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THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST IN
ACCRA WITH SPECIFIC FOCUS ON CHILDREN: AN EXPLORATORY
STUDY

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Thesis submitted for the degree Doctor of Theology in Practical Theology
for the University of Stellenbosch



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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously submitted it in its entirety or in part at any university for a degree.

Signature

Date:

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PROLOGUE

My greatest tribute will firstly be to God who created me and purposed me for a wonderful and fulfilling life in his Kingdom. I want to identify with the words that someone expressed at the end of his life: “thank you for allowing me to join the game.” My tour of service in children’s ministry started with a deep sense of calling about 30 years ago. I joined Petra College (now Petra Institute) in 1993. I consider myself privileged part of God’s mission to the children and I can look back with great gratitude to so many sectors of life that enriched us as a family in the ministry. Expressing gratitude here is not because of a custom or a requirement but a sincere tribute to those who enriched my life. I consider myself as a person richly blessed by God and by his people over so many years.

I would like to thank my family for so much support and encouragement. Karin, the last number of years you had to be content with a gypsy lifestyle. Thank you for allowing me so many hours to be with you and at the same time be absent in front of books and the computer. My constant travelling and hectic programme did not help much and I am grateful for your support. My children, Elké and Celeste, thank you for your support and understanding over so many years. You also had to cope with my constant travelling and by God’s grace; you grew up well in a demanding ministry environment and blessed me with wonderful grandchildren later in life. My grandchildren, Liam, Tijhan, Milan and Dealane – thank you for your love and the value you added to my life. May you experience great fulfilment in life and learn from my journey with God. I thank my Mom for supporting me in times when she needed me more than my own needs. I also need to mention my dear brother Andre who supported me and enriched me in the ministry. Our many discussions and dealing with deep theological issues from time to time were very stimulating and enriching. Your practical support over the years enabled me to become what I am today.

Then I want to thank God's people for blessing me abundantly. There are the numerous children who blessed me with their presence and touch during camps, children's services and counselling sessions. My colleagues at Petra, you were from the very beginning a great inspiration to me and will remain so. Thank you to Petra leadership who allowed me in the last two years to spend much more time on my studies. Words are not adequate to thank the leadership of the Church of Pentecost. I want to thank in particular Apostle Dr. Koduah, Apostle Dr. Opoku and Prophet Adubah for your care and support during visits. You blessed me and made this research project a joy and a great learning experience. I have learned so much about my extended family in Africa through my brothers and sisters in Ghana (which include the children). I am also grateful to people who along the way gave valuable inputs to the development of this thesis. Your "fatherly" guidance is appreciated. To my supervisors, Dr. Anita Cloete and Dr. Jan Grobbelaar, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the dedicated time that you spent in guiding and helping me to complete my studies. Your patience, wisdom and encouragement serve as a motivation to pursue more theological contributions for the sake of children. I have learned much more from you than this study reflects.

SUMMARY

Children represent more than half of the total African population and therefore form a significant and strategic part of the church in Africa. Visits to churches and children's ministries in Africa raised questions on the being of the church and children's inclusion into church life. My personal exposures to the Church of Pentecost (COP) lead to this reflection on the children's ministry of the Church. I was in particular interested to learn what ministry strategies and related theological underpinnings support their children's ministry.

It appears from literature that children does not enjoy the same attention from systematic theologians when central theological themes such as the human condition, nature of faith, language about God, the church and the nature of religion, is discussed. The apparent absence of clearly defined theological positions on children by the COP and limited African theological discussions and academic works on children matters, contributed further to conclude the following problem statement: The church needs children's ministry strategies that includes children as integral part of church life. In support of such strategies, the Church needs theological underpinnings for a Christian theological approach to children and the role and responsibilities of families and faith communities. My choice for an African church relates to my exposures to and relationships with churches in Africa. The COP is viewed as a significant church in Ghana, provided an ideal opportunity to explore an African church within the framework of the broader Christian landscape in Ghana.

The research question is: What was the ministry strategy focusing on children of the Church of Pentecost between 1970 and 2010? Chapter 1 deals with the motivation, objectives, research question and strategies of enquiry. Chapter 2 describes the genesis history of the COP as to explore possible strategic children's ministry elements. Chapter 3 focuses on theological underpinnings for a church as a particular ministry environment where children could be integrated

into church life. The study worked with a key metatheoretical assumption that God is dynamically working in the church and society. Theological themes and characteristics raised in the study of the Old Testament people of God suggested a possibility that the New Testament church might be a continuation of the Old Testament people of God's way of living. This theological exploration of the church contributed to inform the proposed ministry practices in chapter 6.

Chapter 4 dealt with the design and operationalisation of the empirical research strategies to explore church members' perceptions of church, based on their childhood experiences. The empirical data were analysed and interpreted in chapter 5 to serve the study in the conclusions in the last chapter. Chapter 6 concluded with the finding that the COP did have a number of non-intentional elements interpreted as possible ministry strategies for the children's ministry as well as an intentional strategy. The findings concluded that the COP seriously needs theological underpinnings for an intergenerational approach to children's ministry. The last part proposes children's ministry processes that could assist the COP to become an intergenerational church.

OPSOMMING

Kinders verteenwoordig meer as die helfte van die bevolking in Afrika en is daarom 'n beduidende en strategiese deel van die kerk. Blootstelling aan die kerk en kinderbedienings in Afrika het vroeër die verstaan van kerkwees en kinders se insluiting in die bediening van die kerk na vore gebring. Antwoorde is in die strategiese benadering tot kerkbediening asook die kerk se teologiese begroning van kerkwees gesoek. Die Church of Pentecost (COP) se strategiese posisie in Ghana het bygedra om om hierdie studie op die bedieningstrategieë van die COP te rig. Vanuit 'n teologiese perspektief lyk dit asof kinders min of geen rol speel in die manier hoe sistematiese teoloë oor sentrale teologiese temas soos die toestand van die mens, die wese van geloof, taal oor God, die kerk en die wese van religie, dink nie. Daar is ook geen noemenswaardige werke wat handel oor teologiese gesprekke en ondersoeke rondom kind-geïntereerde onderwerpe vanuit Afrika nie. Die bogenoemde persepsies het bygedra om die volgende probleemstelling te ontwikkel: Die kerk het 'n behoefte aan kinderbedieningstrategieë wat kinders in gemeentewees kan insluit. Hierdie bedieningstrategieë benodig 'n teologiese onderbou om 'n Christelik teologiese benadering tot kinders asook die rol en verantwoordelikhede van families en gemeenskappe daar te kan stel. My keuse vir 'n fokus op 'n Afrika kerk kom uit my verbintenis as 'n Afrikaner aan Afrika sowel as die verhoudings en insig wat opgedoen is met die Afrika kerk. Die COP in Ghana word beskou as een van die toonaangewende kerke in Ghana. Dit het my 'n ideale geleentheid gebied om 'n gevallestudie binne die groter Christelike landskap in Ghana aan te pak.

Die navorsingsvraag van die studie is: Wat was die kinderbedieningstrategie van die "Church of Pentecost" tussen die tydperk 1970 en 2010? Hoofstuk 1 spel die motiverings, doelwitte en navorsingstrategieë uit. Die vraag of daar strategiese elemente in die geskiedenis van die COP se bediening van kinders ontdek kan word, word in hoofstuk 2 bespreek. Die wordingsgeskiedenis van die COP is binne die groter Christelike landskap in Ghana beskryf. Die teologiese onderbou

vir die verstaan van die kerk as n bepaalde ruimte wat kinders kan insluit word in hoofstuk 3 beredeneer vanuit die Ou Testament en die Nuwe Testament. Die studie het hier sterk gesteun op temas en karaktertrekke van die geloofsgemeenskappe in Bybelse tye wat kan help om te verstaan watter aspekte gesien kan word as n voortsetting van die gemeenskapslewe van die volk van God in die Ou Testament. Die studie verreken hier n sleutel meta-teoretiese vertrekpunt naamlik dat God dinamies werksaam is in die kerk en gemeenskappe. Hoofstuk 3 kon teologiese vertrepunte ontwikkel wat later in hoofstuk 6 n voorgestelde bedieningspraktyk geïntegreer het. Hoofstuk 4 sit die empiriese navorsingstrategie uiteen en operasionaliseer dit om die vraag oor lidmate se persepsies van kindwees in die COP te beantwoord. In hoofstuk 5 word die analise en interpretasie van die empiriese data bespreek. Die bevindinge word in hoofstuk 6 bespreek. Dit blyk dat die COP met sowel nie-beplande kinderbedieningstrategieë as n intensiewe kinderbedieningstrategie gewerk het. Die COP kort egter duidelike teologiese onderbou vir hul kinderbediening asook bedieningspraktyke wat kinders intergenerasioneel kan insluit in kerkwees. Hieruit maak die studie aanbevelings vir n proses benadering tot kinderbediening wat daartoe kan bydra dat die COP wel geleenthede kan skep vir n meer intergenerasionele benadering tot kerkwees.

