipleship is also a calling to grow in knowledge of Christ that requires discipline and effort through spiritual formation.

How can these insights help the DRC Grasvoëlkop become a congregation that can be described as missional?

Two of the greatest challenges facing Grasvoëlkop would be to move members from a strong individualism in their faith practice to the expression of Christian life as community, and from a passive attitude of receiving to one of serving. The practice of spiritual disciplines in private needs to be encouraged with an equal emphasis on those that express community.

A renewing of faith in the triune God together with a hope built on the reign of God as expressed in his Kingdom can help the congregation to break out of an institutional understanding of church to come to a fresh expression of love. As the foundation of this love is discovered within the Trinitarian community of God, church life can grow to reflect this love in unity, service, spiritual growth and witness.

A clearer understanding of what is hindering growth in cell groups can help bring people together with greater intentionality. In a context where isolation is growing and people are becoming more private, there is a new opportunity to demonstrate love and community through a visible and welcoming unity. There are opportunities for the congregation to live their faith in the public square. There is a need to recreate a warmth and openness within the community that has declined over the years.

While there is a warm and accepting attitude that is clearly displayed during services and meetings, and while there is a commendable level of care for each other, there is much room for growth in this expression of love. There is room for a greater display of love through closer communion with one another, but especially in crossing boundaries and welcoming the stranger. This will be the real test of the congregation's desire to live missionally. The strange combination of a sense of uncertainty and expectation in all likelihood demonstrates the willingness of many members to move forward missionally and to be involved personally in the work of God through his congregation. Rather than tackling too many new projects in an attempt to be missional, the congregation should discern where its strengths and opportunities lie to demonstrate its missional character.

The SAPMC reading team raised an important concern about discipleship in the workplace and the question as to how much active discipleship is practised outside an organized structure or project, in the daily lives of members, families and individuals, has been answered in an unexpected way. Through the discovery of the ordinary, a new vision and impact can be achieved in the daily life of believers. The importance and the impact of this should not be underestimated.

A vibrant love for one another flows from the love of God and the love for God. A call to discipleship is a call to Jesus, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. As the congregation grows in spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation, it should be expected that love will bear fruit in good works and unity. The call to discipleship is a call to walk in love and unity, a call to walk in good works which have been prepared for them as surely as they have been prepared by God for these good works (Eph 2:10).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The research question that launched this study was to discern: *How can missional theology help DRC Grasvoëlkop to move from a mission-minded focus to a missional identity and ministry?*

This question confronted both the researcher and the congregation with matters which go to the heart of the congregation's involvement in the world arising from this missional focus. Missional theology has been a very capable conversation partner, both welcoming and challenging the congregation by providing insight into what is lacking in the congregation, what is needed for the congregation to move forward and what the direction should be so that this movement can be transformative and fruitful.

Missional theology has been shown to provide a new hermeneutic for the congregation to understand the way forward that is provided through faith, hope and love. An institutional hermeneutic that primarily looks at bank balances, the security of the DRC as denomination and works with an inward focus aimed at merely caring for one another does not offer any fruitful way forward. It is clear that the current mission-minded focus has not translated into a missional mindset within the congregation due to it simply being a part of the congregation, however sincere and productive it may be. This focus will not be strong enough to sustain the congregation in a time of change and challenge such as is currently being experienced.

The changing demographics and culture have removed many of the support pillars that previously helped many Dutch Reformed Churches to thrive. The description of the situation and context of the congregation in Part I helped to answer Osmer's first task: "What is going on?" and has revealed the challenges that face this congregation and challenge its future well-being. The congregation faces changes in the community, context and culture, and is faced with the question of survival. As the church struggles with the possibility of a sustainable ministry in the future, it becomes incumbent on the congregation to establish its identity and calling.

The way forward lie in understanding both the need for new missional growth, and that this growth is found counter-intuitively by looking away from oneself and one's self-preservation. This growth and transformation belongs to the heart of the *missio Dei*; when the congregation responds as sign, instrument and foretaste, there can be a resting from concern about the future, as the future is unfolded through God's very real presence. The ethnographic study has been helpful to point out obstacles, but also shows the sprouts of possible missional growth.

In Part I the development of the missions-minded focus of the congregation was described as a positive step taken in faith to move the congregation to play a role in the mission of God. While there is much to be appreciated and recommended in this endeavour it is lacking in that it remains a work that can be achieved at a comfortable distance, without getting one's hands dirty or calling for much personal involvement. Whereas this missions-mindedness does display faith, growth and a missional outlook on the world, it lacks the ability to support the congregation in moving forward to a faithful response to the changing macro and meso contexts that have been described. "Missions" remains ministry at a safe distance and does not aid the congregation in being salt and light within its own community. In this way the missions activity is not a reflection of a truly missional identity. The change in the context that the congregation is confronted with, has forced the congregation to take a fresh look at its identity and ministry and to discern a new way forward towards a fuller missional identity and ministry.

Part II was undertaken as an aid to understanding and as a guide to describing what such a congregational identity and calling would look like in missional terms. These key missional concepts have supplied bountiful insight.

A summary of the missional findings of the three chapters of Part II can be helpful in drawing together the different aspects of the discussion to form a more complete picture. These chapters are summarized as follows:

KEY THEMES	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
MISSIONAL MESSAGE <i>Normative task</i>	TRINITY	KINGDOM	DISCIPLESHIP
CONGREGATIONAL CALLING	<i>FAITH</i>	<i>HOPE</i>	<i>LOVE</i>
MISSIONAL MOVEMENT	THE SENDER "FROM"	THE SENDING "TO"	THE SENT "THROUGH"
CHRIST PLAYS IN TEN THOUSAND PLACES ¹⁶¹	HISTORY	CREATION	COMMUNITY
NEWBIGIN'S ¹⁶² TRINITARIAN VIEW	PROCLAMATION (FATHER)	PRESENCE (SON)	PREVENIENCE (SPIRIT)
CRITIQUES OF CHURCH CULTURE <i>Interpretive task</i>	DEISM & SECULARIZATION	SPIRITUAL ESCAPISM	INDIVIDUALISM & SELF-CENTREDNESS
BIBLICAL BALANCE <i>Normative task</i>	CHRISTOCENTRIC	CHURCH & PROCLAMATION	THE "ORDINARY"
DANGEROUS DRIFTS <i>Interpretive task</i>	PLURALISM	INCARNATIONAL MINISTRY	MYSTICISM
FUTURE FOCUS <i>Pragmatic task</i>	VISION, PREACHING & WORSHIP	COMMUNITY, CONTEXT & POVERTY	CHURCH LIFE & CELL GROUPS
ESSENTIAL EPHESIANS	1:10	3:10	2:10

Missional theology has helped as an interpretive tool to understand that the challenge before the congregation is much greater than just the result of the changing demographics of the immediate context. Behind these changes lies an accommodation of Western culture that calls the church to a continuing conversion. These are issues that overwhelm the congregation and should be confronted by a radical living out of faith, hope and love as the congregation rediscovers the Trinity, the Kingdom and the calling to life within a community of love.

Chapter 4 opens an understanding of the *missio Dei* as grounded in the Trinitarian nature of God in which God is active in the world and working in and through his church. No congregation exists for itself. While it "has [been] blessed ... in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3), the church is not called to be a *receptacle*, but as a *conduit* through which these blessings are to flow to a world lost in darkness.

¹⁶¹ Peterson (2005).

¹⁶² Newbigin (1995)

The strong Reformed insight of living for the glory of God is given a missional dimension as the church recognizes that God is at work in history and takes up the cause of making him known. Both *missio Dei* and the understanding of the Trinity have a clear Christocentrism. It is through Christ that God reveals himself; it is through Christ that he gathers a people for himself, and it is through Christ that he will renew all things. The church is called to know God and to make God known through Christ. This disallows any room for a pluralism of faith. As part of God's work in history, the congregation can see its faith being strengthened and find expression in hope and love. This faith finds expression in heartfelt worship, biblical preaching and missional vision that does not extricate the congregation from but engages it in the world.

The Kingdom of God (Chapter 5) confronts the congregation with its diminished and watered-down view of the gospel. While a life of "spiritual escapism" may look very attractive to those pressured by life and appalled by surrounding evil, this reduction of the work of God in Christ to the salvation of the soul, leading to an awaited escape to heaven, misses the heart of the doctrine of creation and redemption. The challenge for the congregation is to live hopefully in the here and the now, and to be a sign and a foretaste of the Kingdom.

The assured hope of a consummation in which a redeemed people participate in a new heaven and earth enables the congregation to live out this hope in the present. The church is an instrument of God in the world and should therefore understand and engage the local community as the context to which it is called. For Grasvoëlkop that would mean a context that has changed demographically; a city with many broken people and broken relationships; a province with huge poverty and unemployment, and a world with many enclaves of unreached people, and brothers and sisters suffering persecution, injustice and a lack of resources. It is to this context that the congregation is called to be a servant and a messenger that represents the reign of God. It is in this context that the congregation should strive to discern where it can make a difference through acts of kindness.

The call to evangelism and proclamation is central to the mission of the church. The church is uniquely qualified and commissioned; it alone has been entrusted with this task. The insight into the important role that proclamation played in the social

transformation of societies helps to underscore the importance of cross-cultural mission and its support and promulgation through involvement at congregational level. The impact of 20 years of faithful involvement should not be underestimated. Cross-cultural missions are not to be discarded, but embraced, while a new missional focus can be helpful in discerning wider opportunities for witness within the local context.

Chapter 6 confronts the individualism of Western culture that so pervades Western congregational life. Matthew 28:19–20 underlines the missional call to be and to make disciples. Discipleship takes place in a community of faith. The role of baptizing and teaching places this command to make disciples in the context of lives shared in community and progressing in faith. It is only through the renewed understanding of the call to community that the church can give expression to its missional nature.

The refreshing insight of vocation as a missional calling can counteract the development of a sacred/secular divide in which members view Sundays and the few church activities they participate in as their spiritual calling; it can replace the false feelings of guilt with a sense of calling as they go about their mundane daily tasks. The importance of developing the role of the “ordinary” within the mission of God, together with discipleship, in the lives of members can save the congregation from an unhealthy activism in which a variety of projects are tackled and members are whipped into involvement, only to increase the compartmentalization of their faith.

A missional focus is established through a balanced life in which the importance of sharing life within the community of faith is recognized and spiritual growth is found in both private and communal practices of spiritual formation. This call to service and sanctification demands obedience and hard work. It starts with a daily commitment to serve and grow in the knowledge of God. Credited to DL Moody, the saying that one’s Bibles is to be covered in shoe leather means that one is called to a daily “walk” of faith and obedience.

The image of a pendulum swing has been important in this study; an awareness of new dangers is essential because all these swings represent an accommodation of a cultural response to modernity, and because cultural sins are extraordinarily difficult

to discern within one's own heart.¹⁶³ In this way pluralism, incarnational ministry and mysticism have been identified as threats to the orthodoxy and missional focus of the congregation.

Despite the use of so many words, much is still left unsaid. The researcher would suggest that the congregation accepts the following writers as conversation and travel partners as it moves forward:

- NT Wright, for his understanding of the Kingdom rule of Christ;
- Ed Stetzer, for his clear guidance in analyzing the local context to facilitate a missional response, the evangelical framework within which he responds to missional thinking and the body of work he is producing based on research of local congregations; and
- The Puritans as a form of biblical spirituality that calls to be emulated.

The congregation is grounded in a distinct context; this time and place is a calling to the congregation to be involved in the *missio Dei* as witnesses and as salt and light. When praying the "Our Father" prayer, the congregation is witnessing to the brokenness of this world. Each supplication discloses a different area of evil and brokenness, yet in its essence, it is a missional prayer that calls forth:

- *Faith*: in God as his desire to be glorified and to rule is expressed through his mission in which his people participate;
- *Hope*: in a coming Kingdom on this earth that is already being expressed, even in the mundane of daily life, and that will close in his Kingdom, power and glory reigning forever and ever;
- *Love*: expressed in a willingness to forgive, a willingness to serve others as symbolized in the prayer for daily bread and a desire to be protected from that which is evil and derails Kingdom living.

¹⁶³ It seems that Paul's politically incorrect statements in Tt 1:12–13 are a reminder of the reality of cultural sins. It is a simple thing to see the cultural sins of others, yet prohibitively difficult to see one's own.

How does the congregation respond with regard to its size? The size of a congregation should not play a role in its identity or its calling. Newbigin (1995:124) demonstrates how Christ's emphasis was on faithfulness, not on numbers. Paul likewise did not consider size a matter of concern, concentrating rather on faithfulness and the integrity of their witness. Newbigin shows many periods of growth which could be categorized as unhealthy and says that "we have to ask whether the church is most faithful in its witness to the crucified and risen Jesus and most recognizable as the community that 'bears about it in the body the dying Jesus' when it is chiefly concerned with its own self-aggrandizement" (1995:127).

The many congregations with which the congregation has partnered through Veritas training in Egypt are a clear example of faithfulness in ministry and witness in very difficult circumstances. These congregations are predominantly small and lacking in resources, yet display a commendable desire for fellowship, worship and service. They simply accept that they are small and weak, but strive for faithfulness and rejoice in any growth. Grasvoëlkop would be unfaithful to its calling if its size became a reason for concern. There should always be the desire for growth, but not as a badge of honour.

"Anyone who knows Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior must desire ardently that others share that knowledge and must rejoice when the number of those who do is multiplied. Where this desire and this rejoicing are absent, we must ask whether something is not wrong at the very center of the church's life." (Newbigin 1995:127)

The congregation carries the Name of Christ as his body. God brings his Kingdom reign through Christ. This is achieved through his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. NT Wright (2012) shows the importance of the rediscovery of the gospel message as the story of God becoming King, both in the public ministry and death of Jesus (2012:175). He sees the Gospels as writings to and from communities that understood that a transformation had been taking place through Jesus as Israel's Messiah (2012:196), that God's promises for his covenant people were being realized and that this was being expressed through a joining together of the key themes of Kingdom and cross.

"The gospel story of Jesus seen as the launching of the renewed people of God includes, as a central element, the incomprehension, failure, and rebellion of that

people, until they are stunned into new faith by the resurrection and energized into new obedience by the Spirit. The themes of kingdom and cross are not simply theological themes that the disciples have to learn, abstract ideas on their way to establish a creedal 'orthodoxy.' They are a pattern of their life, both as they follow Jesus around Galilee, despite not understanding what he's up to, and as they follow him in the power of the Spirit, to the ends of the earth." (NT Wright 2012:198)

This study set out to address the question: *How can missional theology help DRC Grasvoëlkop to move from a mission-minded focus to a missional identity and ministry?* The researcher is confident that the description of the congregation has helped identify the seismic change in context and culture that plays into its identity and calling. Missional theology has played its role in showing that the mission-minded focus of the congregation does not reflect a missional identity and vision that is grounded in the *missio Dei*, and is therefore insufficient as a foundation for sustainable growth through this time of change. The missions focus is just a segment of the life of the congregation which still functions from an institutional hermeneutic.

This study has achieved its goal in describing missional theology, with its focus on Trinity, Kingdom and discipleship, as providing the foundation from which the congregation can redefine its identity and calling to move into God's preferred future. The researcher has shown how God has initiated this change to a missional hermeneutic in the life of the congregation. He is assured that the truths developed from the three key missional aspects are dependable and the practical guidelines achievable so that growth in faith, hope and love can be sustainable.