ABBREVIATIONS

AACC = All Africa Conference of Churches

AEA = Africa Evangelical Association

AV = American Version

CET = Child Evangelist Training Institute

FBO = Faith Bases Organisation

GAR = Greater Accra Region

GCF = Global Children's Forum

HIV/AIDS = Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome

KEO = Kinder Evangeliste Opleiding

NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation

UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund

USA = United States of America

KJV = King James Version

NLT = New Life Translation

NIV = New International Version

TPR = Textus a patribus receptus

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CHAPTER 1
ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dan Brewster¹ (2011:3), whilst working for the child-focussed organisation Compassion International in the work called Child, Church and Mission, made the following statement: “Never in history have we had so many children² among us and never have so many of them been at great social risk.” This statement sums up why children, church, and mission are critical topics to discuss in the present time we live in. It seems also of utmost relevance at a time when children’s issues receive focused attention internationally and which also challenges the ministry of the church.³

This chapter will serve as general orientation for the study. It covers aspects like personal motivation for the study, social needs in Africa affecting children, trends and developments within the field of children’s ministry, value, and contribution of the study to the field of Practical Theology, development of the research question

¹ Dan Brewster wrote the initial work Child, Church and Mission in 2005 in collaboration with Compassion International where he was involved for more than 25 years. His work was revised in 2011. He is also a lecturer at the Malaysia Baptist Seminary.

² I use the word *children* and *child* to refer to children in general. Where a specific reference is to an individual child, it is indicated accordingly. I am aware that there are different interpretations of how a ‘child’ is defined according to age and culture but will use the concept children or child in this study to indicate children under the age of 14. This concept is explored further in 1.9.5.

³ In the thesis I prefer the lower case “c” in church where I refer to the global church as a body of believers worldwide or sometimes a local community of believers also called a faith community and upper case “C” where reference is made to a specific denomination or local assembly as an institution.

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and choice of research methodology. The chapter also address the clarification of crucial concepts related to the research and will include an overview of the structure of the dissertation.

1.2 MOTIVATION

My motivation for this research got its impetus from the following contributing factors:

1.2.1 Personal motivation

My ministry⁴ as a pastor has concentrated almost entirely on matters that pertain to children's ministry.⁵ My involvement with this ministry started in 1985. After completion of my theological studies in 1993, I joined the Child Evangelist Training Institute⁶ (CET). My career of 15 years in the corporate world within management capacity and as a pastor and missionary since 1993 contributed to my critical thinking about the church and the ministry of the church.

⁴ In this thesis, I choose to use the first person singular. It corresponds with current trends within the academic environment. Some of the reasons that were proposed are that the researcher as writer is personally involved and that it would be difficult to separate the writer from the one who makes the discovery (Evans & Gruba, 2004:159). Bak (2004:96) considers the reference of yourself as the writer/researcher as "...an outdated way of writing."

⁵ "Children's ministry" is widely used as a concept to describe what the focus of the ministry is concerning children and is commonly referred to as ministry to children. In recent years this understanding was challenged from a theological and academic perspective, arguing that ministry to children is actually one-sided and limited. It would appear that the church generally does not acknowledge or include children as contributing members in God's mission in the world but rather see them as objects of ministry. I will elaborate on this concept in section 1.9.6.

⁶ KEO started in 1989 as Kinder Evangeliste Opleiding (KEO) (CET when translated to English – Children's Evangelist Training). Later it was changed to Petra College for Children's Ministry. In 2012 the organisation changed its name again and is known as Petra Institute for Children's Ministry. For the sake of clarity, I will consequently refer to Petra Institute.

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Since I joined Petra Institute in 1993, I have met various African church leaders and have made contact with a number of different contexts of church life in both urban and rural areas in the African context. My position as head of training services at Petra Institute also kept me in contact with more than thirty-eight countries through the Institute's project leaders. In the majority of these countries, Petra Institute has long term training strategies for building capacity for partners' children's ministries through leadership development processes and building of organisational ministry capacity for the various denominations and organisations. These exposures include observations, discussions, and practical children's ministry experiences. In visits to Churches in about 18 countries in Africa, some fairly regularly, two European countries (Switzerland and Germany) as well as the State of Illinois in the USA, I was able to develop an understanding and an assessment, albeit subjectively, of the value and place of children in the church and societies in general. I was compelled to re-evaluate my own understanding and perceptions about what is understood about church as well as the place and value of children in the church. This understanding, as part of a theological discussion, is elaborated on in chapter 3.

A visit to Ghana in 2006 took me for the first time to the city of Accra. I observed a city that apparently has good governance, portrays a sort of Christian environment where many shops have biblical names; Bible verses are written on taxis and fishing boats and conservative television programmes. Meeting with leadership from various church denominations in Accra created an impression of a strong church influence and presence in the Ghanaian community. Participation-intervention from corporate businesses like MTN in Ghana also plays a definite role and the MTN sponsored gospel festivals held in Accra in 2010 and 2011 is one such example. The involvement of a giant corporate business in religious affairs is not common in our times, and may

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suggest that Christianity is a deeply ingrained part of the Ghanaian society. What could be the reason(s) behind this phenomenon? Several factors could have contributed to this situation for example more stable political governance, a sound economy with much investment from outside, a good educational system and good service delivery. These seemingly positive observations prompted me to question in which way children's ministry could have contributed to Ghana's Christian history especially when considering that the society leaders of today were the children of quite a few years ago. Various leaders from denominations such as the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Church of Pentecost referred to the positive impact that the churches in Ghana made on them as children. There was a suggestion that the churches collectively started to focus specifically on children and children matters about 40 years back. This is sighted by most leaders as a telling reason for them to be in leadership today. Whilst this question of the impact on children by the church might be relevant for all the churches in Ghana, the study will for the sake of practical reasons, only focus on the history of the Church of Pentecost.

Visits to Ghana also helped me to observe the way a number of churches are doing children's ministry within a particular African context. Most Churches that I observed in Accra, Ghana such as the Methodist Church, Baptist Church, Presbyterian and Pentecostal Churches including the Church of Pentecost seem to follow popular trends in ministry where children do not attend the main service, but instead have Sunday school and some even have a parallel service with adults. My interest was to understand more about these approaches to children's ministry from an African perspective, viewed against current academic discussions and children's ministry trends in the global arena where children are the focus of attention. My personal relationship with various church leaders in Ghana opened up various possibilities for a more formal investigation into the ministry practices of a church in Africa where my focus is on the children's ministry. My exposure to the

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Church of Pentecost in Ghana⁷ and its leadership over a number of years resulted in building of good relationships and trust. Visiting various congregations from the Church of Pentecost in Accra exposed me to the striking presence of children within the reach of the Church. The big number of children involved with the Church and their potential value to the Church motivates me to explore the Church's children's ministry as part of a practical theological study. The Church is considered to be a fast growing and leading indigenous church in Ghana with a noteworthy ministry in the Ghanaian society (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:23). The history of Christianity in Ghana, described in Chapter 2, gives more insight into the significance of the Church and its contribution to the Ghanaian society. As such the Church of Pentecost as an indigenous African church denomination provided me an ideal opportunity to explore the ministry of the Church with a specific focus on their approach to children's ministry.

Further motivation for this study comes from the challenges the African church faces concerning the social realities affecting children (in 1.2.2), a need for theological reflection on children in the church context and in this study a Ghanaian reflection (in 1.2.3), and the need to understand current trends in the way the church in Africa approaches children's ministry (in 1.2.4).

1.2.2 Social challenges children face in Africa that need response from the church

Globally there were significant developments over the last 10 to 15 years within the field of ministry where the focus is on children. At the same time there were

⁷In the study I will refer to the Church of Pentecost in Ghana as the Church of Pentecost or the Church with a capital C unless the structure of the sentence would require the addition of the word Ghana. The omission of the word Ghana is for practical reasons and a shorter way of writing.

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also growing efforts worldwide to address child issues like child labour, child soldiers, child trafficking, street children, and orphans. Considering the place and role of the church in all of these efforts challenged and motivated me to contribute by undertaking research in the field of children's ministry. Both the secular world⁸ and faith communities contributed more seriously to global efforts concerning children like those from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on child protection in general, and Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) and Faith Based Organisations (FBO's) on child care. These efforts from the various role players show particular concern for children's health, safety, and education. Global Organisations like Compassion International, World Vision and World Relief and other likeminded ministries, who responded to children issues on behalf of the church, might be viewed as leading organisations in the field of compassion ministries. One can view this responses on behalf of the church as also challenging the church to clarify to what extent the church takes responsibility for children and what relationship exist between such FBO'S and the church. The situation regarding the children in Africa is in particular relevant for this study, as Ghana is the focus of the study. Africa is a continent where more than half of the population is under the age of 18 years (UNICEF, 2013a:v). Such a significant representation of Africa's population would obviously warrants a more concerted effort to explore their life world from a theological perspective. It is a continent where aspects like poverty, wars, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are prominent world news in newspapers and on television. Hendriks (2004:11) points to the fact that Christianity is growing in an African continent ravaged by political turmoil,

⁸ The term secular is applied to distinguish between efforts directed to children on pure humanitarian principles and initiatives done on religious principles. It is not debated as either a right, nor a wrong approach, but serves merely to distinguish between two approaches to child issues.

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HIV/AIDS, poverty and a lack of integrity in leadership circles. Viva Network Africa (2007:1-12) presented some notable statistics at a “Child in the midst” roundtable meeting in Nairobi 26-29 March 2007 highlighting the plight of Africa’s children at risk and contributed to the motivation to focus this research on the African context. The report on the “State of the World’s Children of 2003”, (UNICEF, 2003:101) indicated that the African region represented at that stage about 325 million children under the age of 18 with 34 million orphans, 32 million children that were malnourished, more than 120 000 children participating in armed conflicts in the region, and 30 000 children engaged in prostitution in South Africa alone. Being part of that meeting, the statistics raised many questions with me, such as: How does the church respond to the plight of children? Why is there so little participation and interest shown by church leadership for meetings such like these in Nairobi?

Another contributing issue for the motivation for this study is Africa’s urbanisation which bring with it various social risks affecting children. With current predictions that 70% of all people will live in urban areas by 2050, the impact of children living in slum conditions is significantly increasing children’s exposure to things like malnutrition, lack of proper schooling and other social ills like child neglect and abuse (UNICEF, 2012a:v). The effects of urbanisation are also affecting Ghanaians and by implication also the way that the church in Ghana should respond in ministry. It is further noted that in 2012 already more than 51% of people in Ghana migrated to urban areas (UNICEF, 2012a:vi). In 2010, Ghana had nearly 11 million children under the age of 18 years with 27 000 children between the age of 0-14 living with HIV and about 160 000 orphans due to HIV/AIDS (:101; 109). Children in Africa, including Ghanaian children, are therefore considered to be a most vulnerable people group in the African context, who are touched adversely by the above mentioned issues.

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My various visits to African countries and witnessing some of the consequences of the social impact on children, convinced me that the presence and response of the church could make a difference in the lives of children. Hendriks (2004:11) is of opinion that the way that the church deals with the social and political realities in Africa will ultimately be a witness to the reality of the God we serve. It therefore calls for deeper theological reflection on how the church should do ministry that is in line with God's desire for the children of Africa. The role of religion in society is to affect social change which bring into question Christian practices in both the church and public life (Osmer, 2008:235). Moila (2002:i) refers to the importance of understanding social issues as *African realities* and contends that theological reflection on such issues is no longer an option or a matter of personal interest, but a must for African Christianity and a theological task in Africa. Exploring the ministry of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children allows for the exploration of an African church's response in ministry to African realities where specifically children are affected.

1.2.3 Lack of theological reflection on children in the church context

Cooley (2010:3) argues that whilst scholars have changed their views on women and related women-issues since the seventies very few scholars have attended to the value, status, and role of children in religious context⁹ as bearers of an emerging religious agency. This argument seems to represent general perceptions

⁹ Wikipedia contributors offers an epistemology for the concept "contextual" and explains it as to "express different propositions relative to different contexts of use" Available from: <<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contextualism>> [Accessed: 1 November 2014]. A contextual approach to theology encourages the application of theology in the diversity of different contexts (like tribal, cultural, social systems, political systems, language, times and place) where people are living and being church. Theology should address the issues and problems of such different societies in a holistic way (Hendriks, 2004:19). To be contextual also emphasises the enculturation of the church where the Christian experience of a local church is integrated into the culture of its people which can also serves as an enrichment to the church universally (:35).

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held by many child focussed agencies and individuals I have met during the last twenty one years in the field of children's ministry. A further motivation to do this study is to explore the extent of theological and academic contributions to child-related topics. My motivation can be summarised as:

- There is a perception that children are generally in many ways marginalised by theology (Grobelaar, 2012:36). This study would aim to explore more understanding and explanations for such perceptions and what is the theological reasoning behind it.
- Consulting with various African church leaders over a number of years on matters concerning children's ministry and facilitating numerous workshops with church leadership on children's ministry, has highlighted the need for more theological discussion and work on children's issues from an African perspective.
- Whilst various theological works (cf. 1.6) focusing on children have been produced over the last number of years in other parts of the world, there is still an expectation that African theologians can contribute more to children related works.
- In her *Historical Perspectives on children in the Church*, (a contribution to the 2004 Houston Consultation on Child Theology), Bunge (2004:38-45) suggests that there is a lack of commitment to children by the church. Whilst this charge is levelled at the church in general, my expectation is that exploring a prominent church in Ghana will create an opportunity to find the basis for such a charge and develop more understanding of an African ecclesiology.
- Visits to various Sunday schools and consulting children's ministry leaders in Ghana created an impression that congregations offer weak religious education programs and fail to emphasise the importance of parents in faith development. It appears that religious education programs are not only without real substance theologically speaking, but sometimes are irrelevant

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to the spiritual context and needs of children (Bunge, 2004:38-45). Exploring the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost in this study provides the opportunity to learn more about best practices in the African context and discover the theological underpinnings that support such a children's ministry.

- It is perceived that many parents in the church neglect to educate their children about moral and spiritual matters and to integrate life practices into their everyday lives that should nurture the faith of their children (Bunge, 2004:38-45). The current focus on families within movements like the Global Children's Forum¹⁰ initiated theological conversations in various countries concerning families. Africa is one of the critical regions identified to join these discussions. The Church of Pentecost could herein provide insight on how parents could be assisted to fulfil their roles within the faith community and what theology could support such approach.
- Organisations like Compassion International, World Vision and movements like the 4/14 Window¹¹ seem convinced that theologians and theological programs are critical focus areas in an attempt to address the needs of

¹⁰ The 2004 Lausanne Movement for World Evangelisation started a forum in Pattaya, Thailand which is considered the start of initiatives to research and explore the state of evangelism and discipleship of children in the world. The initiative developed further by June 2008 when global leaders in children's ministry met again and united under an initiative called: 'What can we do together that we cannot do alone to evangelise and disciple the more than 2 billion children of the world? The movement became known as "The Global Children's Forum." The Movement is represented by various major organisations like Compassion International, World Vision, Viva Network and Scripture Union and continues to develop multiple resources and advocacy initiatives focusing on children.

¹¹ 4/14 Is a Movement initiated by Luis Bush with a new missional focus: The 4/14 Window. Where the 10/40 Window represented a geographic frame, the 4/14 describes a demographic frame – a life season comprising the ten years between the ages of 4 and 14 (cf. <http://www.4to14Window.com>).

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children. One of the major challenges is to address the perception that many churches consider reflection on the moral and spiritual formation of children as beneath the dignity of the work of their theologians. It would then appear that children are not significant in the way systematic theologians think about central theological themes such as the nature of faith, God, and the task of the church (Bunge, 2004:38-45). There is a need to clarify the position of African theologians in this regard and the study could provide a constructive way to explore some of the contributions that African theologians can make to the matter.

Another notable consideration that serves as motivation for this study is to develop a better understanding about the reasons behind the diverse ways churches in Africa separate children from the main activities of the church and divide their children's ministries into self-supportive and autonomous governed units. The next motivation will explain some of the reasons why this could be important for this study.