The researcher prays Paul's prayer for the Colossians for Grasvoëlkop in a desire to partner with this body, through a renewed focus on discipleship and the surrounding community, as an expression of the growth and certain future that is inherent in the Kingdom:

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1:3–14)

APPENDIX A

Ethnografic Research: DRC Grasvoëlkop

1. Beskryf die gemeente aan 'n nuwe persoon.

1. Die gemeente is relatief klein maar bestaan uit kern groep wat baie heg aan mekaar verbind is – en getrou is. Altyd getrou. Daar is baie wat op die rand skyn te wees met min betrokkenheid. Fisiese nood soos siekte word ernstig opgeneem. Daar is groot sending ywer by die kern groep. Begroting word goed aangewend.
2. Dit is 'n voorreg om aan Grasvoëlkop te behoort want jy ontvang so baie geestelik. Elke erediens is 'n geestelike ervaring en jy gaan met 'n boodskap huis toe wat jy die hele week kan gebruik. Ons voel baie tuis hier want almal is baie vriendelik, maar daar is tog 'n verskil vir ons wat van die platteland kom. Ons is nooit gedwing om iets te doen wat ons nie wil doen nie, so die gemeente is aan te beveel.
3. 'n Klein gemeente met 'n sterk kerngroep wat werklik die Here dien met toewyding. 'n Gemeente wat 'n sterk sendingvisie het. Die maandelikse fondse wat inkom is 'n aanduiding van hoe gemeentelike sending ondersteun. Die gemeente ondersteun 'n aantal sendelinge. Daar is mense wat mekaar se belange op die hart dra. 'n Aantal selgroepe, Bybelstudiegroepe en dissipelskap is aktief betrokke.
4. Dis 'n klein gemeente waar almal mekaar se lief en leed deel en vir mekaar omgee.
5. Die gemeente is klein en die meerderheid van die mense is ouer. Daar is 'n groot fokus op sending en aanbidding. Daar is aktiwiteite soos kinderkrans, jeug en 'n dans en drama groep. Daar is 'n mooi besorgdheid van mense oor ander mense.
6. ons leraar is vir my 'n ware voorbeeld wat ek in 'n leraar soek. Preek suiwer uit die Woord, toegewyd aan God en dwing gesag af. Die gemeente is hartlik teenoor mekaar en kan die liefde van God ervaar en aanvoel. Sang is 'n plesier om die Here te loof. Orrelis lei ons goed om die Here te loof. Gemeente bestaan uit meestal bejaardes. Finansiële dink ek gaan dit goed. Sendingbewus, en Christus se laaste opdrag word hier uitgeleef.
7. Dit is soos 'n klein dorpie gemeente in die stad. Jy voel nie soos 'n nommer nie en die mense is approachable. Die gemiddelde ouderdom is seker redelik hoog maar daar is genoeg jonger mense en hulle is vriendelik. Die eredienste is soos tipiese NGK dienste en die aanddienste is informeel en ontspanne. Die gemeente is aktief betrokke met sending.
8. 'n Klein groepie vriendelike mense. Verskillende kommissies funksioneer met jeug, sending en barmhartigheid en gemeentebediening. Ons doen graag saam Bybelstudie, het ook selgroepe en dissipelskap en gaan weer 40 dae van gemeenskap aanbied.
9. Daar is altyd iets nuuts en interessant wat gebeur (alhoewel dit nie altyd opwindend is nie!) Die jeug is nie volop nie maar is altyd vol lewe en is vriendelik. Die gemeentelike is almal baie besorg oor mekaar, omdat dit 'n klein gemeente is.
10. Die gemeente is klein, skrifgetrou, vernuwend en na buite gerig.
11. Dit is 'n klein gemeente en mense is oorwegend ouer as 40. Daar is 'n hele klomp vriendelike mense wat nuwe lidmate sal verwelkom maar daar is ook baie kliënte. Daar is sterk geestelike leiers.
12. Ons is 'n klein hegte gemeente. Baie van die ou lidmate wat die gemeente gehelp vestig het is reeds weg. Ons ondersteun sending, ook met geloofsgelofteoffers, en is dankbaar vir nuwe mense wat hulle hier vestig wat ook sending ondersteun. Ons kom Vrydae om 06:00 bymekaar vir gebedstyd om sending werk asook die wat ons ondersteun, aan die Here op te dra. Daar word ook vir die jeug voorsiening gemaak.
13. Dis 'n klein gemeente, meeste lidmate bly in die selfde gemeenskap en ken mekaar goed. Vir my het dit 'n gevoel van familie en is mense met wie jy gemaklik kan wees. Sommige mense het 'n opregte en lewendige verhouding met God maar daar is baie ander wat, dink ek, net daar is uit gewoonte en tradisie. Ons gemeente is nie streng op

tradisies nie maar daar is ouer mense wat nie gemaklik is daarmee nie. Ek dink 'n nuwe persoon sal gemaklik inpas omdat ons soos 'n familie is en goed met mekaar kommunikeer.

14. Dit is 'n klein intieme gemeente. Die meeste mense ken mekaar goed, op eerstenaam basis. Hulle ken tot 'n redelike mate mekaar se behoeftes.
15. Ons is 'n klein maar baie liefdevolle gemeente, ons probeer om die hele gemeente te betrek by al die aktiwiteite van die kerk. Ons is deel van sending.
16. 'n Kleinerige stadsgemeente met 'n plattelandse atmosfeer waar mense omgee vir mekaar. Getalle afgeneem het maar nou stabiliseer het, min kinders en jeug. Meestal tradisionele eredienste met heelwat aktiewe selgroepe. Goeie betrokkenheid by sending.
17. Die gemeente is klein en probeer om 'n familie in Christus te skep wat dit maklik maak vir 'n nuweling om betrokke te raak. Die denkwyse is redelik vernuwend en probeer om die historiese outydse tradisies te breek.
18. Dit is 'n klein gemeente wat baie omgee vir mekaar. Daar is goeie belangstelling en betrokkenheid by lidmate.
19. Daar is 'n baie gemaklike atmosfeer. Voel soos 'n familie byeenkoms, almal is vriendelik en vrolik.
20. Elke lidmaat kan hulself uitleef en die ou gebruike van styfheid word nie meer gedoen nie. Dit is dinamies in hoe die Evangelie verkondig word en elke lidmaat kan homself uitleef. Daar is ruim geleentheid vir alle persone van alle ouderdomgroepe. Alle ordes word nagekom. Die uitreik in veral sending bediening geniet groot aandag – dit is aktief en lewer goeie werk.
21. Gemeente is klein in area en getalle maar is hartlik en warm in atmosfeer. Baie mense (besoekers en nuwe intrekkers) praat oor die warmte en vriendelikheid van die lidmate. Die mense gee werklik vir mekaar om. Die gemeente het 'n visie op die wêreld en sending is belangrik. Groot projekte is oor die jare opgebou. Die gemeente bestaan uit hoofsaaklik middeljarig en ouer mense.
22. Dit is nie 'n baie groot gemeente nie en bestaan uit merendeels ouerige mense, daar is darem 'n klompie jongmense. Die oggenddiens is formeel en die aanddiens meer informeel. Die mense is almal baie vriendelik en hulle aanvaar nuwe mense maklik in die gemeente.
23. Die gemeente bestaan al oor die 25 jaar. Die uitstaande kenmerk is die sending georiënteerdheid. Verskeie sendelinge trek voordeel uit betalings van die geloofsgelofteoffers. Die gemeente is aanpasbaar en poog om nie rigied te wees nie.
24. Klein gemeente waar daar geen rede is dat almal nie almal ken nie. Bekend vir omgee verhoudings tussen mense. Sterk sendinggerigtheid. Bybelgefundeerde preke. Kinders het spesiale plek.
25. Dit is 'n baie liefdevolle gemeente en nuwe lede word maklik aanvaar.
26. Ons is 'n lekker gemeente, ons is klein en ken mekaar baie goed, en daar is warmte en sing heerlik. Ons is baie betrokke by sending en onderling doen mense baie vir mekaar. Daar is baie ondersteuning aan mekaar in sel en Bybelstudie groepe.
27. 'n Groep christene wat soos 'n familie saam staan, omgee en in moeilike omstandighede mekaar ondersteun. Die belange van ander lede word op die hart gedra.
28. Die mense het 'n groot bereidwilligheid om te help waar nood is. Hulle ondersteun mekaar en aanvaar jou soos jy is. Die gemeente kuier lekker saam en daar is 'n warm ontvangs. Dis klein met 'n noue familieband. Die samesang is lekker en is regtig lofprysing.

2. Hoe leer gemeentelede wat dit beteken om 'n volgeling (dissipel) van Jesus Christus te wees?

1. Deur prediking – eredienste en aandbyeenkomste, wys van DVD's. Kleingroepe speel groot rol: dissipelskap, selgroepe, Bybelstudies, gebedsbyeenkomste. Aktiewe bevordering van sending visie en praktiese omgee deur barmhartigheid.

2. eintlik hang dit van jouself af as jy 'n dissipel van Jesus wil wees, maar hierdie gemeente bied 'n volle geleentheid om wel en te wees. Ons kry 'n goeie voorbeeld van ons leraar en leiers en ook geleenthede soos selgroepe en dissipelskap. Ons kry die geleentheid om die opdrag van God, nl. om sy woord aan ander nasies te bring, uit te leef. Ons voel deel van 'n groep mense wat graag volgelinge van Jesus wil wees.
3. 2 jaar gelede het ons as nuwe intrekkers 'n ware tuiste in die gemeente gevind juis omdat ons God se teenwoordigheid ervaar het – veral in die eredienste wat die liefde van Jesus illustreer het. Gemeentelede wat by ons betrokke geraak het en ons uitgenooi het na selgroepe, Bybelstudie en huiskerk. Die liefde van Christus is sterk aangevoel. Mense wat ook mekaar versorg in tye van nood en siekte – persoonlik tydens my operasie onlangs. Kerngroep wat saam bid vir die nood van die wêreld en sosiale samesyn.
4. Die gedagtes wat tydens preke oorgedra word tesame met praktiese voorbeelde – soos wat verduidelik en illustreer word deur sendelinge wat hier optree.
5. Daar is met dissipelskap begin wat breedvoerig kyk na wat dit behels om 'n dissipel te wees. Daar is ook selgroepe en die eredienste en preke waar mens leer wat dit beteken om 'n volgeling van Jesus te wees.
6. Om die wat voorgaan in die gemeente se voorbeeld te volg. Christus is ons volmaakte voorbeeld en om Hom na te volg in Gees behoort ons almal se ideaal te wees. Ons doen wel Bybelstudie en is ook besig met 'n dissipelskap kursus. Dit beteken vir ons geweldig baie om so nader aan die vader te leef en ook meer te besef van ons afhanklikheid van die Vader en medegelowiges.
7. Daar is selgroepe en geleenthede soos 40 dae van doelgerigte lewe en dissipelskap kursus. Dan dien die preke ook hiervoor.
8. Preke en onderig, en Jesus se lewe wat ons voorbeeld is. Dan ook die dine wat en voorheen genoem het.
9. Deur kursusse en deur mekaar en die verhoudings met mekaar.
10. Inligting oor dissipel wees word tydens eredienste gedeel. Daar is geleenthede waar dit prakties uitgeleef kan word. Selgroepe bedink wat dit beteken en gee geleentheid vir die praktiese uitleef daarvan.
11. Vir meeste lidmate is dit slegs deur die eredienste, dan is daar selgroepe waar meer hieroor geleer kan word, alhoewel dit 'n vraag is of genoeg mense ingeskakel is.
12. Daar is ruim geleentheid om iewers betrokke te wees. Daar is 'n paar Bybelstudie groepe vir vroue en een vir mans wat 'n oggend per week bymekaarkom. Op die oomblik skakel sommige in by Dissipelskap geleenthede. Vir die jongmense is daar ook dissipelskap klasse en kom jongmense ook naweke bymekaar. Vir die kleiner groepe is daar kinderkrans, Sondag kleuterkerk en dan ook kategese vir laer en hoërskool kinders.
13. “Dissipelskap” is begin en 'n hele paar mense is daarmee besig. Dus dui dit daarop dat daar 'n verlange is om te leer hoe om 'n volgeling van Jesus te word. Barmhartigheid – daar is ontferming oor mense en betrokkenheid by CMR en instansies. Ook sending is belangrik om Jesus te wen vir die koninkryk.
14. Deur die Sondag eredienste by te woon of betrokke te raak by projekte by die kerk of gemeenskap. Daar is bidure en selgroepe en spesiale kursusse.
15. Daar is baie groepe en mense word uitgenooi om daaraan deel te neem, dan moet daar uitgereik word na familie en vriende en moet 'n getuie wees.
16. Veral deur kleingroepe en preke tydens eredienste. Moeite word gedoen om kinders by kategese te leer. Deur mekaar te dien en te versorg asook lidmate wat na buite betrokke is.
17. Kleingroep byeenkomste, Bybelstudie groepe en dissipelskap en ander kursusse. Doelgerigte eredienste wat hierop gerig is – veral met die gebruik van preek reekse wat impak het.
18. Daar is gereeld kursusse en ook 'n dissipelskap wat aangebied word en mense leer om mekaar by te staan in moeilike omstandighede. Daar is baie geleenthede vir mense om betrokke te wees op verskillende maniere.
19. Sondag se kerk diens, huiskerk en kerk kampe.

20. Huidiglik is daar dissipelskap kursusse wat gevolg word – wat ook 'n retraite insluit. Daar is baie geleenthede om met Bybelstudie byeenkomste meer te leer en jou Christenskap uit te leef. Die geleenthede is vir alle lidmate en die jeug beskikbaar en word goed bygewoon. Die belang om dissipel te wees en nie net kerk by te woon nie word goed benadruk en uitgeleef.
21. Eredienste is belangrik en daar is skrifgetroue prediking. Kleingroepe word beklemtoon en daar is projekte aangepak wat nie te groot impak gehad het maar tog 'n rol speel – soos Alpha en 40 dae. Dissipelskap wat 'n 2 jaar kursus is, is hierdie jaar begin en dit het reeds impak.
22. Daar is selgroepe en bidure en dan ook die 40 dae.
23. Selgroepe het 'n paar jaar gelede ontstaan waar saam Bybelstudie gedoen word en mense geleentheid het m mekaar te ondersteun. Die Alpha kursus is ook aangebied. Dit is opgevolg deur die 40 dae. Huidiglik word die dissipelskap kursus (leefwyse) gedoen.
24. Deur te dien waar hulle kan; deur die preke op hulle lewens toe te pas. In klein groepies.
25. Deur die boodskap wat ons Sondae ontvang en deur selgroepe.
26. Preke en eredienste, en dinge wat aangebied word soos Alpha en 40 dae. Die gemeenskap van gelowiges selgroepe is belangrik hier.
27. Deur preke en dissipelskap kursus.
28. Eredienste, selgroepe en deur verhoudings waar mense vir mekaar bid en ondersteun. Daar is mooi voorbeelde van mense wie se lewens verander en mens sien die groei in hulle en hoe hulle die Here werklik dien.

3. Vertel iets wat illustreer hoe jy ervaar dat God teenwoordig is en hoe Hy werk in hierdie gemeente.

1. Wonderlike betrokkenheid by nuwe intrekkers. Die atmosfeer tydens eredienste waar die sang aangrypend is. Die gemeente geniet dit om die Here deur sang te eer.
2. Ek ervaar God as werklik teenwoordig in die gemeente want op alle gebiede ondervind ek dit. Die manier waarop die leraar sy boodskappe oordra kan ons voel dat God met ons praat. Omdat ons getalle nie so groot is nie is ons meer afhanklik van mekaar en deur gebede vir mekaar het Gd al op wonderbaarlike maniere voorsien. Ons deel God se teenwoordigheid met ander gelowiges wat met wie ons saam aanbid, en ons doen voorbidding vir mekaar.
3. 2 jaar gelede het ons as nuwe intrekkers 'n ware tuiste in die gemeente gevind juis omdat ons God se teenwoordigheid ervaar het – veral in die eredienste wat die liefde van Jesus illustreer het. Gemeentelede wat by ons betrokke geraak het en ons uitgenooi het na selgroepe, Bybelstudie en huiskerk. Die liefde van Christus is sterk aangevoel. Mense wat ook mekaar versorg in tye van nood en siekte – persoonlik tydens my operasie onlangs. Kerngroep wat saam bid vir die nood van die wêreld en sosiale samesyn.
4. Ek is deur 'n baie moeilike tyd en my gesinslewe is omvergewerp deur 'n persoon se besluit maar dit is alles nietig verklaar deur gebed. Ek self het gebed en daar is deur ander vir my gebed en dinge is reggestel wat my in staat gestel het om met my daaglikse lewe voort te gaan.
5. Die gemeente se finansiële posisie het die afgelope paar jaar baie verbeter en dit was die direkte gevolg van gebed en hoe God in mense se lewens gewerk het en hulle oortuig het om te gee.
6. Ek ervaar die Vader se teenwoordigheid deur die prediking van die Woord, en Sy liefde wat ons dring en ontvanklik maak vir die uitleef van ons geloof in Christus met medegelowiges. Ervaar dit in Bybelstudie en dissipelskap kursus waar ons nader aan mekaar leef wat kommunikasie plaasvind – waar ons ons lief en leed met mekaar kan deel.
7. Ek dink aan die begin van 'n dans en drama groep vir die jong mense. Die gemeente se gewilligheid en betrokkenheid met die aankoop van die klankstelsel.

8. Ek sien hoe God ons finansies bestuur het. He hy die regte persone roep vir sekere werke. Om mense te sien verander van byv. 'n geharde persoon na iemand wat sag is en begin omgee vir ander, tref my baie.
9. Die betrokkenheid by sending en die verskil wat die kerk en gemeente in hul lewens maak.
10. God word gesien deur die verandering van mense se lewens. Dit is opvallend hoe Hy ons deur verskillende seisoene lei deur preek inhoud.
11. Toe ek nuut in die gemeente gekom het was daar oral geestelike leiers wat na vore gekom het om my te lei en te ondersteun in my geestelike groei. Die rol wat sending en finansies speel en die deure wat oopgaan.
12. Die betrokkenheid van lidmate, asook sommige nuwes is verblydend. Die feit dat daar met dissipelskap van die jongmense sowel as die ouer lidmate betrokke is. Ons ondervind die Here se voorsiening in ons gemeente wat betref finansies. Die druiwe projek waarby ek jaarliks betrokke is, waar mense inskakel wat betref hulp op verskillende maniere.
13. Die finansies en geloofsgelofteoffers en die getuienisse daaroor. Ek dink ook God werk sterk in die kleiner groepe soos sel en dissipelskap en Hy wys sy krag in verhoudinge tussen mense en veral in individue wat soveel van die Here uitstraal.
14. Daar is goeie terugvoering wat 'n mens ontvang van sendelinge, ek dink met betrekking tot sending gaan dit redelik goed.
15. Ons gemeente het geestelik gegroei, ons het meer mense wat deelneem aan sel groepe en mense wat uitreik na ander wat nie lid is van ons kerk nie. Sendeling wat deel is van ons kerk en dan terugvoer gee aan die gemeente.
16. In kleingroepe kan mens waarneem hoe mense in geloof groei en ek sien dit ook in individue se groeiende praktiese betrokkenheid. Finansies, veral geloofsgelofteoffers is baie positief en daar is breë vlak van ondersteuning vir gemeente se betrokkenheid na buite.
17. Die gemeente is baie ingestel op sending en gereeld stuur die Here mense na die gemeente wat betrokke raak hierby en om hierdie visie verder te vat
18. Ek sien Sy teenwoordigheid in die erediens en ook hoe die gemeente daarop reageer deur verder daaroor te praat en vrae te vra. Ek sien dit ook in die optrede en lewe van medegelowiges.
19. Ek dink dis in die ondersteuning wat die kerk aan die sending gee. Ek weet nie presies wat die betrokkenheid is nie maar mens besef dat die kerk bid vir mense in moeilike lande en hulle is altyd veilig.
20. Ek dink dit is duidelik met hoe die gemeente betrokke is op sending gebied en hoe daar skakeling is met sendelinge reg oor die wêreld. Dit is duidelik hoe God teenwoordig is met die uitdra van die Evangelie aan hulle wat dit nog nie gehoor het nie.
21. Om elke jaar te sien dat daar genoeg inkomste is vir die gemeente om nie net te "oorleef" nie maar ook om na buite te werk. Die kerkraad het 'n tyd van finansiële tekort 'n paar jaar terug op 'n besonderse geestelike manier hanteer en die Here het wonderbaarlik die situasie omgekeer. Ek beleef dit in ons betrokkenheid by die werk wat in Noord Afrika en Afghanistan plaasvind en ons betrokkenheid daarby, asook wanneer mense getuig oor hoe hulle gedra was deur ander se sorg in tye van dood, krisis en siekte.
22. Gereeld as daar 'n versoek uit die gemeente kom vir iets of hulp word verlang sal daar altyd uitkoms kom.
23. Alhoewel baie beskeie is daaroor word daar deur verskeie mense na ander in nood uitgereik en vind daar versorging plaas. Die geloofsgelofteoffers wat elke maand inkom is tog 'n weerspieëling van hoe God mense se harte verander.
24. Ons het 'n huweliksbevestiging gedurende 'n oggenddiens gehou en dit was vir my 'n geestelike ervaring - ook om die egpaar se groei in die gemeente dop te hou. Dit het vir my die geleentheid gegee om met my Sondagskoolklas die konsep van die kerk as bruid van Christus te verduidelik.

25. Deur lede in die gemeente wat by sendingwerk betrokke is en deur geestelike groei in lede.
26. Ek voel God se teenwoordigheid is sigbare in die dienste – wanneer ons sing en ook in die boodskappe wat ons kry. Ek weet God is aan die werk en ek voel Hom daar. Die dinge wat mens hoor raak jou hart.
27. Gebed het daartoe gelei dat verskillende persone naby aan my 'n verandering ondergaan het en hulle is na God gelei.
28. Die sang beteken vir my baie, die Here word werklik gedien en soms bly ek net stil om te luister. Gebed is belangrik en ek sien God se teenwoordigheid in hoe antwoorde gekom het op ons versoeke. Veral rondom finansies.

4. Beskryf 'n ervaring van betekenisvolle aanbidding van God wat jy in die gemeente gehad het.

1. My eerste besoek aan die gemeente is ek diep getref deur 'n banier teen die muur wat sê Mag die volke u loof! Ook tydens aand nagmaal waar gelowiges om die beurt in groepies na voor gaan en persoonlik bedien word. Pinkster 2007 wat oor gebed handel het blywende indruk gelaat wat gebedslewe positief beïnvloed het.
2. die Pinksterdienste van 2007 was vir my besonder betekenisvol. God het my bewus gemaak van die wonder van gebed. Gebed gaan nie net oor jou eie behoeftes nie maar ook vir die gebroke wêreld en gebroke kerk en veral vir die uitdra en uitleef van die Evangelie na ander lande. As ons genoeg tyd aan sy voete deurbring sal ons die vrede van God ondervind wat alle verstand te bowe gaan.
3. Alhoewel die gemeente klein is ervaar ek persoonlik dat die samesang 'n ware kwaliteit van aanbidding bevat en word daar hartlik en met oorgawe gesing. Dit het 'n baie groot indruk op my persoonlik gemaak. Die wyse waarop die nagmaal bedien word – gesamentlik asook aan elke persoon individueel tref die hart, ek voel hier in diepe toewyding en aanbidding.
4. Ek het vir 'n persoonlike vriend gebed en die daaglikse gebed is bewaarheid, dit was voorwaar 'n ervaring van betekenisvolle aanbidding.
5. Sondagaand se tye van aanbidding is altyd vir my 'n tyd waar ek God kan aanbid saam met die gemeente. Informele nagmaalsgeleenthede op Sondagaande wanneer ek 100% kan konsentreer op wat Jesus aan die kruis gedoen het. My stiltetyd en die preke stem baie keer ooreen.
6. Ervaring van betekenisvolle aanbidding van God het my ook bewus gemaak dat gebed nie gaan oor my eie selfsugtige belange nie maar oor die koninkryk oor die ganse mensdom. Asook om deel te hê van medegelowiges om so sy liefde uit te leef.
7. Tye wat ek dit beleef is by party van die huiskerk geleenthede en die sang met die aandiens.
8. Om lofprysing te doen is baie spesiaal, ook raak ek opgewonde as iets vir my duidelik word wat ek nie tevore verstaan het nie of iets wat ek uit my kinderdae verkeerd verstaan het vir my duidelik word.
9. Die manier wat die gemeentelede altyd daar is en nood – ek was in die hospitaal en mense van ons gemeente het gekuier en gebed, daar was ook 'n tannie wat altyd vir my omgee het en versterk het toe ek jong was.
10. Daar is 'n paar maar een van die keerpunte het ek ervaar tydens 'n erediens toe ek baie duidelik ervaar het hoe God my denke verander het.
11. Die 2 jeugkampe wat ek by betrokke was. Met sang het ek betekenisvolle aanbidding geleer en deur lesings is my verhouding met God werklik verdiep, en dis iets wat blywend was en nie na die tyd net verdwyn het nie.
12. Sondag dienste was en is steeds iets om na uit te sien om die Woord beter te verstaan en om mt toe te wy aan die opdragte van die Woord. Ek beleef groei in die Pinksterdienste, asook 40 dae en dissipelskap kursus. Ook die afgelope retraite was goed om dinge vir die Here te gee en te weet dat sy genade daar is en in staat stel tot alles deur sy krag.

13. Die afhanklikheid van God wat gewys is tov finansies en hoe daar in gebed saamgestem is daaroor. Die sang Sondagaande is vir my wonderlike aanbidding en ek kan werklik Sy teenwoordigheid beleef. Ook in kleingroepies waar ons in gebed God kan aanbid is altyd vir my 'n wonderlike ervaring.
14. Daar was 'n moeilike tyd gewees waarin my pos afgeskaf sou wees en ek het swaar gehad om dit te verwerk en gewonder of ek vir my gesin sou kon sorg. Dit was 'n belangrike tyd om te stop en te herfokus, ek weet daar is gebed vir die situasie.
15. 40 dae van doelgerigte lewe en Alpha het my weer nader aan die Here gebring en my teruggebring op die pad. Die Here het met my hier gepraat. 'n Onlangse tee met een van ons sendelinge het my regtig aangeraak.
16. Ek kan aan 'n paar besondere oomblikke onthou – daar was 'n spesifieke aand toe selgroep lede dringend oor 'n saak gebed het, 'n erediens wat saam met 'n naburige Indiergemeente gehou is en ook 'n kerkraadsvergadering waar saamgebed is oor 'n krisis.
17. Die gemeente het groot finansiële nood gehad en was tegnies bankrot gewees maar het homself voor God verootmoedig, Hy het voorsien in die behoeftes en nou nog is daar seën.
18. Alpha het my gehelp om meer betrokke te raak en nader aan God te beweeg, so het my gebedslewe ook gegroei en ek het sy nabyheid meer begin beleef.
19. Was tydens 'n kerssangdiens, toe ons as gemeente gesing het ek net skielik tot die besef gekom het dat die Here leef en dat Hy daar is vir ons.
20. Daar word ruim geleentheid geskep vir saam bid. Die manier van bid in klein groepies het my geleer en laat besef dat gebedsgeleentheid baie kosbaar en persoonlik moet wees. Ek het baie daarby gebaat en ervaar dit daaglik.
21. In 'n dissipelskap groep toe ons elkeen besef het dat ons lui geraak het met gebed en Bybelstudie en hoe die Woord ons aangespreek het en gemotiveer het.
22. Ek dink aan hoe maklik ek in die kerk aanvaar is.
23. Tydens dienste en dan veral ook by 'n klomp spesiale dienste wat ons gehad het. Ons het 'n sangdiens gehad met baie, baie kerse en ek het diep onder die indruk gekom van die wonder van God se grootheid. So ook 'n aanbidding oor die sterrestelsel en God se heerlikheid was vir my diep aanbidding van Sy grootheid.
24. Sang tydens die aanddiens is altyd betekenisvol.
25. God het my lewe verander deur my in beter verhoudings met my medemens en werkers te laat hê.
26. Met krisis in die gesin het mense na my gekom en baie mooi uitgevra en gesê dat hulle vir ons bid. Daar is soveel ondersteuning van ons en van ander, en de feit dat hulle regtig omgee en bid is groot bemoediging.
27. Ek is een Sondagoggend kerk toe net iets swaar op my gemoed, toe die dominee begin preek was dit asof hy spesiaal die boodskap net vir my gebring het. Ek kon my probleem oplos en was deurentyd bewus van God wat my lei en dra.
28. 40 dae van doelgerigte lewe het baie beteken vir my gebedslewe. Ek het besef dat dit belangrik is en dat ek enige tyd en enige iets van God kan vra. Dit het vir my makliker geraak om met ander mense oor God te praat.

5. Vertel van 'n situasie waarin jy en/of ander mense by 'n probleem of konflik by die kerk betrokke was en hoe dit hanteer is.

1. Bewus geword van 'n spanning by huisgesin wat te kenne gegee het dat hulle by 'n ander kerk inskakel weens ongelukkigheid in die gemeente. Situasie is nog hangende maar weet dat daar al jare gepoog is om oplossing te kry deur gesprekke en besoeke.
2. Ek weet van geen konflik wat by die kerk plaasgevind het nie. Ons doen gereeld voorbidding dat as so iets gebeur dit in 'n goeie gesindheid en liefde opgelos kan word.
3. In huisbesoek het ons lidmate gevind wat onbetrokke was en baie aggressief. Was nie gewillig om ander lidmate aan huis te ontvang nie – soos vir huiskerk. Na gesprek het dit verander en is ander wykslede met hartlikheid ontvang. Die vrou van die huis het na die gesprek baie meer betrokke geraak by kerkbywoning, Bybelstudie en huiskerk.