1.2.4 Tendency to separate children's ministry from congregational ministry

In my visits to various church denominations in Africa and particularly in Ghana to churches like the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and the Church of Pentecost, I found that the trend was to separate children's ministries from the main activities of the church like the Sunday main service, weekday prayer meetings and other adult gatherings. The questions I raise in this part is why does a church make children's ministry an isolated and separate ministry of the church, and if such ministry functions on its own, what value does such a church place on its children's ministry in relation to its other ministries? Through my involvement with the training of children's workers and children's ministry leaders over many years, I have been left with the perception that whilst children's ministry is considered to function independently as a ministry such as evangelism, women's ministry and

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others, the same attention and support that is given to the other ministries is generally not afforded to the children's ministry. It is in particularly the area of leadership and support structures for the children's ministry where the children's ministry is sometimes marginalised. The reasons why there are separate departments created for children's ministry seems to relate to historical developments in the field of children's ministry and which are also supported by a particular theology. In order to develop a better understanding of some of the reasoning behind an African church's approach to separate children's ministry it could be valuable to broadly mention some significant developments starting at the early church.

Christian education in Africa goes back to the very first century where the early church fathers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Origen, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria played leading roles (Coetsee & Grobbelaar, 2013:806). In the latter years Sunday School became tool for evangelism and faith formation and henceforth an integral part of church planting strategies in Africa from the earliest years (:806). With the secularisation of education in Africa Sunday School became the primary place where the church actively meets children (:806). Sunday school became a key methodology for training adults and youth [children] (:806). It is considered one of the oldest forms of children's ministry in Africa but in many instances, this absolute necessity seems to pose challenges to the church (:806). The shortage of proper teaching material, a lack of an adequate body of qualified children's workers, and the almost constant want of funds and resources are mostly the problems that have plagued proper ministering to children over many years. It also raises a question concerning how children should become more integrated into church life. These challenges may well be the symptoms of a problem related to the way children are perceived and accepted (and welcomed) in the church (:808). Concerning the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost it would be valuable for this study to find out how their children's ministry functions

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and what influenced their choice for that particular model. The following three perspectives posited by Gangel (1985:88), a former Chairman and Professor of Christian Education at Dallas Theological Seminary, seems to capture some of the general reasoning for separating children in the church's ministry which seems to be still valid today.

The **first** perspective posited by Gangel (1985:88) supports the tendency to separate children from adults when it comes to Christian education. In this regard Gangel (:88) pleads for a focus on adult education which he see different than Sunday School. He (:88) subsequently calls the Sunday School the largest educational agency of church for children but also states that it should not be equated with church education which is more focused on adults. **The second** perspective in support of a separate ministry approach is the encouragement for a Children's Church which runs parallel with the main Sunday Service. This approach is considered as a positive learning experience for children and a valid part of the total church education program (Gangel, 1985:98). A **third** perception for separating children from regular church services is stated by Gangel (:98) as "[i]t is simply a fact of life that parents are disturbed by young children in the regular church services- not only the parents but also other persons around them." This statement probably sums up the way many adults feels about the presence of children in the church. This way of reasoning seems to influence the decision by churches to separate children from adults in church services. Similar reasoning was found in most of the churches I visited in Africa, including the Church of Pentecost in Ghana, and has an adverse effect on the way children are treated in the church. In order to bring more clarity on this matter and assist the Church to understand the implications of this reasoning, this study could provide necessary insight to advance more concerted effort to address the challenges concerning children's ministry. Herein the Church of Pentecost could be an ideal case study to provide reflections from an African perspective.

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1.2.5 Problem statement

Visiting different church denominations in different countries referred to in 1.2.1 and asking questions about the form and function of churches and their children's ministries, led me to believe that the way a church structures its children's ministry could be indicative of such a church's broader understanding of what church is about. It is the deeper exploration of an understanding of the church's approach to children's ministry that this study wishes to pursue. Whilst a focus on children in most of the ministries of the church may be interpreted as a positive sign that indicates the church's concern with children, there is also according to Bunge (2001:7), the challenge to revisit the ministry approach to children from a theological perspective. Focusing on the ministry approach of the Church of Pentecost raises the question of what is to be understood about the mandate and calling of the church concerning children. Samuel (2012:88) argues a fundamental issue concerning the church by referring to a tension which is sometimes created between '*basileia*' and '*ecclesia*' which leads to a weaker understanding of the church in God's plans of salvation, in the Kingdom of God, and the New Creation. Samuel (:88) posits three questions:

- What is the church?;
- What is the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God?; and
- What is the place of the child in the church?

It is in particular the questions on the essence of church and the place of children in the church that needs to be answered for the sake of church and the children. These questions are further supported by issues raised in 1.1 and 1.2 concerning church and children that contributed to the development of the research problem in this study. The significant issues are summarised as:

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- The apparent absence of clear theological viewpoints of the church on children and their inclusion in church life calls for a fresh interpretation of the concept *church* and the church's response to children in and outside the church;
- The perceived low level of responses from the church to social matters concerning children points to a possible lack of theological conviction. The church is therefore in need of a well-defined theological position on the response to social issues affecting children in Africa;
- Charges levelled by Bunge (2004) against the church concerning a perceived general lack of response by the church to children matters, need to be explored from a theological perspective. In the context of this study an African perspective could also address the suggested gap for well-researched theological underpinnings for children's ministry practices in the African church;
- A proposed tension between differentiation (separation) and integration (intergenerational approaches) to children's ministry needs more focussed attention from theologians so as to clarify and inform the ministry practices of the church; and
- There is a critical shortage of theological reflection and works by African theologians that needs to be addressed.

The above summary suggests that the church needs children's ministry strategies that include children as integral part of church life. Such ministry strategies need to be supported by well-researched theological and academic underpinnings for a Christian theological approach to children in the ministry which might also be applicable for the Church of Pentecost.

In order to explore this problem deeper the research question with related sub-questions for the research is postulated in 1.3.

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1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question is thus: What was the ministry strategy of the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost focusing on children between 1970 and 2010?¹²

The exploration of the above research question is further supported by the following sub-questions:

- 1.3.1 What significant ministry elements related to children can be discovered in the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost that contributed in shaping the ministry practices of the Church?
- 1.3.2 What events, significant decisions and outside influences contributed to the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focused on children?
- 1.3.3 What biblical and theological underpinnings (Old Testament and New Testament) could provide insight on how children could be an integral part of church life that could serve as suggestions for the Church of Pentecost?
- 1.3.4 How do adults of today remember their experiences of church as children in the Church of Pentecost?
- 1.3.5 In which way did the Church of Pentecost include children as part of the faith community?

¹² This period-demarcation is important for the study because preliminary indications are that over the last forty years the churches in Ghana like the Presbyterians, Baptist, Methodist and Pentecostals had already begun to focus on a ministry for children which could have influenced the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. The role players in those initiatives figure prominently in this study (for whose valuable input I am gratefully indebted).

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1.3.6 What theological framework for a children's ministry could support or suggest a best practice for the Church of Pentecost's approach to children?

According to above formulated research question and sub-questions, the purpose and objectives of the research are formulated in the next section.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the research is: To explore the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana, Accra regards their focus on children from 1970 to 2010.

1.4.1 Objectives of the research

The following objectives are set for the research process:

- 1.4.1.1 To **provide** an historical overview on the Church of Pentecost in chapter 2.
- 1.4.1.2 To **identify** possible contributing factors that influenced the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost with the focus on children in chapter 2.
- 1.4.1.3 To **identify** aspects of the ministry practices of the early church in the New Testament and its relationship with the Old Testament so as to **develop** a biblical perspective for defining the church as a welcoming and accommodating environment for children that can inform the ministry approach of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children in chapters 3 and 6.
- 1.4.1.4 To explore if/how adult Church members of today remember their experiences as children in the Church of Pentecost in chapter 5.
- 1.4.1.5 To **explore** where, when and how did the Church of Pentecost includes children as part of the faith community in chapters 2 and 5.

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1.4.1.6 To **develop** a framework for a best practice in children's ministry whereby the Church of Pentecost can measure their own ministry approach in chapter 6.

The research question with related sub-questions is further explored using the following chosen research design.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The nature of the research question is very important to consider, as it informs a specific research design that is enhanced with specific methods or techniques to gather information (Hendriks, 2004:228). The ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost's focus on children is explored from a qualitative perspective. The research design includes a broad description of the Practical Theological methodology, the literature review approach and empirical methodology used in the study.