4. Nog niks beleef en hoop dit sal so bly.
5. Ek was betrokke in 'n konflik met 'n ander persoon waar ek ongemaklik geraak het in die vriendskap en dit het verwydering veroorsaak in 'n paar ander gebiede in die gemeente. Dit is opgelos deur baie gebed en gesprekke tussen my, die ander persoon en die predikant.
6. Ek is nie bewus van probleme of konflik wat by ons gemeente plaasvind nie.
7. Niks ernstig nie maar het vasgesit met 'n meisie en baie na mekaar gehap, dit het verander na haar bekering en ons het darem albei gegroei en het vrede gemaak.
8. Ek was net een keer betrokke by iets wat gebeur het en ek het na die persoon gegaan en op 'n mooi manier gesê dat ek nie hou van wat gebeur het nie en dat dit onnodig was. Ek dink die situasie het nie meer spanning nie.
9. Weet nie van iets nie.
10. Ek was baie vies omdat die vrouediens afgestel was. Die leraar het my besoek en verduidelik hoekom dit so was.
11. By van die jonger mense sien ek soms interpersoonlike konflik wat nie regtig hanteer word nie, die mense vermy mekaar en wag maar vir die "issue" om oor te waai.
12. Daar was 'n behoefteige gesin wat by mense in die erf gebly het, hulle is met kos en finansies en pogings om werk te kry bygestaan. Ek ervaar dat die leraar altyd daar is om mense in woord en daad by te staan.
13. Ek weet van konflik tussen gemeentelede wat lank goeie vriende was. Die situasie het baie lank bly lê maar is nou grotendeels opgelos. Ek dink dit hang baie af van tyd wat wonde genees, ek was ook baie dankbaar vir die leiding en insig van ons dominee in hierdie geval.
14. Ek dink nie ons het 18 jaar terug mekaar goed geken of regtig met mekaar gesels nie, dit het verander en voel vir my soos een groot familie.
15. Nie bewus van iets nie.
16. Twee persoonlike situasies, 'n vriendin wat baie ongelukkig was oor my optrede en 'n wykslid wie my baie kwaad gemaak het – kon opgelos word toe ek gaan praat het oor die konflik en gaan vrede maak het.
17. 'n Ouderling was baie kwaad oor 'n kerkraadsbesluit en het dadelik gesê dat hy bedank. 'n Besoek of 2 deur mede ouderlinge het die situasie ontlont en hy het wel sy termyn uitgedien en is nog betrokke as lidmaat.
18. Ek en gemeentelid het ligte onderonsie gehad, so 2 jaar terug. Dit het bietjie gebroei maar ons het dit spontaan uitgepraat en God het met ons gewerk.
19. Kan nie aan enige iets hier dink nie.
20. Ek kan dink aan mense wat in krisis of die wat afgedwaal het wat besoek is en opgevolg word. Daar is nie altyd vrug nie maar ek weet dat dit hanteer word.
21. Dis moeilik om my vinger te lê op enige spesifieke situasie. Ek dink miskien aan 'n geval toe mense oor my gekla het oor iets wat ek nie regtig dink geldig was nie, ek was vies en seergemaak en wou onttrek maar die Here het my oortuig om in die situasie ander op te tree.
22. Weet nie regtig van iets nie, seker net interpersoonlike goed van iemand wat met 'n vriendin vasgesit het.
23. 'n Paar jaar gelede het dit nie goed gegaan met die finansies nie. Ek het skedules opgestel met sekere vooruitskattings om die situasie tuis te bring. Die leraar het dit gesien as 'n probleem op geestelike vlak en almal is aangemoedig om te bid oor die saak. Dis is ook so in die kerkraad hanteer. Die ommekeer was verbasend.
24. In my Sondagskoolklas het twee kinders nie met mekaar oor die weg gekom nie. Die een was baie ontsteld daarvoor. Ek het afsonderlik met die ontstelde een gebid en met die ander een gepraat. Ek het vir hulle geleer van vergifnis en die gevolge om nie te vergeef nie.
25. Ek het nog nie dit teëgekome nie.
26. Ek het beleef hoe 'n ouderling in 2 gevalle baie kwaad word en dan skade doen aan verhoudings. Dit het lank gevat om dit te verwerk en die skade opgelos te kry, dit is

uiteindelik opgelos, maar daar was skade in ons klein groepie. Hy moes eerder die goed uitgepraat het en beter hanteer het.

27. Ek was nog nie in 'n konflik situasie betrokke by die kerk nie.
28. Ek het beleef dat iemand in die selgroep die konfidensialiteit verbreek en dit het my laat terugtrek. Ek het met die leier gepraat.

6. Wat maak jou *angstig* oor die toekoms van die gemeente, en wat gee jou *hoop*?

1. Die situasie van die gemeente het hoop. Daar is potensiaal in die omgewing vir betrek van inwoners wat moontlik nêrens kerklik betrokke is nie. Uitreik geleenthede na ander kultuur groepe en jongmense wat groei kan bring. Dissipelskap skoling behoort by te dra tot doelgerigte betrokkenheid en groei. Daar is entoesiasme te bespeur by die leraar, kerkraad, en kern groep lidmate wat beslis belofte inhou. 'n Mens sou kon angstig wees oor die negatiewe gesindheid (onbetrokkenheid) van lidmate op die rand. Kerkraad is baie klein en daar is min jongmense.
2. Daar is volgens my mening nog baie hoop vir die gemeente – daar is jongmense wat die uitdagings van die lewe weerstaan en die liefde van God uitleef, daar is mense wat tyd gee om die Here te dien en vreugde vind in diens. Daar is mense wat getrou is by die samekomste van die gelowiges, en ek bid vir ons geloof en volharding.
3. Ek is angstig oor die hoeveelheid mense wat tevrede is om net op 'n Sondag kerk toe te kom en dink dit is genoeg. Ook oor die gebrek aan jonger geslag tussen 30 en 40. Ek is hoopvol as ek sien hoe God in mense se lewens werk, mense tot diens roep en as leiers oprig, en hoe God die gemeente seën, soos in die beantwoording van gebed (ek dink spesifiek aan finansies en sending).
4. Die feit dat daar nie nuwe gemeentelede op groot skaal aansluit nie die hoop is dat daar tog baie geleenthede is om nuwe mense nader te trek.
5. Ek is angstig oor die hoeveelheid mense wat tevrede is om net op 'n Sondag kerk toe te kom en dink dit is genoeg. Ook oor die gebrek aan jonger geslag tussen 30 en 40. Ek is hoopvol as ek sien hoe God in mense se lewens werk, mense tot diens roep en as leiers oprig, en hoe God die gemeente seën, soos in die beantwoording van gebed (ek dink spesifiek aan finansies en sending).
6. Ons angsts oor die toekoms laat ons alle hoop plaas in Christus wat ons nooit beskaam nie.
7. Die gemeente krimp en die ou mense hou nie van verandering nie en is nie baie oop vir ander nie. Daar is regtig sterk gelowiges en daar is baie mense wat nog in die gemeente ingebring kan word, God sal sorg vir die gemeente.
8. Ek is angstig oor die krimpende getalle en die impak wat dit kan hê, en dan ook die redes wat party mense gee wat van gemeente verander. Ek is hoopvol dat by Christus is niks onmoontlik nie, Hy kan mense verander en Hy hou sy kerk in stand.
9. Angstig oor mense wat die gemeente maklik verlaat oor iets waarmee hulle nie saamstem nie, die gemeente is maar klei. Tog is daar gereeld nuwe gesigte en die band tussen meeste lede is sterk genoeg om die kerk bymekaar te hou. Die selgroepies word sterker.
10. Ek is soms bekommerd dat ons God se plan vir ons gemeente miskyk – soos vir diens, groei, integrasie of vernuwing. Hoop is mense wat getrou die Here dien en wat met wysheid en insig raad gee en leiding neem.
11. Die onbetrokkenheid van meeste lidmate en die klein mate waarin hulle verantwoordelikheid vir mekaar neem Daar is min sterk leiers wat werklik die interne opbou en versterking van die gemeente hanteer. Daar is baie geestelike potensiaal wat ontgin kan word.
12. Kleiner getalle, minder dooplidmate. Ek is ook angstig oor jongmense wat na belydenisaflegging verdwyn. Ek glo dat daar steeds genoeg lidmate sal wees vir die voortbestaan van die kerk.
13. Ek is angstig oor 'n missing generasie tussen 30 en 40, wat jong getroudes insluit. Ek dink daar is werklik 'n leemte en die gaping tussen jonk en oud is baie groot. Daar is baie

- “dooie” lidmate wat net daar is maar nie werklik God aanbid nie – veral ten opsigte van sang en gebed. Die groei wat ek in my eie lewe ervaar gee my hoop want ek glo dat daar dan ander mense is wat ook groei en ’n groot verskil in mense en die gemeente se lewens sal maak. Ek dink ook aan die gemaklikheid en openheid in ons kleingroep en dat mense maklik oor hulle geestelike lewe gesels.
14. Die gemeente lyk nie asof die ledetal verhoog nie. Dit bekommer mens bietjie en mens weet nie of mense wegbly of ander kerke toe gaan nie. Ek dink die wat daar is, is vriendelik en gaan kerk toe in positiewe luim, en sal gemeente vorentoe vat.
 15. Die lede in die gemeente word al minder en daar is min jongmense, ons moet meer dinge soos kampe vir die gesin doen en mekaar beter leer ken. Geestelike groei maak my bly en ons kan daardeur meer mense na die gemeente trek.
 16. Angstig oor die feit dat al hoe meer mense in woonbuurt wat nie tradisionele lidmate is nie en dat ons ’n onvermoë toon om so te wees dat hulle inskakel by gemeente. Hoop – soveel lidmate wat positief is oor die gemeente se optrede na buite en dat daar deesdae nuwe lidmate aansluit. Ook die dissipelskapgroepe.
 17. Angstig oor die ledetal wat kwyn om verskeie redes, soos dat geen resedentiele uitbreiding binne die gemeente grense moontlik is nie, jonger mense trek weg en as die ouer lidmate verhuis is dit baie keer mense van ander denominasies of kulture wat intrek. Mense kan ook soms die gemeente oor onbenullighede verlaat. Tog skakel daar gereeld ook mense in, ook van buite die grense, sonder dat die gemeente geadverteer word.
 18. Ek raak soms angstig wanneer gemeentelide wegraak of weggaan, en wonder dan waar lê die fout. Soveel anderskleuriges het in die woonbuurt ingetrek, maar ek het definitief hoop omdat ek glo vorentoe sal ons mense van alle rasse in die kerk hê, ons moet uitreik na hulle.
 19. Angstig dat al hoe minder mense kerk dienste bywoon, maar tog is die mense wat daar is besige om hulle harte uit te leef vir die Here.
 20. Die getalle wat afneem laat mens angstig raak, maar die Here sê waar 2 of 3 in sy Naam vergader is Hy teenwoordig. Dit gee my hoop as nuwe lidmate wat nie in die gebied woon nie hier inskakel.
 21. Ek is angstig oor die afwesigheid en onbetrokkenheid van mense in die ouderdomsgroep tussen 20-40. Die NG Kerk se situasie wat ook nie goed lyk in die algemeen nie. Dit wat hoop gee is die gevoel dat die Here ’n plan het vir die gemeente en teenwoordig is, en besluite om te kyk en te verander aan die strukture van die gemeente om meer betrokkenheid te bevorder.
 22. Daar is nie eintlik groei nie en die jongmense verdwyn uit die kerk, tog weet ek dat God nooit sy kerk sal laat sterf nie en daar is sterk geestelike leiers.
 23. Soos gemeentelide wegtrek word hulle huise baie keer gekoop deur mense wat nie lidmate is nie. Die ledetal is besig om stadig te krimp. Ten spyte van bogenoemde, sluit geestelik volwasse mense nog steeds aan en op finansiële gebied gaan dit verbasend goed.
 24. Angstig oor die krimpende kerkbywoning en die feit dat mense nie kan onderskei tussen die dinge waarop die regtig neerkom nie. Dat mense se waarde dikwels aan die materieel gemeet word en dat daar nie regtig ’n stryd teen sonde is nie. Baie kerkraadslede nie hulle wyke besoek en ondersteun soos dit hoort nie en dat mense net kan wegraak sonder dat die kerkraad dit agterkom. Daar is ’n gebrek aan leiers en sien ook dat iemand wat geestelik baie gegroei en gedien het, na ’n kerk gelok is wat ek nie dink altyd suiwer leering het nie. Hoop om te sien hoe God gebed beantwoord. Dat as gevolg van die Kinderkrans drie nuwe kinders Sondagskool toe kom.
 25. Ek is bekommerd oor die getalle in die gemeente wat minder raak en ek het hoop oor ons lede wat betrokke is by sendingwerk.
 26. Die feit dat ons minder word en of daar genoeg mense sal wees, daar is baie wat wegtrek. Dan ook klomp wat nie betrokke is nie, omdat ons klein is wonder ek of ons sal oorleef. Hoop is die positiewe gees en geloof. Daar is mense wat wil werk en betrokke wees en ons sal in krag van Here kan vorentoe gaan.

27. Ek is angstig oor die gemeente wat kleiner word en oor die behoefte want kinders het om meer van Jesus te hoor.
28. Angstig as ek sien die gemeente raak kleiner en wonder wat in die toekoms sal gebeur en of ons na 'n ander gemeente sak moet skuif. Hoop is dat God in beheer is en sy kerk bewaar.

7. Vertel hoe jy en ander voel oor die veranderinge wat in die afgelope 3 – 5 jaar in die gemeente plaasgevind het.

1. Ek voel nie dat ek lang genoeg in die gemeente is om hieroor te oordeel nie. Die situasie oor die afgelope 2 jaar is konstant gewees.
2. Verandering is nie noodwendig goed nie, maar blyk belangrik te wees vir die hedendaagse mens. Dit moet gaan oor die Koninkryk van God en nie oor menslike begeertes nie dan sal dit jou sterker maak in die geloof.
3. Jongmense – veral hoëskool het minder betrokke geraak. Dissipelskap groepe is begin en baie geestelike groei vind hier plaas.
4. Ek is positief oor die benutting van die elektroniese vooruitgang. Voel dat ons nie genoeg bymekaar kom nie met sosiale geleenthede en ek sien ook die wyksontbinding negatief want ek is nie in 'n selgroep ingeskakel nie.
5. Oggend voorsang is afgeskaf en dit is vir my baie positiewe ding aangesien dit vir mense die geleentheid gee om bietjie te kuier voor die diens. Daar was wel mense wat nie ten gunste was van die verandering in die begin nie maar ek is nie op die oomblik bewus van mense wat ontevrede is daarmee nie. Kerkraad sit nie meer in hul spesiale banke nie maar tussen die gemeente, ek is positief daarvoor maar daar was mense wat ongelukkig was. Die predikant maak nie meer gebruik van die preekstoel nie, en dit is vir my 'n goeie ding. Die nuwe liedboek het mooi liedjies in maar daar is baie wat te moeilik is om te sing.
6. Ek keur nie al die veranderinge goed nie, maar aanvaar dit so. Kyk na wat werklik belangrik is. 'n Positiewe Christen ontvang die genade om uit te styg bo irritasies deur te berus in die teenwoordigheid van Christus.
7. Ek is nie positief oor mense wat oorskuif na meer charismatiese kerke om dat hulle meer “geestelike” ervarings soek. Ek is positief oor die wegbeweeg van nuttelose reëls en regulasies wat die NGK kenmerk, byv. die leraar wat hoog en verhewe eenkant is, wettiesheid en die houding van “dit is die dominee se werk.”
8. Die jonger mense pas makliker aan by verandering, die ou mense hou nie baie daarvan nie, hulle wil byv. maandeliks besoek hê van diaken en gereeld deur ouderling en dominee. Ons probeer die versorging anders te laat lyk, met mense wat vir mekaar omsien en dit is positief.
9. Die kerk het meer modern en tegnologieë geword wat dit beter maak. Daar is baie meer kursusse wat aangebied word.
10. Die “fisies” veranderinge het min impak op my gehad, gee nie daarvoor om nie, maar as ek dink aan die veranderinge in wykstelsel na selgroepe voel ek dat ons 'n bietjie in 'n “tussentyd” is en dat daar dalk mense is wat verlore gaan tussen die 2 strukture.
11. Ek kan slegs aan die preekstoel wat in onbruik geraak het dink, en voel neutraal daarvoor.
12. Die styfheid het plek gemaak vir meer gemoedelikheid in die gemeente. Ons kan omdraai en gesels voor die diens en groet mekaar gereeld aan die begin van die diens. Vir my as ouer lidmaat was ek gewoond om stil te sit en nie aktief deel te neem nie, maar ek is baie gemaklik met die veranderinge, veral as ons soms dienste bywoon wat nog baie styf is. Informele nagmaal is ook 'n nuwe manier vir my maar ook 'n wonderlike ondervinding. Dis hartseer om ou lidmate te sien wegtrek, besighede wat al nader kom en lidmate wat koud word en nie meer betrokke bly nie.
13. Ons het weggedoen met die voorsang tydens die oggenddiens en dit vervang met 'n tyd van aanbidding gedurende die diens, ek geniet dit definitief baie meer en dit beteken vir my baie meer. Ook die informele nagmaal wat ons soms op Sondagaande hou en is baie meer persoonlik, wens dat ons dit wel in die oggend ook kan implementeer omdat die

tradisionele Nagmaal so stram voel. Dis vir my goed dat daar nie meer 'n groot ophef van die dominee gemaak word nie en dat die betrokkenheid van almal meer beklemtoon word.

14. Die mense lyk meer positief as hulle kerk toe kom en praat meer met mekaar. Daar is 'n vriendelike informele gevoel in die kerk. Dit is vir my 'n mooi verandering.
15. Ek is opgewonde oor die meer lewendige sang, ook in die aanddienste, al word dit nie goed bygewoon nie. Daar is meer selgroepe en hartlikheid, meer geleenthede met kursusse.
16. Sekere orde veranderings is deur enkeles aanvanklik negatief ervaar, ek dink nie dit is nog 'n "issue" nie. Persoonlik wens ek daar kon al meer veranderings gewees het. Ek dink die ouer lidmate mag die mindere klem op wyke dalk negatief ervaar.
17. Lidmate kla soms wel oor veranderings soos elektroniese media, Engelse liedere en vernaderings in volgorde van erediens, maar na 'n ruk is dit baie keer hulle wat gekla het wat dit prys.
18. Klein veranderings het plaasgevind en was elke keer sinvol. Sommige is teen die sing van Engelse liedere maar ek dink dit is wonderlik.
19. Nie regtig bewus van iets, net dat die kerkraad nie meer voor sit nie.
20. Die formaat wat die erediens verander het is aanvaarbaar vir baie mense. Verandering in kleredrag en meer gemoedlike stemming is positief en ek dink mense, ook nuwe intrekkers, voel tuis. Baie verhuisings het plaasgevind en mense van ander gelowe en kulture en kerke het ingetrek. Dit is 'n uitdaging om hulle nader aan die gemeente te kry.
21. Ek dink van die ouer mense wil nie veel verander nie, maar daar is wel verander sonder baie klagtes of teenkanting. Dinge raak meer informeel in die erediens en daar is weggedoen met voorsang terwyl die sang en lofprysing tydens die diens uitgebrei is. Dit het meer warmte en hartlikheid ingebring en miskien voel mense nie heeltemal so passief nie.
22. Die gemeente gebruik 'n projekter vir sang en die preekstoel word nie meer gebruik nie, dit is nie dinge wat my pla nie.
23. Minder klem word op wyke geplaas en selgroepe wat meer natuurlik ontstaan vervul 'n groter rol. Dit is positief. Die meer informele nagmaal geleenthede is ook baie positief. Die klem wat op lofprysing geplaas word, word ook baie positief beleef.
24. Baie goeie leiers het afgetree en weggetrek. Dit het die geleentheid vir nuwe leiers geskep, maar die leiers is nog nie ontwikkel nie. Is bewus dat baie mense nie hou van die aanddiens se sang nie. Dit is vir my baie jammer.
25. Dis 'n baie goeie idee om die liedjies op die bord te wys en dis goed dat mense meer gemakliker kan aantrek, die minder styf en formeel is 'n positiewe verandering vir my.
26. Praktiese dinge het verander en mense het gekla oor Engelse liedere, aanddienste se styl. Dit is so onnodig om daarvoor te kla. Ek is nie negatief daarvoor nie. Kerkraad sit nie voor nie en daar is mense wat daarvoor kla is "petty". Goed om nie voorsang meer te hê nie, al mis ek dit, omdat mens dan kans het om te kuier en daar is genoeg sang tydens die diens.
27. Die veranderings het 'n positiewe impak gehad – die kerkraad wat saam met hulle families tydens die diens sit, die nie-stereotipe kerkdien wat die belewenis van mens se geloof verdiep.
28. Ek is positief oor die nouer verband wat mense met mekaar het en dis asof lidmate meer oop is, gee makliker. Daar is 'n vrees by sommige dat as die gemeente kleiner raak sal dit moet verander om by ander aan te pas. Ek is meer positief daarvoor, terwyl sommige bedreig is en vrese het.

8. Hoe voel jy en ander oor die veranderinge wat in die afgelope 3-5 jaar in die samelewing rondom julle plaasgevind het?

1. Ek dink van die grootste verskuiwings die afgelope paar jaar is demografiese veranderinge, veral inbeweeg van ander kultuur groepe. Die demografie in die omgewing

- van die gemeente het ook heelwat verander. Dit maak dat mense minder kontak het met mekaar.
2. Verandering is nie noodwendig goed of sleg nie, 'n mens moet bly onderskei tussen goed en sleg. God wil hê ons moet elke dag geniet en gebruik tot sy eer. Partykeer lyk alles vir my na 'n jaag na wind.
 3. Daar is baie druk op jonger mense in werksomstandighede - minder tyd word gespandeer aan huisgesin aktiwiteite – soos kerkbywoning ook. Pa's baie meer afwesig. Meer egskedings en enkel ouers. Dwelms word probleem by skool. Elektronika – oefen groot druk uit op jongmense – selfone en rekenaars. Sedes het verander. Onsuiver lering begin kerk in breë binnekom.
 4. Morele waardes het verval en dit het ook gemaak dat kerk toe gaan nie “cool” is nie!
 5. Mense voel nie meer so veilig nie, diefstal neem toe en mense se lewens is nie meer baie werd nie, ek voel sleg daaroor, so ook oor die feit dat kinders minder maniere en respek het vir ouer mense.
 6. Ek aanvaar al die veranderings wat rondom ons plaasvind want dit sal tog nie help om te skop teen die prikkels nie. Ek hoop dat dit sal geskied tot eer en verheerliking van God se Naam en sy koninkryk.
 7. Jong mense streef al meer na fisiese plesier, van 'n al jonger ouderdom af, dis nie goed hoe hulle nie werklik verstaan wat liefde is nie. Dan is daar ook jongmense wat die Here sterk dien en baie dedicated is.
 8. Van die grootste verandering is in die woonbuurt waar mense van ander kulture en gelowe intrek. Almal is nie gelukkig nie maar die meeste mense het vrede gemaak met die veranderinge wat plaasvind. Hulle leer nuwe mense ken en ook oor ander gelowe wat hulle weer laat kyk na wat hulle self glo. Die media het baie waardes verloor en mense moet besluite neem tussen goed en kwaad.
 9. Die samelewing raak vinniger en makliker maar ek beleef dit dat mense verby mekaar leef.
 10. Ek sukkel bietjie daarmee dat mense nie meer natuurlik kontak maak met hulle bure nie. Die omgewing is nie meer oorheersend lidmate van ons gemeente nie.
 11. Daar is 'n groot vrees in baie mense, veral oor die misdaad en mense word al meer afgesonder en verloor kontak met selfs mense wat naby hulle was. Daar is 'n gebrek aan waardes en dit is asof enige iets toelaatbaar is. Ek sien die veranderinge in 'n negatiewe lig en voel amper of die nuutste verandering slegter as die vorige was.
 12. Ek vind die manier waarop winkels op Sondae besoek word baie steurend en dit hoort nie so nie, sport word al hoe meer Sondae gespeel en die dag se karakter verander. Dissipline by skool oorkant die pad is al hoe meer 'n probleem en dit pla my dat mens so baie hoor van paartjies wat saambly en ook die wat so maklik skei. Dit lyk nie asof hulle werklik probeer om die probleme uit te werk nie.
 13. Ek voel dat daar glad nie 'n vrees vir God is nie, die houding is doen wat jy wil, wanneer jy wil. Kinders word nie meer geslaan of gedissiplineer nie en daar is baie wat arrogant en disrespekvol is. Ouers neem nie meer veel beheer en leiding met tieners nie en hulle ruk hand uit – dit word beskou as die norm. Baie mense beweeg weg van die NG kerk omdat dit as boring beskou word en iets vir ou mense.
 14. Dit maak my bietjie skrikkerig dat mense leef al hoe meer soos kluisenaars. Jy sien jou buurmense amper nooit nie en bure praat nie met mekaar nie. Daar is nie meer 'n “gemeenskap” gevoel in die samelewing nie. Ek dink mense het te veel regte en 'n mens is te bang om iets te sê of te doen.
 15. Daar is groeiende armoede en werkloosheid, bedelaars. Daar is mense en kinders wat swaar kry. Mense sien ook nie meer God raak nie.
 16. Kleur integrasie in woonbuurt het in 'n sekere sin afbreek gedoen aan 'n “gees van gemeenskap” – dit bied geweldige uitdagings aan 'n gemeente wat hier 'n verskil wil maak. Mense is geneig om baie meer na binne te leef.
 17. Daar is 'n sterk gevoel dat daar probleme by skole is oor dissipline. Die woonbuurt verander met groter integrasie, ook by werkplek. Ek dink dis belangrik om positief te wees oor verandering en dit aanvaar, en vir 'n Christen is dit sekerlik makliker.

18. Nuwe intrekkers kan soms sku wees om kennis te maak. Dis nie vir my moeilik om positief te bly deur veranderinge nie.
19. Die samelewing het meer 'n gejaag geword, mense het nie meer tyd vir hulself nie, kinders is meer opstandig en blootgestel aan die verkeerde goed. Die lewe het gevaarlik geword en misdaad neem toe. Waardes het afgeneem en mens sien dit orals op TV. Mens voel vies dat die dinge voortgaan en niemand doen iets daaraan nie. Werksdruk het ontsettend toegeneem op mense.
20. Ek dink daar is groter angs en bekommernis by mense, juis oor geweld en misdaad. Daar is 'n verandering in opvoeding en waardes en mens sien meer gesinsverbrotte kinders. Ek wonder of huisgodsdienst nog vir enige gesinne belangrik is. Dit is natuurlik 'n groot uitdaging vir die kerk.
21. Ek dink daar is veranderinge wat wel impak het op hoe mense leef en wat nadelig kan wees vir die gemeente. Misdaad neem toe en baie mense bou hoë mure – wat nooit so was nie. Mense leef meer by mekaar verby. Ek dink die manier hoedat almal winkels toe stroom op 'n Sondag is 'n hartseer verandering in die samelewing.
22. Die samelewing het meer gewelddadig geword en mense gee nie meer om vir ander nie.
23. Die meer kosmopolitiese samelewing en die sekularisasie daag 'n Christen uit om sterker standpunt in te neem oor dit waarvoor ons staan. Godsdienst beoefening by die skole is baie afgewater en die sport en inkopies wat op 'n Sondag plaasvind maak inbreek op hoe die dag gevier word.
24. Ons woonbuurt het verengels en ons kerk maak nie voorsiening om daarmee saam te groei nie. Ek sou graag wou sien dat ons begin om die aandienste in beide Engels en Afrikaans aan te bied en die gemeenskap rondom die kerk daarheen nooi.
25. Ek is baie bekommerd oor die toekoms van ons land en stad. Oor die geweld en wetteloosheid. Bekommerd oor die toekoms van my kind en dissipline in skole.
26. Die samelewing het verengels en daar is die behoefte om miskien selfs 'n Engelse diens aan te bied. Daar is ook behoefte aan meer aktiwiteite vir gesinne om aan te kan deelneem.
27. Baie verander in opsig dat daar nie meer goeie diens is en kwaliteit beheer, so daar is baie negatiewe goed wat mens vies maak, standarde is af. Lewe is gejaag. Meer mense raak betrokke by kerk op dieper vlak by kerke en geestelike sake as in verlede, ten spyte van al negatiewe. Mens moet altyd bewus wees van soveel wat mens het om dankbaar oor te wees.
28. Mense is meer ongeduldig, ander gelowe word meer sigbaar en ek beleef dat daar by die werk druk kom van Moslems om ander te verander. Ek dink mense is meer oop vir ander rasse en aanvaar mekaar makliker omdat hulle saam groei.

Respondents: Gender, Age (decade), Family (F), Insider (I) or Outsider (O)

1. Male	6 F	15. Female	3 I
2. Female	6 I	16. Male	4 F
3. Female	6 I	17. Male	4 I
4. Male	4 O	18. Female	5 I
5. Male	3 I	19. Male	3 O
6. Male	6 I	20. Male	7 F
7. Male	2 I	21. Male	4 F
8. Female	5 F	22. Female	2 O
9. Female	2 O	23. Male	5 F
10. Female	4 I	24. Female	4 F
11. Male	2 I	25. Male	3 O
12. Female	7 I	26. Female	6 I
13. Female	2 I	27. Female	3 O
14. Male	3 O	28. Female	3 I

APPENDIX B

SAPMC Reading report

Suider-Afrikaanse Vennootskap van Gestuurde Gemeentes NG GEMEENTE GRASVOËLKOP (PORT ELIZABETH) LEESVERSLAG 2010

Liewe broers en susters

Dit was vir ons 'n vreugde en voorreg om julle onderhoude te lees en daardeur 'n kykie in die kultuur van die gemeente te kry. Ons is baie bewus daarvan hoe uniek en besonders elke gemeente is, en respekteer ook julle unieke gemeente-identiteit. 'n Spesiale dankie aan die luisterspan wat sulke goeie en deeglike werk gedoen het om die onderhoude te voer en op te teken.

Onthou asb dat hierdie verslag nie 'n evaluering van die gemeente is nie. Dit bevat opmerkings oor die waardes, gewoontes en gebruike, die standarde wat aangelê word vir sukses, en die persepsies omtrent God en kerkwees waarmee julle gemeente leef. As buitestandere wil ons nie te veel advies probeer aanbied nie. Ons hoop eerder ons opmerkings en vrae stimuleer julle eie verdere gesprek oor die identiteit, kultuur en roeping van die gemeente.

Ons vertrou dat die dinge wat ons raakgesien het en wat in hierdie verslag saamgevat is, julle gaan help in julle prosesse van geestelike onderskeiding en beplanning. Mag dit julle inspireer en besiel om te verstaan hoe die Here in julle midde werk, en hoe Hy julle wil laat meewerk aan die koms van sy koninkryk. Mag dit julle help om sy roeping vir julle nog duideliker as tevore te onderskei en te gehoorsaam.

Vrede vir julle!

Corrie du Toit (Namens SAVGG-leesspan)

Agtergrond waarteen die leesspan se terugvoer verstaan moet word:

Die leesspan lees die onderhoude waarderend, nie op soek na punte van kritiek nie, maar op soek na patrone van gestuurdheid (missionaliteit) in die gemeente. Die volgende 8 missionale patrone wat kenmerkend is van missionêre of gestuurde gemeentes, vorm die raamwerk vir ons ondersoek:

1. Roepingsbesef en begrip van gestuurdheid
2. Bybelse vorming en dissipelskap
3. Neem van risiko's as kontras-gemeenskap ter wille van God se koninkryk
4. Gewoontes en rituele wat wys op God se betrokkenheid in die wêreld
5. Aanbidding as publieke getuigenis van God se teenwoordigheid
6. Afhanklikheid van die Heilige Gees
7. Saam reis ("journey") op soek na God se koninkryk
8. Missionale spanleierskap

Die leesspan se doel is om waarderend terugvoer te gee oor die missionale bewussyn en praktyke in die gemeente wat ons aflees uit die onderhoude, en dit saam met die leiers van die gemeente te vier. Die bedoeling is nie evaluering van die gemeente nie. Waar ons dalk die grense oorskry en ongevraag of verkeerd interpreteer, vra ons by voorbaat om verskoning. Ons wil wel die leiers van die gemeente bewus maak van die missionale patrone wat reeds in die gemeente aanwesig is, en hulle aanmoedig om nog meer bewustelik die gemeente te lei om al meer te word wat God ons almal bedoel het om te wees, naamlik sy gestuurdes in 'n wêreld vol gebrokenheid en pyn.

Die bedoeling van die verslag is om 'n spieël voor te hou van hoe die gemeente lyk vir 'n totale vreemdeling wat slegs na die onderhoude kyk en dit lees. Die besondere waarde van so 'n objektiewe kyk van buite na die gemeente is daarin geleë dat ons almal mense van God se koninkryk is en dieselfde droom deel, naamlik dat God in ons lewens en geloofsgemeenskappe sigbaar moet word, dat sy koninkryk in ons lewens moet inbreek en ons gemeentes 'n transformasiekrag moet wees in ons wyer gemeenskappe. Die gemeente moet die draer wees van die goeie boodskap dat God Drie-enig, Vader, Seun en Gees, teenwoordig is, en dat sy koninkryk aan die kom is.

Alle aanhalings uit die antwoorde van respondente word tussen aanhalingstekens geplaas.