1.5.1 Practical Theological methodology

The research question that deals with the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children is herein approached from a Practical Theology perspective. This study will utilise Practical Theology research methodologies to develop an understanding of the research problem and explore Biblical principles that are applicable to the case study under investigation (Breed, 2013:210). Practical Theology would in this study be defined as a continuing hermeneutical concern discerning how the Word should be proclaimed in word and deed in the world (Hendriks, 2004:19). It presupposes a theology which is herein considered as an intellectual participation and engagement in the Word and real life. In its analytical endeavour Practical Theology tries to reconstruct the praxis of the church and in its formative attempt it tries to give way to the experiences of people in line with the freedom that the gospel brings (de Gruyter, 2011:153). The ideal

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for this church orientated study is to bring the results of its analysis into a hermeneutically sensitive dialogue with Scripture and the contexts that affect the local faith communities¹³ (Hendriks, 2004:13). Currently there are different approaches to the field of Practical Theology. Pieterse (2013:720-721) posits that there are among others, empirical, hermeneutical, liberation-theological and narrative approaches to Practical Theology. Müller¹⁴ (2013a:7), postulates a postfoundationalist approach to Practical Theology where transversal rationality¹⁵ provides a tangent point between Practical Theology, Social Science and the field of Humanities. This postfoundationalist approach focus me to listen to real life stories of people in real situations (Müller, 2013a:7). This approach can also be considered as a multifaceted narrative with multiple meanings as it employs aspects of drawings and stories to discover meaning in peoples' experiences of church (Müller, 2013b:5). This study will draw on this approach as part of my

¹³ References to faith communities in this study will generally carries the meaning as referring to a body of believers (God's people) in a particular place and context. It could also refer to a local congregation as a community should the intention of the sentence require such interpretation.

¹⁴ Müller is a Practical Theologian from the University of Pretoria. He approach the field of Practical Theology from a narrative perspective. He explains his approach to Practical Theology in a lecture: *Practical Theology: A story of doubt and imagination*. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F67e8RtHZPI>>[Accessed: 1 November 2014]. More articles by Müller are available on: <<http://up-za.academia.edu/JulianMuller>>

¹⁵ Transversal rationality is explained as a concept that was formulated by scholars such as Schrag (1992) and Van Huyssteen (2006:19). It is an attempt to envision a responsible and workable, tangent point between the various disciplines. In the words of Van Huyssteen (:19): "In this multidisciplinary use of the concept of transversality there emerge distinct characteristics or features: the dynamics of consciousness, the interweaving of many voices, the interplay of social practices are all expressed in a *metaphor* that points to a sense of transition, lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting, and conveying without becoming identical." Van Huyssteen (2007:421) states that "transversal reasoning" isn't about arbitrarily opening or closing yourself up to other viewpoints, but rather to discover an epistemic space where all kinds of interdisciplinary critical evaluation is possible, which includes critical self-evaluation and "optimal understanding". However, Van Huyssteen (2007:421) is of the opinion that the interdisciplinary conversation has natural limitations. "In the transversal, interdisciplinary moment rich resources could be shared, but after this moment, a post-foundational approach points back to the contextual."

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Practical Theology methodology. Integrating the postfoundationalist approach to Practical Theology with Osmer's (2008:4) four questions will in this study contribute to the descriptive-empirical and interpretive tasks in the following ways:

- It takes into account the dynamics of consciousness. Osmer (2008:37) also describes it as the relationship between a spirituality of presence and the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation along the lines of a continuum. In this study it is to ensure that a deeper level of understanding (contextual picture) is explored of what is really going on the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost.
- It interweaves various voices from literature, theologians representing various speciality fields, specific academics on relevant topics needed for the study and opinions of selected church members from the Church of Pentecost on their experiences in the children's ministry.
- It utilises root metaphors or models as to draw on a familiar area of life (social practices) to understand an unfamiliar area (Osmer, 2008:116).
- Whilst theological interpretation takes place in all sub-disciplines of practical theology it also acknowledges the common structure of practical theological interpretation in both the academy and ministry. As such it could help me and other researchers to recognise the interconnectedness of ministry (Osmer, 2008:12).

The interpretation of the praxis of the Church of Pentecost will take into consideration multiple components like Scripture, reality and the reality of the given praxis of the Church of Pentecost (Pieterse, 2013:721).

My choice is furthermore to approach this study hermeneutically from a reformed theological perspective (Pieterse, 2013:719). This choice presuppose my perspectives on God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), God's new covenant people (the church) and the threefold office of Christ when applied to the church and

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church life. Osmer (2008:27) posits that the reformed tradition's focus on the threefold office of Christ portrays the interrelatedness of the Old and New Testaments. This proposed interrelatedness is herein interpreted further to suggest that God's covenant people in the Old Testament lived in relationship with God and others which reflect similarities to the relationship between God and the church in the New Testament. This perspective will serve the study when theological reflection is done on possible ways that the church [God's people] function as a continuation of the way that God's people of the Old Testament functioned within faith communities.

Pieterse (2013:734) points to the critical importance for researchers to state their metatheoretical assumptions when approaching a research project. In this regard Osmer (2008:58) suggests that a metatheoretical perspective is composed of the assumptions about reality, knowledge, and science. The following assumptions will guide this study:

- The point of departure in this study is in Scripture as the only source of knowledge in the way God is revealed in Scripture (Pieterse, 2013:722). Exploring a biblical understanding of the church in chapter 3 relies on the interpretation of Scripture. Exploring Scripture in this study calls for faith-based focus on God who is revealed in Scripture as a fountain of sending love through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the church (Hendriks, 2004:21).
- God's election of Israel is viewed as an act of divine grace which brought Israel into being as a covenant community (Osmer, 2008:27). New possibilities opened up when Christ came and resulted in the election of a new covenant people in the New Testament. These new covenant people (church) are brought together in the concept of the threefold office of Christ as priest, king and prophet (Osmer, 2008:28).

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- The church has a supernatural element which acknowledge the mysterious way the triune God dwells in the church and sustains it by grace (Hendriks, 2004:21). Belief is the core assumption in the approach to doing theology (:21). Exploring the church from a theological and biblical perspective assumes that there is a mystery involved in the way God interacted with people in the Old Testament and the way God is present and at work in the church in the New Testament. The church are therefore an expression of this mystery in the way it exists and functions.
- Children are created beings, born fully human with a destiny to be people who are, according to Genesis 1:26-28, “God’s image” and “likeness” (Hendriks, 2004:22). Referring to children in the study will assume a similar theological anthropology.
- Learning was an integral part of society and children and youth were not separately dealt with in the Old Testament (Breed, 2013:201).
- Children and youth ministry are a service (*diakonia*) of the church and a significant part of the body of Christ which validates research on this segment of a congregation (Breed, 2013:197).

Such assumptions help researchers according to Osmer (2008:58) to reckon with background assumptions that influence the way research is carried out and assists researchers to become more reflexive about their research. He (:4-11) proposes four tasks of Practical Theological interpretation which will guide this study further. A critical understanding that will guide this study is that the four tasks is not considered as linear steps in the process of interpretation. Osmer (2008:11) proposes that practical theological interpretation is more like a spiral than a circle. The process will constantly circles back to tasks that have already been explored (:11). In this study I chose to include the normative interpretation directly after the literature study for the following reasons:

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- The literature study would have already explored important information concerning episodes, situations and context concerning the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children which needed a theological perspective as to guide my theological interpretation further.
- The empirical process in chapter 4 is expected to raise issues supporting the findings of the literature study where the developed theological perspectives could already be valuable as to assist in the further interpretation process.

A priestly listening process that is part of the descriptive-empirical task of Practical Theology will be followed to gather information relevant to this study (Osmer, 2008:4;33). In this particular process I endeavour to answer the first question, namely what was/is going on in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Accra? I will utilise the following research sub-questions: What significant ministry elements related to children can be discovered in the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost that contributed in shaping the ministry practices of the Church?; What events, significant decisions and outside influences contributed to the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focused on children?; How do adults of today remember their experiences of church as children in the Church of Pentecost?; and In which way and why did the Church of Pentecost include children as part of the faith community? Chapters 1, 2 and 5 will contribute to the gathering of information needed in the study to discern what the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost entails.

The next phase in the research process is considered a second task of Practical Theology and attempts to answer the question: Why is it going on? This part of the study is concerned with the interpretive task of Practical Theology (2008:4). In this regard, the understanding of the history and culture of the Church of Pentecost (with special emphasis on the chosen period of forty years,) will provide important insight into the reasons for the choice of ministry practices by the Church and

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explain where the children fit in as described in chapter 2. This second task of Practical Theology utilises also an empirical research process described in chapter 4 to listen to Church members' understanding about their experiences of the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost. It seeks to understand and explain what is behind the interpretations of the empirical findings in chapter 5 and reckons with aspects like the culture of the Church of Pentecost and the ways Church members interpret their everyday church life (Osmer, 2008:89).