Profiel van Respondente

Julle luisterspan het onderhoude gevoer met 24 persone. Die verspreiding van 6 *Family*, 12 *Inside strangers* en 6 *Outside strangers* is presies volgens die voorskrifte vir 'n kultuurondersoek. Die meeste respondente (16) is lang gevestigde lidmate wat langer as 10 jaar daar woon; 3 persone woon 5 – 10 jaar daar, en 5 persone 2 – 5 jaar. Wat ouderdomsverspreiding betref, het julle keuse van respondente geval op 12 persone bo 60 jaar, 4 bo 50 jaar, 4 bo 40, 3 bo 30 en 1 bo 20 jaar (geen tieners nie). Dit lyk dus soos 'n grotendeels gevestigde groep lidmate aan die senior kant.

Vraag 1. Beskryf die gemeente aan 'n nuwe persoon.

Grasvoëlkop blyk 'n gemeente te wees waar mense baie gelukkig is, en hulle beskou dit as 'n voorreg om lidmate van die gemeente te wees. In meer as die helfte van die respondente (13) se beskrywings maak ons kennis met 'n klein gemeente wat soos 'n familie funksioneer: intiem, warm, vriendelik, hegte verhoudings. Bowendien is die gemeentelide gasvry en reik verwelkomend uit na besoekers en nuwelinge sodat hulle gou tuis voel. Iets anders wat herhaaldelik in die beskrywings genoem word, is dat die gemeente 'n "sterk sendingvisie" het ("plaaslik sowel as oor landsgrense heen"), en dat 'n kerngroep daarna streef om Christus se voorbeeld uit te leef, in liefde uit te reik, en die evangelie uit te dra aan die nasies ("hoofsaaklik deur ons geloofsgelofteoffers") – "meeste lidmate het die besef of begeerte dat die Woord uitgedra moet word." 'n Betekenisvolle opmerking in dié verband lui: "ons is nie net betrokke by ver-weg sending (nie), maar sien ook nood rondom ons raak in die stad en ondersteun mekaar."

Ander beskrywings wat ons besonder opgeval het, is dat die gemeente "op mense fokus," dat julle "n hart vir ander mense" het. Asook: "Aanbidding het hoë prioriteit." Die kerngroep wat "sterk betrokke" is, is omtrent 70 mense. As ons wiskunde reg is, is dit sowat 25%! Die reaksie in ons leesspan was dat 20% al as 'n besonder hoë syfer beskou word. Ons hoor ook hier reeds van aktiewe Bybelstudie-, sel- en dissipelskapgroepe wat later telkens weer ter sprake kom. Dames speel skynbaar 'n groot rol in die funksionering van die gemeente, en die "jeug is sigbaar, maar nie baie prominent nie," eenvoudig omdat daar nie baie van hulle is nie.

Wat ons verder tref, is dat die buitenvreemdelinge met wie julle luisterspan onderhoude gevoer het, feitlik deurgaans positief is oor die vriendelikheid en warmte wat hulle in hulle

kontak met die gemeente ervaar. 'n Respondent van 30+ jaar merk op dat die gemeente "ongelukkig" uit meer ouer as jonger mense bestaan, maar ouderdom maak nie saak as jy mekaar eers leer ken het nie." 'n Binnevreemdeling van 40+ voel tog dat hoewel die gemeente gasvry is, daar nie genoeg geleenthede is om nuwe intrekkers beter te leer ken nie. 'n Ander persoon uit dieselfde ouderdomsgroep merk op dat daar tog mense is wat eredienste bywoon wat "nie regtig ingeskakel is nie." 'n Twintigplusser beleef dat almal mekaar ken en groet, sodat jy dadelik agterkom as daar nuwe mense is, tog meen die persoon dat daar ongelukkig "klieks volgens ouderdomsgroepe" is. 'n Buitestander het ook die persepsie "dat nuwe lidmate/besoekers dit moeilik vind om in te skakel by bestaande vriendskapsgroepe."

Daar is besondere waardering vir die leraar, sy integriteit en geesvervuldheid, sy verhouding met die gemeente, en sy bediening, insluitend suiwer Woordverkondiging.

Moontlike vrae waarom julle sou kon gesels:

- Wat ervaar julle as die voordele van 'n klein, intieme gemeente? Watter seën hou dit spesifiek vir 'n gestuurde gemeente in om klein te wees?
- Die gemeente word as vriendelik en gasvry beskryf. Gasvryheid is een van die karaktertrekke en geloofsgewoontes van 'n gestuurde gemeente; dit is meer as blote vriendelikheid. Julle gemeente ontvang die gawe en opdrag om God se oop hart vir alle mense te wys. Hoeveel plek word daar doelbewus in julle gemeentehart en -lewe gemaak vir vreemdelinge van "buite", mense uit ander agtergronde, van ander kulture of selfs tale, ander tipes spiritualiteit wat moontlik verskil van julle s'n? Watter tipe mense sou méér verwelkom word as ander in die binnekring van julle geloofs familie?
- Hoe maklik of moeilik is dit vir 'n nuweling om deel te word van die hegte "binnekring" van julle familie gemeente? Aan watter "voorwaardes" of vereistes sou hy/sy eers moet voldoen? Hoe kan julle die drumpel vir toetrede tot julle geloofsgemeenskap vir hulle nog 'n bietjie laer maak? Hoe sou julle nog meer onvoorwaardelike openheid kon toon teenoor nuwelinge en besoekers?
- Daar word gesê "die leraar het 'n goeie visie en wil lidmate instaatstel om die Woord uit te dra na buite. Deel van die visie is 'n fokus op sendinguitreiking." Is die leraar die draer van die visie, of hoe gaan julle te werk om dit aan die gemeente te kommunikeer en hulle mede-eienaarskap daarvan te laat neem? Ons het gewonder hoe help hierdie visie die gemeente om nie op sy eie oorlewing te fokus nie, maar op God se roeping en julle aandeel in die koms van sy Koninkryk? Stel die visie julle in staat om doelbewus te bou aan julle eenheid onder mekaar en met ander gelowiges? In watter mate help die visie julle om oor grense van bv. ouderdom, kultuur, taal, ras e.a. heen te gaan na wie toe Hy julle stuur?

Vraag 2: Hoe kan gemeentedele leer wat dit beteken om 'n volgeling van Jesus te wees?

Dis duidelik dat die gemeente deeglik toegerus word om as dissipels van Jesus te leef. Die dissipelskapprogram wat oor 3 jaar strek, blyk 'n besondere groot impak te hê (13). Dit word verder versterk deur inskakeling en interaksie in Bybelstudie- en selgroepe "waar die Bybel altyd sentraal is" (13). Saam met die volgehoue "sinvolle lering tydens eredienste" (7) word hierdie 3 vorme van lering en toerusting derhalwe deur die grootste meerderheid as die belangrikste leergeleenthede uitgesonder. In die proses van dissipelvorming word die "leerlinge" begelei om Jesus Christus self intiemer te leer ken en sy voorbeeld na te volg (5). Die voorbeeld en getuïenisse van lidmate en die leraar dien tot verdere inspirasie en aanmoediging (5). Aanvullende leergeleenthede is bv. die 40 dae-fokus van Rick Warren en die Alpha-kursus wat nie so lank duur soos die dissipelskapskursus nie.

Natuurlik groei dissipelskap ook oor tyd en nie met een kursus nie. Vir so 'n klein gemeente met minder as 300 belydende lidmate, bied julle besonder baie toerusting in dissipelskap aan vir lidmate om aan deel te neem. Ons dink ook dit is hierdie gedurige interaksie wat die kerngroep gemeentede so na aan mekaar gebring het. Dit tref ons dat die fokus op dissipelskap deurlopend is, en dat die verskillende leergeleenthede goed geïntegreer is met mekaar: “Gevestigde Bybelstudie- en selgroepe ondersteun die dissipelskapaksies.” Iemand praat ook daarvan dat dissipelskap in kommissies soos die Barmhartigheidskommissie en in selgroepe funksioneer waar verdere interaksie onderling plaasvind.

Dit blyk dat hierdie toegespitste fokus op dissipelskapopleiding en –vorming goeie vrugte oplewer. Respondente is baie bewus van Jesus se voorbeeld, en gee blyke dat hulle verstaan wat dit behels om Hom te volg, soos 'n buitestander dit stel: “Waar die Bybel se boodskap en praktyk bymekaar gebring word.” Ander verduidelik verder: “As Hy deel van jou lewe is, dan ken jy Hom”; “Deur liefde en deernis; alles te doen na die voorbeeld van Jesus toe Hy op aarde was”; “die uitleef van Christus-liefde”; “betrokke raak by mekaar deur mekaar te dien”; “ondersteuning te bied aan sendingaksies plaaslik en oorsee.”

Ten spyte van al die geleenthede en kursusse vir deeglike toerusting wat julle aanbied, merk ons tog in die response geen konkrete verwysings na dissipelskap in die werkplek of gewone daaglikse lewe nie. Terwyl ons groot waardering het vir julle uitmuntende dissipelskaptoerusting en leergeleenthede, en toegee dat baie dit in die praktyk van die lewe reeds toepas, is ons aanvoeling tog dat dit juis nou die groot uitdaging vir julle leierskap is om vanaf hierdie stewige fondament wat julle oor die afgelope paar jaar deeglik gelê het, verder te beweeg; meer lidmate te help om wat hulle geleer het oor dissipelwees te integreer met hulle spontane daaglikse lewe tuis en by die werk – om die brug te slaan na die praktyk en 'n kultuur van daadwerklike doen te help skep. Uitdagings te stel en hulle verantwoordbaar te hou om dit uit te voer, sonder om druk of dwang toe te pas. Hulle is meer as gereed daarvoor.

Ons vind dus in die response uitstekende begrip van die teorie van dissipelskap, en kennis van Jesus se lewe en die implikasies daarvan vir die leefstyl van sy volgelinge, maar sou graag meer stories wou hoor (spontaan, sonder dat die vraag spesifiek daartoe aanleiding gee) van hoe God sy kinders roep en uitstuur om in die daaglikse lewe buite die mure en grense van 'n kerkgebou en gemeente as verteenwoordigers van Jesus Christus te gaan leef, verhale van respondente wat bepaalde grense na vreemdelinge oorgesteek het om Jesus se “hande en voete” vir ander te wees.

- Bespreek die stelling: Die grootste leer van wat dit beteken om in Jesus se voetspore te volg, vind dikwels *in* die uitreik plaas – daar waar passie en deernis in die blootstelling aan 'n medemens se behoefte in sy situasie gewek word. Dink aan 'n voorbeeld waar dit al met julle gebeur het dat daar in die *doen* en gee van jouself 'n ommekeer in julle houding of denke plaasgevind het.
- Hoe verstaan julle die verskil tussen die organiseer van 'n uitreik en die bemagtiging van lidmate; tussen gestruktureerde (beheerde) en spontane aksie? Kan dit wees dat baie van julle opgeleide Jesus-vogelinge sit en wag vir die leiers/leraar om iets te organiseer? Hoe kan hulle gehelp word om die denksprong te maak dat hulle self kan en mag uitreik en spontane bedieninge begin waar hulle bewus raak van nood en behoeftes in die gemeenskap? As ons julle leierskap mag uitdaag: Vertrou die gemeente met die opleiding wat hulle gekry het! Hulle is toegerus en gereed – soos hardlopers oorgehaal in die wegspringblokke. Al wat sommige nou nog moet leer is: Hoe doen jy dit in jou daaglikse lewe?
- Hoe dikwels word daar ruimte geskep vir gemeentede om hulle (daaglikse) uitreik-ervarings te deel en stories te vertel van hoe hulle grense oorgesteek het ter wille daarvan om Jesus se verteenwoordiger by iemand te wees?

- Die voorbeeld van ryper gelowiges is 'n bron van inspirasie. Julle is geseën met baie ouer mense wat die rytheid van geloofservaring en wysheid besit. Hoe word hulle gawes aangewend om jonger dissipels te lei en inspireer?
- Hoe kan julle kleingroepe nog beter benut word vir die ontwikkeling van persoonlike roepingsbesef en gestuurdheid?
- Die missioloog Alan Hirsch beskou dissipelvorming as die kerntaak van die kerk en sê oor julle visie (die uitdra van die evangelie) : “*Embodiment is crucial to transmission (of the gospel)*”. As die oordra van die evangelie aan ander geskied deur Jesus by hulle te beliggaam (*embody*), beteken dit dat ons meer soos Jesus moet wees en word sodat Hy sy bediening aan die wêreld deur ons kan voortsit. In watter opsig help julle toerustingsbediening lidmate om gevorm en verander te word sodat julle Hom oral kan beliggaam waar julle kom – in Egipte sowel as in Cotswold?
- Waarmee dink julle sou Jesus Homself besig gehou het in julle omgewing? Wie se lewe sou Hy 'n bietjie aangenamer en vroliker of hoopvoller wou maak?

Die NG kerk bevind hom geruime tyd reeds in 'n “Seisoen van Luister”. Inskakeling by die Vennootskap wil julle juis help om aandagtig en diep te luister – eerstens na God, om vas te stel wat die volgende fase is waarheen Hy sy gemeente wil lei, maar ook na mekaar, en na julle direkte omgewing. Dit is waarom julle hierdie onderhoude gevoer het. Om diep te luister, help 'n gemeente met geloofsonderskeiding; dié proses van gesamentlike gebed, studie van die Woord en intensiewe gesprek waardeur ons leer wat God ons verwag om te wees en te doen.

Vraag 3: Vertel iets wat illustreer hoe jy ervaar dat God teenwoordig is en hoe Hy werk in hierdie gemeente.

Daar bestaan by ons geen twyfel dat die gemeentede 'n duidelike, intieme belewenis van God se teenwoordigheid het nie. Hulle beleef sy werk op verskillende maniere. Hulle taalgebruik en woordkeuse is dié van mense wie se geloofsoë ge oefen is om op Hom te fokus en Hom te herken en erken en oor Hom te praat.

Die volgende ervarings word genoem: God se teenwoordigheid word “sterk ervaar” gedurende eredienste, en spesifiek aanbiddingsgeleenthede, en die ervaring word veral versterk deur lofprysing, sang en musiek “waar dit nie oor ons gaan nie, maar oor God” (3); “getuïenisse in die eredienste speel 'n groot rol” (3). Wat in die eredienste van God ervaar word, geld ook vir die gebedsgroepe en kleingroepbyeenkomste (4).

Verder sien gemeentede God se werk in mense wat tot bekering kom (2); sigbare geestelike verdieping en groei by lidmate (4); die opregte omgee tussen gemeentede, liefde en uitreik na mekaar is “'n duidelike teken van God se teenwoordigheid,” bv. in nood en siekte, asook in die Arendsvlerkeprogram (5). “Wanneer mense na mekaar uitreik (veral met siekte), glo ek dit is God se liefde wat gestalte vind.” “Mens sien dit ook aan verhoudings binne die gemeente”(1); aan die eenheid van die kerkraad (1) en gemeente - “saam een voor God” (2), en aan die sterk leierskap (2).

'n Prominente terrein waar die werking van die Heilige Gees deur die gemeentede gesien en beleef word, is die sendingfokus en aksies in o.a. Afghanistan, Egipte, Malabar en Transkei (6), en die offervaardigheid van die gemeente in dié verband. Ook die feit van “gestuurdes uit ons gemeente, soos Philip.” Die gesonde finansies waar die Here telkens voorsien in antwoord op gebed, word ook opgemerk en getuig van sy werking (4). Die gemeente is dan ook nie skaam om geld buite die gemeentegrense te bestee nie (tot R130,000). Die teenwoordigheid en seën van God is ook gesien toe die preekstoel verwyder en 'n nuwe verhoog gemaak is: “Alles het net in plek geval en mens kon die teenwoordigheid en seën van God op die projek aanvoel.”

Julle is werklik 'n geseënde geloofsgemeenskap met lidmate wat gereeld saam voor die aangesig van die lewende God verkeer, hetsy in die groter of kleiner groepe. Ons sien dít as die bron van julle entoesiasme en energie vir die saak van die Koninkryk en vir die uitdra van die evangelie. Omdat julle so intens op die drieënige God fokus, kan julle “op mense fokus” – soos ons by die eerste vraag gehoor het – en is julle “hart vir ander mense” nie leë woorde nie. Binne die gemeente en in die verskillende sendinguitreike daarbuite vind daar betekenisvolle omgee en versorging plaas. Hierdie offervaardigheid en vrygewigheid om die geestelike en materiële seëninge wat julle ontvang het, te deel met ander, is 'n gawe wat julle as gemeente moet koester, versterk en aanwend.

- Hoe gaan julle te werk om die vermoë by mekaar aan te wakker om die Here se teenwoordigheid toenemend raak te sien in die gewone dinge van die lewe, en daarop te reageer? Sou julle sê die vermoë was altyd deel van die gemeente se kultuur, of het dit oor tyd gegroei en toegeneem? Het julle 'n nuwe taalgebruik en woordeskat aangeleer om julle lidmate te help om meer en makliker oor God en sy werk te praat? Watter rol speel getuïenisse (“Godstories”) om die fokus op Hom te laat val? Sluit dit spesifiek die getuïenisse in van mense wat dit waag om grense te deurbreek?
- Hoe beleef lidmate wat nie saamgaan nie die uitreike na ander lande? Raak dit harte? Hoe word die geestelike effek van julle uitreike verwoord en vasgelê sodat daar by die ander lidmate ook innerlike transformasie en groei kan plaasvind?
- Waar sien julle God buite die grense van die kerk in die omringende gemeenskap aan die werk? Waar en hoe deel julle stories van hoop uit julle nabye omgewing met mekaar?
- Wat sê die Heilige Gees vir julle oor geloofsonderskeiding, spesifiek in vergaderings? Hoe help die gewoonte van Wandel-in-die-Woord en die stel van “Godsvrae” julle om julle vergaderingskultuur te vernuwe en te verdiep?

Vraag 4: Beskryf 'n ervaring van betekenisvolle aanbidding van God wat jy in die gemeente gehad het.

Ons is weereens diep geraak deur die egtheid waarmee die respondente hulle diepste aanbiddingservarings probeer verwoord het. Dit getuig vir ons van 'n vlak van geloofsbeleving wat nie oornag ontstaan het nie, maar deur toegewyde geloofsdissipline en –gewoontes gegroei en verdiep het – presies dit waarvan respondente getuig dat hulle dit in hulle eie en in medegelowiges se lewens sigbaar waarneem.

Respondente getuig dat hulle “hart geraak (word) deur 'n ervaring van God se teenwoordigheid,” of dat hulle “'n besondere ervaring (het) van God se teenwoordigheid en ook die eenheid van gelowiges in aanbidding” by die volgende geleenthede: eredienste, “dikwels veral gedurende aandbyeenkomste” waar aanbidding deur medium van musiek plaasvind in lofprysing en samesang (3) en Kerssangdiens (1) – “die sing van lofliedere voor eredienste is sonder uitsondering 'n wonderlike ervaring van aanbidding”; deelname deur begeleiding (orrel, “band” – 2); Pinkster waar in klein groepies saam gebid word in 'n kleiner huislike ruimte rondom tafels (7); vroeë voorbiddingsgroepe Vrydae (1); in kleingroepe - dissipelskapsessies waar Wandel-in-die-Woord plaasvind (2) en selgroepe waar die Woord sentraal staan (1); Week van gebed waar ook in groepies gebid word (1); tydens voorbidding, veral vir “noodsituasies soos tans in Afghanistan en Pakistan”(1); by betekenisvolle persoonlike belewenisse soos Nagmaal - “God se liefde vir my!” (1), doop en belydenisaflegging(1); by die uitstuur van 'n uitreikspan en “hoe almal saamwerk”(2); tydens geleentheid vir stil gebed en selfondersoek in die groot groep (1); tydens interaktiewe deelname (informele nagmaal en spontane gesamentlike gebed)(2); wanneer dankbaarheid ervaar word teenoor God oor “hoe Hy ingegryp het in praktiese omstandighede” (3); Alpha-kursus en -kampe waar “die intense werking van die Heilige Gees” ervaar is (2); tydens besoeke deur “Bikers for Christ”, asook 'n Nigeriese leraar (2); en les bes: “ons is ook

geseën met 'n leraar wat die Woord vir jou 'oopbreek' met sy prediking." Een respondent volstaan deur te sê: "Alle aanbidding is betekenisvol."

Julle is een van die weinig gemeentes wat ons al teengekom het wat 'n merkwaardige gebeds- en aanbiddingskultuur het. Daarom het ons 'n paar vrae op die hart om te probeer vasstel watter praktiese "wenke" julle aan ander gemeentes sou kon gee wat begeer om hulle gebeds- en aanbiddingskultuur te verdiep.

- Response op vrae 3 en 4 laat blyk dikwels dat julle mense die Here God veral ken en ervaar as wonderbaarlike Voorsiener en Geneser. Watter ander "eienskappe" van God ken julle uit ervaring, en gee aanleiding tot julle lof en aanbidding? Hoe verryk hierdie breër fokus op Hom julle aanbiddingskultuur?
- Dink julle 'n gemeente se aanbiddingservaring verdiep wanneer die gelowiges nader aan mekaar beweeg en leef; vriendskappe en dieper verhoudings met mekaar aanknoop? Ons sien reeds 'n sterk *koinonia*-struktuur by julle kerngroep, tog moet mense bewustelik 'n stap neem om nader aan mekaar te kom en so nader te beweeg na waar die geestelike energie is. Watter rol speel die skep van intiemer ruimtes by julle in die ontwikkeling van 'n gebedskultuur? Skep julle ook geleenthede waar mense hulle broosheid t.o.v. probleme met mekaar kan deel om sodoende hulle afhanklikheid van die Heilige Gees te verdiep? Watter gewoontes of gebruike het julle wat help om 'n gebedskultuur in stand te hou en om in afhanklikheid van die Heilige Gees te lewe?
- Ons het ook gewonder wat die verhouding is tussen wat julle "vir die Here doen," en die tyd wat julle in nadenke in die teenwoordigheid van die Here self deurbring. Teenoor ons ervaring van "dinamiese" gemeentes met "besige" eredienste sou ons graag wou weet hoeveel klem lê julle bv. op die skep van genoeg geleenthede om tot rus te kom by God en in aanbidding voor Hom te verkeer? Sou die ouer deersnee ouderdom van baie van julle lidmate wat nie meer die fisieke energie het om so aktief te wees nie, iets daarmee te doen hê dat julle soveel geestelike diepte het? Gestel julle sou skielik 'n toestroming van jonger lidmate ervaar, hoe sou julle die balans behou wat julle tans het?
- Hoeveel gebruik maak julle in julle eredienste en ander byeenkomste van besondere liturgiese momente, rituele en simboliek om die gewaarwording van God se teenwoordigheid te versterk? Hoe vier die gemeente hulle vreugde oor God se teenwoordigheid? Hoe gaan julle te werk om interaksie en betrokkenheid by mekaar binne die erediens te skep sodat die belewenis van God verder versterk kan word? Het julle 'n eredienswerkgroep van lidmate wat saam met die leraar die weeklikse erediens beplan en evalueer?

Vraag 5: Vertel van 'n situasie waarin jy en/of ander mense by 'n probleem of konflik by die kerk betrokke was en hoe dit hanteer is.

Meer as die helfte (14) van die respondente is nie bewus van enige konflik nie, of was self nog nooit in konflik in die gemeente betrokke nie. Die insidente wat wel gerapporteer word, het dikwels "'n goeie einde" gehad en is "vreedsaam opgelos." Drie persone noem dat mense al weggegaan het uit die gemeente - moontlik a.g.v. onopgeloste konflik (no.12; 14; 15).

Oorwegend klink dit asof meningverskille deur gebed en gesprekvoering opgelos word - met of sonder 'n tussenganger (no.1; 3; 6; 8; 9; 10c; 12; 20; 23). Drie keer word gepraat van onafgehandelde sake (2; 10a; 11). Die strategiese benadering tot die struktuurveranderinge in die kerk (verhoog ipv kansel) was om dit nie impulsief te doen nie, maar die gemeente se houding daarteenoor eers "sagter" te maak. Daar is geduldig gewag "totdat daar op geestelike vlak gevoel is dat die tyd ryp is daarvoor." Dit het verseker dat baie potensiele konflik vermy is. 'n Wonderlike voorbeeld van geestelike volwassenheid, onderskeidingsvermoë en wag op die Here!

In die patroon van konflikhantering wat ons in julle kultuur raaksien, is die twee hoofkomponente gebed en gesprekvoering, hoewel 'n senior lidmaat toegee dat dit nie altyd maklik is om konflik aan te spreek nie. "Die leraar en kerkraadslede bid ook indringend dat sulke situasies met liefde en begrip opgelos word." Probleme word eenvoudig 'n saak van gebed gemaak, en telkens is daar nog 'n getuigenis van 'n aktiewe gebedskultuur wat die vrug van vrede en versoening oplewer. Ook in hierdie opsig sou julle vir baie ander gemeentes 'n navolgenswaardige voorbeeld en inspirasie kon wees.

- Konflik is in alle verhoudings 'n realiteit. Of dit voorkom, is nie die kwessie nie, maar hoe dit hanteer word, is waarop dit eintlik aankom. Waarom is vermyding of ontkenning van konflik beide so ongesond?
- Hoe gaan julle te werk om 'n gemeentekultuur van gesonde konflikhantering te ontwikkel wat in lyn is met die riglyne van die Skrif? Watter vaardighede beskou julle as noodsaaklik om konflik konstruktief te kan hanteer?
- Groter deelname aan God se missie en roeping bring vir elke gemeente wat erns maak daarmee vernuwung van denke en bedieningstrategieë mee. Dit ontlok noodwendig verskillende reaksies en menings. Daarom benodig enige gemeente wat erns maak met sy identiteit en roeping die kapasiteit van gesonde konflikhantering. Hoe en waar kan julle doelbewus proaktief veilige ruimtes skep waarbinne gemeentelede die vaardigheid kan inoefen om respektvol na mekaar se menings en standpunte te luister, en waar hulle dit kan waag om in liefde van mekaar en van die leraar te verskil?

Vraag 6: Wat maak jou angstig oor die toekoms van die gemeente, en wat gee jou hoop?

(a)Faktore wat hoop gee:

Opgewondenheid oor die feit dat daar ten spyte van die verlies van ouer lidmate altyd weer jonger egpare na vore kom wat aktief en toegewyd meeleeft in die gemeente (5), en veral "die sigbaarheid van jonger mans (1); die leraar se prediking en boodskappe, visie en gesindheid (4); 'n deeltydse jeugwerker (1) en die aandag aan kategetese, kinderkerk en die kleintjies (3); 'n positiewe gees: die gemeente "skrik nie vir uitdagings nie" (1); die wil om leemtes te identifiseer, ernstig op te neem en behoorlik aan te spreek, en om progressief te verander (2) en die positiewe veranderinge wat reeds plaasgevind het (1); getroue bidders en voorbidders (1); die vaste geloof dat die Here in die gemeente werk, dat Hy in beheer is en die werk van sy hande in stand sal hou (3); sel- en dissipelskapgroepe wat goed funksioneer en groei (4) en mense "regtig leer om weer na mekaar uit te reik (1); die toewyding, samewerking en volharding van die kerngroep (4); nuwe lidmate met nuwe idees wat inkom (3); soveel omgee en warmte tussen gemeentelede van alle ouderdomme (2) en mense wat mekaar ondersteun en bystaan in krisisse; die kerkraad wat almal ernstig is oor hulle eie geestelike ontwikkeling; kerkraad se visie; die sendingbetrokkenheid is "uiters positief"; die entoesiasme van lidmate (1 elk).

Ons is getref deur die jongste respondent se oortuiging. Hy voel die gemeente behoort uit te reik na die nuwe intrekkers in die buurt, want hy het klaarblyklik genoeg kennis en vertroue dat dié gemeente die nuwe mense sal aanvaar; "(ek) voel dat ons gemeente die minste nonsens het – vandat ek hier is, het dit my opgeval. Al groei ons nie in getalle nie, groei ons op ander gebiede." Wat 'n getuigskrif uit die mond van 'n jongmens in 'n "ou" gemeentel!

(b)Faktore wat angstigheid veroorsaak:

Kommer word uitgespreek oor krimpende getalle (7), die "veroudering" van die kerngroep, en die feit dat ouer lidmate na aftreeoorde verhuis en nie aangevul word nie (7); "oënskynlike" swak bywoning van eredienste (leë banke) (5). Hiermee gepaard gaan die klagte dat jonges "verdwyn" na belydenisaflegging, die klein getal tieners wat beperkend

inwerk op 'n effektiewe jeugbediening aan hulle, en die vrees dat die gemeente nie 'n genoegsame geestelike tuiste vir hulle skep nie, o.a. omdat daar nie sterk genoeg leierskap in die jeugbediening sou wees nie.

Verder is daar ook angstigheid oor alkoholisbruik; gebrekkige kommunikasie; tekens van rassisme; die feit dat die gemeente nie weet "hoe om mense buite ons 'stand' in die gemeente te laat veilig voel nie" (1 elk). Een persoon is nie angstig nie, maar "wonder soms oor God se plan met ons. Hoor ons reg?"

- Van watter gawes het julle reeds bewus geword in die lees van die verslag tot hier toe? Maak 'n nuwe lysie van die dinge wat vir julle as leierspan die meeste hoop gee. Fokus daarop, op die gawes wat julle reeds het en wat hoop gee, want hoop skep energie. Deel dit met die gemeente, vier dit, en beleef julle vreugde in die Here.
- Wat is die verskil tussen mense laat "tuis" voel en laat "veilig" voel? Hoe reageer julle op dié aanklag?
- Waarom dink 'n jongmens julle is die gemeente met die "minste nonsens"? Hoe gaan dit julle help om uit te reik na die nuwe mense wat in die buurt ingetrek het?
- Een van die patrone van 'n gestuurde gemeente is dié van 'n span leiers wat gesamentlik met roepingsgesag optree, teenoor bv. dié van 'n leraar wat alleen die toon aangee. Hoe sien julle huidige leierskapskultuur daar uit? Hoe deursigtig is julle leierskap? Hoe verteenwoordigend is die leierspan van die eiesoortige behoeftes van spesifieke belange- of ouderdomsgroepe in die gemeente?
- Hoe ver het julle al gevorder om die bedieningstyl te verander van 'n bediening **aan** lidmate na 'n bediening **deur** lidmate? Hoe word gemeentelede aangemoedig en bemagtig om volgens hulle eie gawes mede-eienaarskap te neem vir mekaar se geestelike versorging en die bediening van die gemeente? Hoe het dit die rol van die leraar verander?
- Die wydverspreide angstigheid oor die oorlewing van die gemeente dui op 'n instandhoudingskultuur wat nog in baie lidmate se denke die botoon voer. Ten spyte van die sterk sendingvisie wat julle gerigtheid op die Koninkryk stimuleer en voed, moet die meeste lidmate nog 'n kopskuif maak na missionale denke. Julle kom in hierdie stadium voor as 'n "gemeente-met-'n-sending", maar is reeds uitstekend geposisioneer om te groei tot 'n ware gestuurde gemeente waarin elkeen 'n gestuurde is – nie net die sg, sendelinge wat deur die gemeente uitgestuur word nie.
- Wat hoor julle by die Here oor sy plan vir julle toekoms? Watter verskil kan julle maak in julle direkte omgewing en in die groter prentjie van die Koninkryk van God?