The third task of practical theological interpretation is a normative task in a spirituality of prophetic discernment that asks the question: What ought to be going on (Osmer, 2008:8;135) in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost. In chapter 3, ecclesiological underpinnings are explored taking into account both Old Testament and New Testament perspectives. Answers discovered from the first two questions namely: what is going on and why it is going on, will then be brought into conversation with what could be discovered from the Biblical exploration on what ought to be going on. Biblical insights about the church gleaned from this process will then serve as interpretative guide for the findings about the ministry of the Church of Pentecost in chapter 6. In this normative task the following research sub-question is considered: What biblical and theological underpinnings could be discovered in the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) concerning the church as a particular faith community that could provide insight on how children could be an integral part of church life that could serve as suggestions for the Church of Pentecost?

The research sub-question related to chapter 6 asks: What theological framework for children's ministry could support or suggest a best practice for the Church of Pentecost's approach to children? Chapter 6 contributes therefore to the pragmatic task of Practical Theology by providing elements for strategies of action answering the question: How might we respond (Osmer, 2008:4). In this regard

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the Biblical reflections discovered from Chapter 3 will be interpreted in relation with what were discovered in the first two questions (chapters 2 and 5) and a children's ministry practice will be proposed in Chapter 6 as part of the pragmatic task of Practical Theology (:4). As such Chapter 6 will make recommendations concerning a children's ministry strategy for the Church of Pentecost that might also be applicable to the children's ministry in Ghana (and possibly in some other African context). The information needed from abovementioned domains of enquiry would be best explored through a qualitative approach to the field of enquiry. Next, the literature review as part of the data gathering process will be discussed.

1.5.2 Literature review

This study is basic research. The literature review constitutes one of the critical sources of information for the study. The research question on the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost in Accra, Ghana, places the research within an African context. The research relies therefore on contributions from African academics and theologians as much as possible. The choice is to use mainly academic works of African origin in the research and it will range from academic works to popular resources (works that could be considered as non-academic) but is considered a source of important information necessary for the research.

Another source of information comes from the archives of the Church of Pentecost. The written and recorded data produced by the Church of Pentecost is considered valuable information for this study on aspects of church and congregational life (Hendriks, 2004:232). The archival material contains important information on the history of the Church of Pentecost. Reports, policies and other communications that could provide insight on ministry strategies of the Church and in particular, where children were involved are included. The information sourced from the literature review and archive documents assisted in answering the

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Practical Theological questions of what is going on and why is it going on from a qualitative perspective (Osmer, 2008:4).

In the next section the empirical methodology for this research is discussed.

1.5.3 Empirical methodology

The study is approach within the qualitative paradigm. The unit of analysis represents a few sources. Welman, Kruger & Mitchel (2005:57) suggest that a sampling frame should firstly be compiled in order to obtain clarity about the population. A sampling frame will consist of a list of the units of analysis used in research. The sampling frame for this study consists of members of the Church of Pentecost, literature from mainly indigenous writers and archive documents of the Church of Pentecost from which specific conclusions can be reached. The approach to sampling in this research may be described as a non-probability sampling procedure as the probability of inclusion of some members of the population of the Church of Pentecost could not be specified. The population encompasses the total collection of all units of analysis that the researcher wishes to make specific conclusions (Welman *et al.* 2005:52). The population for this study will include specific church members, specific literature, and specific information sourced from the church archive.

The first source of literature comes from academic and other works by mainly African writers on topics that could contribute and explain the history, ministry, and children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost. This unit of analysis is further supported by the archive documents of the Church of Pentecost that contributed towards information on specific incidents, decisions, relevant statistics, and declarations that influenced the ministry strategy of the Church with the focus on children.

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The second source of data is both written response to ten open-ended questions and focus group responses from the same members of the Church of Pentecost in Greater Accra Region (GAR) who have been members of the Church for more than forty years and who are selected through a purposive process. Notes made during focus group discussions are considered as analytical notes and the information received is interpreted in line with the purpose of the group discussions (Welman *et al.* 2005:196). The research strategy is set out more comprehensively in chapter 4.

Data captured in the responses to the ten open-ended questions is analysed according to the **theme identification method** (Welman *et al.* 2005:211). Data recorded in the form of written answers, notes and reflections from memory is coded and interpreted in line with the data analysis process described in 5.2. Data analysis and interpretation was sent to an analyst referred to in 5.2. The data analysis report is compiled in 5.3. Data interpretation and display is done in 5.4.

The significance and relevance of the study for the field of Practical Theology will be explained in 1.6.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, CHILD THEOLOGY AND THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

This study becomes relevant for the field of Practical Theology when questions posited by Bass and Dykstra (2008:6) are considered asking: “How might practical theologians provide clear, incisive and comprehensive portraits of the shape of Christian life in our time.” The study also relates to a further practical theological question on how the church can best foster a life that is truly life-giving in and for the sake of the world we live in (Bass and Dykstra, 2008:3). This study therefore endeavours to create a portrait of Christian life where the church and the children

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are part of such Christian life. It also provides an opportunity to explore a strategy for a children's ministry from a theological perspective and subsequently develop a possible model of best practice for a ministry. Exploring the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children through Osmer's (2008:4) four tasks for practical theological interpretation, could become a way to do research in the African church and in particular encourage more research even on denominational and congregational level. Another important aspect that has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the field of Practical Theology in this study is the inclusion of African perspectives on African hermeneutics in exploring the church and children's ministry.

A perceived shortage on contributions made by indigenous Africans¹⁶ referred to in 1.2, creates an opportunity for this study to open up more intentional theological reflection within the field of Practical Theology concerning children issues and encourage further research by Africans. The study could also strengthen arguments concerning children and church in works like *After Our Likeness: the Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Volf, 1998); *Be converted and Become as little children: Friedrich Schleiermacher on Religious Significance of Childhood* (DeVries, 2001); *A Church Where Children Are Welcome: A New Paradigm for Children's Ministry in Africa* (Coetsee & Grobbelaar, 2013) and *The local church as a village* (Hagood, 2008). These works represents a growing interest by theologians in topics relating to children and church. Religious and theological interest by African theologians on the African church, reflected in Academic Journals like *Studies of Religion in Africa* which produced works like *Producing*

¹⁶ The reference to "indigenous Africans" is based on my perspectives that a number of Africans were for many years removed from their context or been so much influenced by Western paradigms that it become difficult to read their works as representing indigenous African thought.

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African Futures and Christianity and African Culture provides opportunities to encourage more concerted efforts to include a focus on children (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:281-282). The launching of a new electronic Journal in 2010, the *Journal of Childhood and Religion*, provides African theologians the opportunity to contribute to an interdisciplinary forum for publication of research papers on children and childhood. In this regard the study have the potential to generate a number of topics concerning church, children and childhood which could be explored further through research and result in the publication of articles by African theologians on this forum.

The study could furthermore contribute to current theological discourse on children issues in forums like Bible schools and seminaries in Africa, the Lausanne Movement, 4/14 Window Movement, and Child Theology Movement. The results of this study can also strengthen current continental efforts of fellowships like the Africa Evangelical Association (AEA) and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) to open up more intentional theological discussions on children and increase awareness in the African church for children. I believe therefore, that the focus on an African Church will contribute to a necessary theological and academic discussion in our time and will bring important foci like church, mission, and children into a deeper level of discussion on the part of practitioners and academics. The focus on a children's ministry in this study could furthermore contribute to a scientific study of God's word, the place and value of children in the faith community and the reality of the practices of the church (Breed, 2013:210). It explores Biblical principles concerning church and children and attempts to develop and apply a ministry model that could serve children with *diakonia* (:210). It will further contribute to the development of underpinnings for a children's ministry where an atmosphere and attitude can be created in which children can find identity and belonging in the church (Breed, 2013:204).

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To make allowance for a manageable research process it is necessary to clarify my demarcation and acknowledge the possible limitations of the study.

1.7 DEMARCATION

The research question by implication suggests a geographical demarcation of Ghana and in particular to focus on the Church of Pentecost. Due to the challenge of the proportions of the Church, it would not be possible to include the whole of the Church of Pentecost in the research. Eighteen local congregations [assemblies] out of a possible 1019 congregations in Greater Accra Region were selected for the research process. The research is demarcated between the period 1970 and 2010. The study is further demarcated through the specific focus on the Church of Pentecost's children's ministry.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

Due to certain limitations, it has to be recognised that a universal interpretation and application of findings for the wider church community could be challenged on various grounds. Some of the factors that could result in limitations were identified and addressed proactively. Other non-foreseeable challenges could at best only be anticipated and dealt with as it became necessary. Some of the limitations will be considered as concerns or challenges which is a given reality and on the other hand there are challenges that can be classified as things that can be changed or influenced (Covey, 1989:119-129).

The following factors and probable limitations may influence the application of the findings of the research:

- The language factor: despite the fact that Ghana has a rich English history and English is a main communication medium in public, the street vernacular, "Twi", could pose a possible communication barrier. It could hinder proper understanding of what a participant wishes to convey during

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focus group meetings. This challenge was pro-actively anticipated and influenced by the acquisition of the services of able-bodied translators/interpreters for the research process and that decisively circumvented the problem. My personal exposure to Africa and ability to contextualise understandings also assisted me to be more sensitive to deal with this challenge to a great extent.

- The cost of travelling to, from and in West Africa is high. It could have limited my exposure to the research field but was largely overcome through the implementation of Petra Institute's ministry strategy that resulted in combined visits with an agenda for research and also achieving Petra's ministry goals.
- One of the more important factors that could limit the results of the research is the fact that very little contextual theological works regards children exist that come from African academics and from a truly African perspective. This is especially true about works on Africa's children and children's ministry. Furthermore, many of the prominent African writers were either raised in the First world (USA, Asia or Europe) or they spent many years away from the African continent. This, combined with their academic exposure in a non-African environment, could influence their perspectives on Africa and their writing about Africa. I therefore selectively sourced specific writers when I needed an African perspective on a matter.
- My cultural and ethnic background as a white South African could possibly pose some challenges like biasedness during the research. The challenges appeared to be relevant for me as well as for the Church under investigation. From my side there was the danger to be subjective in my interpretations. The Church of Pentecost is an African Church that developed their perceptions about Westerners over the years. However, by applying the relational skills that I gained over the last eighteen years in

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Africa assisted me to be culture-sensitive and humble in my approach and relationship with participants.

- Another critical consideration to bear in mind in this study is the possibility of theological bias that may influence interpretation of Scripture. As such, possible bias has to do with my particular background and faith tradition. Having grown up in a reformed and evangelical environment could result in a presupposition film over the lens that I read and interpret the Bible with. Friedl and Friedl (2002: 469) alert one to bear in mind that exegete and text belong to different cultures and times (cf. also Zuck, 1991:76-142) who points out the gaps that divide Western exegetes and Scripture). The exegete has to know and realise that it is inevitable that he/she has a *pre-understanding* and to admit to being corrected by the text and context.

The investigation into the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children necessitates the consideration of important concepts used in the thesis.

1.9 IMPORTANT CORE CONCEPTS IN THE STUDY

Various important concepts to be used in this study need explanation. A concept is a word or set of words that expresses a general idea concerning the nature of something or the relations between things, often providing a category for the classification of phenomena (Hogan, 2006:75). Concepts, including scientific concepts, are then mental constructs reflecting a certain point of view and focusing upon certain aspects of the phenomena while ignoring others. I associate with the conceptualist approach in sociology as described by Hogan (2006:75), as it rejects rigid operational processes and stresses the importance in theory and research of concepts that provide reasonable, general explanations. It is maintained that only through use of such concepts that comparison – not only cross-cultural comparison, but comparison within the same culture from one study to another – and generalisation are possible (:75).

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The following core concepts used in the study are explained:

1.9.1 Ministry strategy

Ministry strategy in this study would be understood as a specific plan of action done in a specific way. According to Online Oxford dictionaries.com¹⁷ (2011) *ministry strategy* could be interpreted as a plan of action designed to achieve long-term or overall aim for ministry actions. In this study, I consider reflections of different approaches to ministry and specific activities involving children as part of a ministry strategy. I therefore use the term to indicate an intentional plan of ministry based on a basis theory informing the ministry practice. The ministry practice in turn would inform the development of basis theory. The formulation of a ministry strategy also provides means whereby the plans of action related to the strategy could be managed, monitored and evaluated.

1.9.2 'African'

Seeing that the study focus is on a subject in the African context, the term African has to be elucidated in/for the context of the study as the designation/term "African" is not understood similarly by everybody. Additionally, it is not to be approached simplistically as African debates on this issue point to the complexity of finding a unified definition. Makgoba, Shope and Mazawai (1999:xii) consider "The African Renaissance" discussions as an opportunity for Africans to define themselves according their own realities and the realities of their world around them. Makgoba *et al.* (:ix) furthermore suggests that a definition of the word/concept *African* is based on three elements: history, culture and

¹⁷ [Online]. Available from: <http://oxforddictionaries.com> [accessed 24 May 2011].

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consciousness. Oden (2007:62) posits that African should not be defined from a geographical perspective alone but should include people who by spirit and temperament live life in Africa not as temporary day-trippers but born and bred in Africa, indigenised in families living through generations of African life.

It may be ventured that Christians from the Developed World view African Christianity from ethnic perspectives (Malherbe, 2004:5; 6). Malherbe (:6) proposes that geography, skin colour, suffering and culture could be the key issues in interpreting African identity and stresses that such an understanding holds many complexities. My choice is to understand the word African more simplistic as speaking about people born in and living in the continent of Africa where each ethnic group has their own uniqueness, history and culture that could distinguish them as a particular people/group.

1.9.3 African Traditional Religions (ATR)

Olademo (2008:4-5) in *Theology of African Traditional Religion*, explains the historic background and current perspectives on the understanding of Traditional Religions in Africa. He (:4) offers the following explanations of how African Traditional Religions could be interpreted: “African Traditional Religion is considered as the indigenous religion of the Africans which was handed over from one generation to another by word of mouth until recent attempts at documentation.” The title “*African Traditional Religion*” presents an assumed unitary portrait of the religions of the African. Though it is true that many features of religion and its practice are similar across Africa, it would however be erroneous to assume that all African religion(s) is the same (:4). It is suggested then that the use of the plural form of African Traditional Religions will reflect the plurality within the continent’s religious landscape. It is furthermore suggested that the emphasis on “traditional” indicates a process of contextualisation needed to be seen as a truly African religion. Whilst African Traditional Religions are based on oral

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tradition and transmission thereof, recently there were attempts to document discussions (:4).

The contents of African Traditional Religions include:

- **Belief in God.** The belief in a Supreme Being who is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent, is prevalent in the African society. In many African societies, the attributes of the Supreme Being are represented in the names by which they call God. In addition, some African societies have no specific gender for the Supreme Being whereas in others God is conceived as a male, or female or genderless (Olademo, 2008:4). Africans have had the knowledge of the Supreme Being and had spiritual interaction with God before their contact with any other culture (:4). This is why the Akan people of Ghana would say that no one shows the Supreme Being to a child (Asirifi-Danquah¹⁸, 2008:4). Asirifi-Danquah (:1) posits a Ghanaian view of God which seems to support Olademo's perspectives. He (:1) contends that Ghanaians, irrespective of tribe or religion, believe in the existence of one Supreme Being. Names that describe God refer to Great, Bright and Shining, Unique, Unsurpassable or Powerful (:2). Asirifi-Danquah (:6) concludes that Ghanaian religious thought is essentially theocentric and theistic.

- **Belief in the Divinities.** The divinities are the deities that have delegated authority from God. They depend on God for their powers and act as intermediaries between God and the people. There are different classes of divinities and they are in charge of different portfolios for example, thunder, fertility,

¹⁸ Asirifi–Danquah is a respected journalist who held several positions within Ghana's news agencies, government and church life. He is a devoted Christian and as a Christian seems to find a notable relationship between what he also see as a positive Christian reflection in society and the positive influences of Ghanaian cultural influences He linked Ghanaian cultural practices with Christian influences in society.

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water, and economics (Asirifi-Danquah, 2008:4). The existence of minor gods in Africa seems to be a fact and range from great tribal gods to little private deities (:8).

- **Belief in the Ancestors.** The ancestors are the departed members of African families, but who are regarded as still integral members of the family. They are held as always present and interested in the concerns of all the members of the family (Olademo, 2008:5). In the traditional African religion, the ancestors are venerated but they are not worshiped (:5). They may influence happenings in the lives of individuals or the family or even in the community. The African's desire to be in the good books of the Ancestors is to ensure harmony between them and the unseen powers. Ancestors are both female and male and death at old age is a compelling prerequisite to be an Ancestor (Asirifi-Danquah, 2008:4-5). It is for this reason that when Ghanaians are offering libations and the names of deceased baby boys or girls are not mentioned (:63).