Vraag 7: Hoe voel jy en ander lidmate oor die veranderinge wat die afgelope 3-5 jaar in die gemeente plaasgevind het?

Die volgende positiewe veranderinge word genoem: die strukturele veranderinge in die kerk rondom die preekstoel en verhoog (9); Die dissipelskapprogram wat gevestig is (3); aandag aan en versorging van ouer lidmate (3); jonger manne wat aktief na vore tree (2); selgroepe groei (2); lidmate toon geestelike groei (1); lidmate word geken in besluite (1); "geleenthede om God beter te leer ken en meer diensbaar te wees het toegeneem" (3 persone met 'n soortgelyke opinie); deelydse jeugwerker bring vernuwing by jongmense (1); groeiende musiekbediening (1); gesonde finansies (1); geestelike groei by lidmate(1); vervanging van ou wykstelsel deur selgroepe (4); verbreding van leierskorps (1); gemoedeliker en gemakliker atmosfeer (2).

Respondente is dus baie positief oor 'n wye verskeidenheid van waarneembare veranderinge, soos reeds geblyk het onder die faktore wat hoop skep. Die hoë vlakke van hoop en positiwiteit oor interne veranderinge wat reeds plaasgevind het, vorm saam 'n kragstasie waar besonder kragtige energie tans gegenereer word, energie wat nou aangewend kan word om nog ingrypende veranderinge in die dieptekultuur van die gemeente teweeg te bring – op die gebied van denke, houdings en gesindhede en waardes.

Twee response wat ons sterk opgeval het (no. 2 en 24) dui daarop dat dit miskien tyd geword het vir nuwe uitdagings en groei. Die een meen daar is “bemoedigende tekens, maar nie soveel groei as wat verwag is nie,” en wonder of stagnasie besig is om in te tree. Die ander persoon vrees ook stagnasie, en vervolgt: “Ons is op ‘n goeie plek, maar ons vat dit nie verder nie.” Ons wil hierby aansluit met dié uitdaging: Ons glo dit is nou julle leierspan se taak om te probeer onderskei wat is die groter prentjie waarvoor die Here julle gemeente roep en stuur, en watter programme en bedieninge nou nodig is om julle te slyp tot die instrument wat Hy in gedagte het. Daarvoor sal julle die gewoonte om diep te luister, doelgerig verder moet volhou.

- Hoe sal julle op hierdie moment die vraag beantwoord: “Wat is God se doel met ons?” Wat sien julle as die volgende waagmoedige geloofstap op die gemeente se pad vorentoe?
- Een van ‘n gemeente se grootste uitdagings is om te werk aan ‘n verandering in mense se denke, houdings en gesindhede - die eintlike dieptekultuur van die gemeente wat ten grondslag van alle volhoubare transformasie lê. Watter “instrument” gaan julle die meeste help om gemeentelêde die kopskuif na gestuurdheid – weg van blote oorlewing en instandhouding van die gemeente in sy bekende strukture – te maak: die oordra van nuwe kennis, of die inoefening van nuwe vaardighede en geloofsgewoontes? Soos wat?

Vraag 8: Hoe voel jy en ander lidmate oor die veranderinge wat die afgelope paar jaar in die gemeenskap plaasgevind het?

Hoewel daar ‘n handjievol verwysings is na toenemende verarming en die voorkoms van misdaad wat lei tot ‘n “veiligheidsmanie” wat op sy beurt weer aanleiding gee tot misdaadversperrings en groter isolasie, gesteldheid op privaatheid en selfgerigtheid, is verreweg die opvallendste verandering wat die aandag trek, die verandering in die kulturele samestelling van die buurt waarin die gemeente geleë is. Tien respondente maak daarvan melding dat die tradisionele kultuur verdwyn het deur die grootskaalse inbeweeg van persone van kleur wat nie-Afrikaanssprekend is. Twee persone is van mening dat daar veral ‘n Moslem teenwoordigheid sigbaar is. Twee mense spreek hulle kommer uit oor “aanslae teen die Christendom”, bv. in kultuuraktiwiteite, sakebedrywighede en advertensiewese. ‘n Opmerking wat ons aandag getrek het, lui dat “nood in die omgewing meer sigbaar is op verskillende vlakke.”

Waar baie ander gemeentes bedreig voel deur soortgelyke demografiese veranderinge, was die leesspan verras om julle response te lees. Die persentasie respondente wat in hierdie veranderinge ‘n positiewe geleentheid en uitdaging sien, en wat aangespreek en gestuur voel om ‘n bydrae tot die koms van die koninkryk van God te maak, is eenvoudig verbasend hoog. Ons kon minstens 9 oortuigde respondente identifiseer wat blyke gee van ‘n sterk na buite gerigte fokus; ook dat hulle reeds hieroor nagedink het en (meer as) gereed is om tot daadwerklike aksie oor te gaan:

- “Ons ervaar ‘n behoefte aan moontlik beter balans tussen plaaslike aksies in die gemeente en betrokkenheid ver weg. Die gemeenskap bied groot geleenthede vir betrokkenheid van die gemeente in bemagtigingsprojekte, maar daar is nie spesifieke leiding hieroor beskikbaar nie. So gaan geleenthede verlore vir groter impak van die gemeente op die samelewing plaaslik.”
- “Die gemeente skep nie die indruk dat dit reeds in beweging gekom het om die nuwe situasie aan te spreek nie – iets wat sal moet gebeur..”
- “Dit stel die gemeente voor ‘n groot uitdaging om ander kultuurgroepe ook te betrek...Ten einde hierdie veranderinge in belang van die Koninkryk te benut, sal verandering in gesindhede rondom kultuurverskille nodig wees... Vir toekomstige groei van die gemeente in die uitvoering van haar roeping, sal groter openheid en begrip teenoor ‘vreemdelinge’ toenemend belangrik word.”

- “Daar is by ’n groter wordende groep mense die behoefte om die (mense) om hulle wat hulp nodig het, te help. Persoonlik is ek baie moeg om te hoor van alles wat verkeerd is, en ek dink ons moet meer ‘goeie nuus’ versprei.”
- “Voel oortuig dat die Heer ons al meer in die naby omgewing wil gebruik.”
- “Op ’n manier moet die evangelie by hul uitkom sonder om eredienste by te woon – wat die belangrikheid van selgroepe onderstreep...”
- “Die omgewing se rassesamestelling het nou verander en die ‘sendingveld’ na die gemeente toe gebring. Die mening word egter gehuldig dat die fokus van die sending meer buite die stadsgrense is en dat die onmiddellike omgewing se behoeftes nie raakgesien word nie.”
- “Die demografiese verandering in terme van ras en kultuur stel nuwe uitdagings, maar beslis ook opwindende geleenthede om meer betrokke te raak en ’n verskil te maak.”
- “Dit verg nogal aanpassing t.o.v. die verskillende kulture wat nou deel van jou gemeenskap geword het. Dit bring egter nuwe uitdagings aan ons as kinders van God.”
- “Dit maak my hartseer dat daar so ’n groot verskil tussen die samelewing en die kerk is. Die twee pas nie bymekaar nie. Die kerk is soos ’n ou mens en dit sal uitsterf as dit nie leer om aan te pas en te verander nie.”

Liewe broers en susters, sien julle wat ons sien? Die Here het aan sy gemeente Grasvoëlkop besondere gawes geskenk. Julle het reeds geweldig baie kapasiteit ontvang en ver gevorder om tot ’n ware gestuurde gemeente te groei. Ons sterkste indruk is dat julle nou deur julle aansluiting by die Vennootskap voor ’n nuwe groeifase staan; ’n tyd om julle bediening te integreer en deurslaggewende keuses te maak wat julle gaan help om in dieper dimensies van God se roeping vir julle in te beweeg. Dis ’n tyd om God nog helderder te sien, ’n tyd om mekaar aan te spoor om volhardend sy wil te bly soek en te gehoorsaam. Gelukkig weet ons julle ken Hom reeds as julle heel belangrikste Vennoot op die reis.

’n Laaste paar vrae om oor te dink:

- Waar sien julle God aan die werk binne-in en te midde van die veranderinge in julle direkte omgewing en gemeenskap? Hoe kan julle met Hom saamwerk? Hoe kan julle die vreugde van sy nabyheid en sy troue liefde en versorging wat julle onder mekaar ervaar, in die samelewing rondom julle indra?
- Hoe gaan julle die mense wat julle gestuur word om te bedien, deel maak van julle geloofsgemeenskap? Hoe dink julle sal ’n nuwe bruggemeenskap daar uitsien?
- Watter moontlikhede en geleenthede sien julle om netwerke en vennootskappe te vorm met ander kerke en gemeenskapsinstansies om saam ’n impak te maak op die leefwêreld van die medemense in julle omgewing?

APPENDIX C

The missional manifesto

PREAMBLE

God is a sending God, a missionary God, who has called His people, the church, to be missionary agents of His love and glory. The concept missional epitomizes this idea. This manifesto seeks to serve the church by clarifying its calling and helping it theologically understand and practically live out God's mission in the world today. Although it is frequently stated "God's church has a mission," according to missional theology, a more accurate expression is "God's mission has a church" (Ephesians 3:7-13).

One of the goals of theology is to safeguard the meaning of words in order to uphold truth and articulate a biblical worldview within the community of faith. Redeeming the integrity of the word missional is especially critical. It is not our intent (or within our ability) to define words for others, but we thought it helpful to describe and define how we are using the term—and to invite others to do the same. A biblically faithful, missional understanding of God and the church is essential to the advancement of our role in His mission, and thus to the dynamism of Christianity in the world.

It is first necessary to be clear about what missional does not mean. Missional is not synonymous with movements attempting to culturally contextualize Christianity, implement church growth, or engage in social action. The word missional can encompass all of the above, but it is not limited to any one of these.

Properly understanding the meaning of missional begins with recognizing God's missionary nature. The Father is the source of mission, the Son is the embodiment of that mission, and mission is done in the power of the Spirit. By nature, God is the "sending one" who initiates the redemption of His whole creation. Jesus consistently spoke of Himself as being "sent" in John's gospel and subsequently commissioned His disciples for this same purpose (John 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25). As the "sent" people of God, the church is the instrument of His mission (John 20:21).

A strong foundation in the gospel, obedience to Christ and posture to the world are critical components to both individuals and churches living missionally. A missional community is one that regards mission as both its originating impulse and organizing principle (Acts 1:8).

It makes decisions accordingly, believing that Christ sends His followers into the world, just as the Father sent Him into the world.

The Church, therefore, properly encourages all believers to live out their primary calling as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) to those who do not know Jesus. The ministry of reconciliation is applicable to both its native culture and in cross-cultural ministry throughout the world. In this sense, every believer is a missionary sent by the Spirit into a non-Christian culture activating the whole of his or her life in seeking to participate more fully in God's mission.

Missional represents a significant shift in the way we understand the church. As the people of a missionary God, we are entrusted to participate in the world the same way He does—by committing to be His ambassadors. Missional is the perspective to see people as God does and to engage in the activity of reaching them. The church on mission is the church as God intended.

AFFIRMATION

With this in mind we affirm the following:

1. Authority: As a revelation about the nature of God, we can only truly understand the mission of God by what is revealed through the Scriptures. Therefore, our understanding of the *missio Dei* and the missional church must always be directed and shaped by, and cannot be contrary to, God's revealed Word in scripture.
2. Gospel: We affirm that God, who is more holy than we can imagine, looked with compassion upon humanity made up of people who are more sinful than we will admit and sent Jesus into history to establish His kingdom and reconcile people and the world to Himself. Jesus, whose love is more extravagant than we can measure, gave His life as a substitutionary death on the cross and was physically resurrected thereby propitiating the wrath of God. Through the grace of God, when a person repents of their sin, confesses the Messiah as Lord, and believes in His resurrection, they gain what the Bible defines as new and eternal life. All believers are then joined together into the church, a covenant community working as "agents of reconciliation" to proclaim and live out the gospel.
3. Kingdom: We affirm that the gospel is the good news of God's Kingdom. The Kingdom is the active and comprehensive rule of God over His whole creation. The sovereign reign of God brings righteousness (right relationships with God, others, and creation), restores justice, and brings healing to a broken world. The Kingdom of God has been inaugurated but is still "not yet." It will not be fully revealed until Jesus returns. The church, birthed in the wake of the kingdom, serves as an agent of the King in the "already and not yet" of the Kingdom by proclaiming and spreading the gospel and living out its implications.

4. Mission: We affirm that the *missio Dei* is the mission of the triune God to glorify Himself. God does so in this world by redeeming sinful humans and, in the future, restoring corrupted creation. The Father sent the Son to accomplish this redemption and sends the Spirit to apply this redemption to the hearts of men and women. Included in God's mission is the *missio ecclesiae* whereby He empowers the church for witness and service that leads to witness. Believers are called to share the gospel with people so they can come to know Christ. Moving from God, through the church, to the world, God's redemptive work results in people of every tribe, tongue and nation responding in lifelong worship of the God.

Ultimately the *missio Dei* will encompass all of creation when God creates a new heaven and new earth.

5. Church: The church is a sign and instrument of the Kingdom of God, birthed by the gospel of the Kingdom and tasked with the mission of the Kingdom. The church is a covenant community of imperfect but redeemed believers living in our world. Followers of Christ do not live out their mission in isolation, but rather the Spirit of God enfolds believers into local Christian communities, i.e. churches. It is in and through such community their mission in the world is enhanced.

6. Christocentric: We believe that Jesus is the center of God's plan. By extension, the church as the body of Christ is the primary medium of God's mission to His world. We affirm that while God's work and presence is not limited to the church, nonetheless the proclamation of the gospel of Christ comes through the church and believers everywhere. Members of the church, living by the power of the Spirit, are being conformed into the likeness of Christ in their attitudes and actions.

7. Disciple-making: We believe that discipling of the nations is the essential aspect of the mission of God (Matthew 28:18-20). The gospel calls people to respond in faith and repentance to the good news of the Kingdom in and by the gospel's power. The maturing of believers is inherent to the work of the church ushering those who place faith in Jesus from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity (Colossians 1:28). This means the church trains its members to be leaders in deeds of justice and ministry to the poor, as well as live out the implications of their faith in business, the arts, in politics, the academy, the home, and in all of life. As the church makes disciples, it equips them to bring their faith to bear on every area of their lives, private and public.

8. Duality: We believe the mission and responsibility of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration. From Jesus, we learn the truth is to be proclaimed with authority and lived with grace. The church must constantly evangelize, respond lovingly to human needs, as well as "seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7).

By living out the implications of the gospel, the missional church offers a verbal defense and living example of its power.

9. Universality: We believe God's mission, and thus the mission of His people, extends to every people, nation, tribe and tongue; to persons of every gender, age, education, social standing, and religious persuasion (or lack thereof). Thus a missional church will intentionally embrace diversity locally and will cross social, cultural and geographic barriers as agents of the *missio Dei*. God's mission furthermore universally encompasses every aspect of life: personal, familial, social, cultural, and economic. This is grounded upon the universal authority and lordship of Jesus Christ.

10. Application: We believe the mission of the church continues in multiplying and maturing the followers of Christ (discipleship), increasing the number of congregations (church planting) dedicated to God's kingdom (living under His lordship), extending God's fame throughout the earth (worship), and doing good in the name of Christ (works of mercy).

Because we believe these things, we are compelled to action. We urge God's people to align around the lordship of Jesus, the missional nature of His church, and the reality of His kingdom. We invite the body of Christ everywhere to see people and the world through the lens of God's kingdom, to live holy lives as Jesus' disciples, and to intentionally represent Him together as the church. We affirm that Jesus was sent to fulfill God's purposes in the world through His perfect life, substitutionary death, and physical resurrection so that redemption could be made available to us. With Christ as our focal point, His kingdom as our destiny, and His Spirit as our empowerment, we accept the privilege and joy of His mission.

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