- **Belief in Spirits.** There are different classes of spirits. Some reside in natural phenomena like rivers, rocks, and grooves whereas others are known to manifest at different occasions as the need may be (Olademo, 2008:4). The important thing to note is that these spirits operate as agents with divine delegated authority to assist humans at different times. In African Traditional Religion, spirits may be appeased if aggrieved to enforce peace and harmony (Asirifi-Danquah, 2008:5).

- **Belief in magic/medicine.** Medicine transcends healing and encompasses wellness and wholeness. It may include the use of herbs, water, or oil to effect healing (Olademo, 2008:5). However, it could also include offerings, prayers, and sacrifices to divine super-sensible powers. The state of the mind is closely related to the health of the body in African medicine, both the psychological and the physical are intertwined (:5). Magic is the deliberate appeal to metaphysical forces in the universe towards a chosen agenda. This often involves recitations of specialized formula by specialist in African mysticism (Asirifi-Danquah, 2008:5).

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Asifiri-Danquah (:81-87) brings two more perspectives into the discussion namely witchcraft involving a living human who possesses witchcraft skills and magic as a technique that is supposed to achieve its purpose by the use of medicines.

In his retrospective work on Ghana's cultural heritage Asirifi-Danquah (2008) emphasises the importance of acknowledging and including aspects like cultural heritage and traditions when African identity and African Christianity are discussed.

1.9.4 Culture

Recognition of and the cognisance of culture is highly important in research of any community. Culture is described as a society's or group's total way of life, including customs, traditions, beliefs, values, language, and physical products – all learned behaviour passed on from parents to children (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2006:15). In an African setting, the understanding of that culture is imperative for one's interpretations of rituals and traditions. Culture is the sum of behaviour acquired from humans' dealings with their environment and transmitted to later generations through art and symbols (Asante, 2007:2). Asante (:2) proposes further that the aim is to define a group's identity and aspirations, to serve as the basis of social behaviour, and a factor that determines what is to be accepted or rejected in a given situation. In the present study, the complexity of culture and tradition is paramount and in interpreting information during the research process had to be constantly borne in mind.

Africans have a very rich culture that has worldwide acknowledgement. This culture reflects in their language, songs, fashion, cuisine, and ethics. African cultures exhibit similarities and differences from one African society to the other. However, certain features are true of African cultures in any African society, to mention a few for example there are emphases on procreation, respect for aged

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people, male/female dichotomy and being your brother's keeper. African cultures and African Traditional Religions have been described as two sides of the same coin due to the close affinity of the two. African Traditional Religions are deeply ingrained and embedded in African cultures and vice versa (Olademo, 2008:4). This is explainable in the light of the pervasive influence of religion in the African worldview. Everything apparently finds explanation and validation in religion in Africa.

1.9.5 African children

Children, Ghanaian children to be exact, are a central concept in the research and therefore needed clarification in the beginning of this study. A child is considered a human being in the early stages of its life-course, biologically, psychologically and socially (James & James, 2012:375-421). It is suggested that in order to develop some understanding of the concept "child" the importance of social and cultural contexts and practices has to be acknowledged in addition to age and development criteria (:375-421). This would also be true for Africa and I would concur with Malherbe (2004a:6) that it could be virtually impossible to accurately profile an African child in terms of cultural characteristics and even early developmental stages of life-course. In this regard Grobbelaar (2008:194) posits that whilst there are various references to children in the Bible, childhood is not associated with children's development phases. Therefore, it would be difficult to develop a definition of a child from a Biblical perspective based on developmental characteristics. It appears that children are normally defined by adults on grounds of perceptions like the status of the child, initiation practices, society's views and attitudes towards children and prevailing cultural heritage's about children. Although Africa is one continent, it is a perplexing mosaic of different cultures with different value systems and views of children (Grobbelaar, 2012:24). This leads to a plethora of interpretations of the concept "child". There is however also an African worldview on children that states that a child should also be defined in

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terms of her or his relationship with others (Grobelaar, 2012:40-41). Whilst it seems difficult to find a uniform understanding for the concept African children, Strange (1996:1), in his work *Children in the early church* provides a useful framework to answer questions like “who is the African child we are talking about?” Whilst his enquiry focused on exploring an understanding of children in the world of the New Testament, his approach could be valuable for any researcher seeking to develop a definition for concepts similar to these. Strange (1996:1) asks two simple questions which are herein adapted to suit the foci on African children. The first question asks: “What do adults living in an African setting say about their children?” The second question asks from the child’s perspective: “What is it like to be a child in an African household?” The answers to the questions would encourage the development of a dynamic and contextual definition for an African child.

Another important aspect to consider is the child as a developing person within the African context where such child is part of a society. The two clear demarcations that our societies live by are that of children and adults. The transition through various phases of childhood until they reach adulthood also has an influence on who we define as children and at what stage of life. Lasetso (2011:28) posits that there is no uniform age that is acknowledged by all cultures as the age when a child attains adulthood. For the purpose for and in the context of this research, I then refer to children as people under the age of 14 years. I also use the word children in acknowledgement of the identity of a child as a unique creation, the importance where this child lives and under which cultural influence such a child grew up in a particular community.

1.9.6 Children’s ministry

Children’s ministry is another critical concept and in this study, its interpretation could influence understandings and conversations on the ministry strategy of the

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Church of Pentecost focusing on children in a significant way. Current theological debates and academic works seem to challenge traditional perceptions which considers children only as objects of the ministry of the church. It appears that the church generally considers children's ministry as a Sunday school activity with some ministry activities like children's clubs and camps done by children workers. Lately, there appears to be a shift from an educational approach like the traditional Sunday school system and clubs to a more intergenerational approach in ministry. An intergenerational approach seems to suggest a ministry approach where church becomes an intergenerational space where various generations join in the ministry of the church as argued by Grobbelaar in "*n Ondersoek na die bediening van laerskoolkinders in en deur die gemeente as intergenerasionele ruimte*" (cf. Grobbelaar, 2008).

Malherbe (2004c:1) for instance, defines children's ministry as an interaction with children with the aim to enjoy them and to respond in faith to the love of God, as expressed in Jesus Christ. Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2013:810) propose an even wider understanding with the inclusion of children in all of church life as part of the faith community. They (:809-811) propose a hospitable children's ministry approach that is relational, intergenerational, narrative and missional. Malherbe (2004:1) furthermore proposes a ministry that accommodates five distinct processes which entails a forming process, growing process, a nurturing process that focuses on care and protection, a socialisation process where children are placed midst relationships and a healing process for the broken and wounded children. These processes are understood as happening within the specific contexts of the home, church, community and school.

In the research, I will use the term *children's ministry* as referring to an intergenerational approach in ministry. It implies that children are considered and included in all aspects of the ministry of the church. Children's ministry is therefore

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not limited to one specific approach or ministry model. The way that the church lives out its Biblical mandate and calling in ministry with the focus on children is considered part of its ministry strategy. Such an all-inclusive ministry approach would therefore assume the inclusion of children's context and appropriate ministry processes.

1.9.6 The church

The concept of *church* could render different interpretations depending on the context when used in the text. In general the concept *church* will refer to the global church expressed as a broader faith community or the Body of Christ. From an Old Testament perspective the reference to a faith community would mean God's people as a religious community belonging to God. The presupposition is that references to a faith community from a New Testament perspective imply a Christian community. There will also be cases where there is reference to a faith community which could represent a congregation or a few congregations in a particular society expressing the church in that particular context as a local faith community or village community. Footnotes is used to clarify the intention and meaning of the concept *church* where deemed necessary in other parts of the study. When reference is made to a particular denomination or congregation the capital letter C will be used. Chapter 3 will explore the interpretation of church further.

The above core concepts provides the study with common point of departure for interpreting important concepts but will remain open for re-interpretation when required in the study. Following is a broad framework for the structure of the study.

1.10 OPERATIONLISATION OF RESEARCH

CHAPTER 1 Orientation to the research

CHAPTER 2 Historical overview of the Church of Pentecost

CHAPTER 3 A Biblical reflection on the church's ministry with children

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CHAPTER 4 Research methodology

CHAPTER 5 Data analysis results

CHAPTER 6 Conclusions and recommendations

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CHAPTER 2
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to pursue the set objectives utilising the following questions postulated in 1.3 namely:

- What significant ministry elements related to children can be discovered in the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost that contributed in shaping the ministry practices of the Church?
- What events, significant decisions and outside influences contributed in the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focused on children?
- In which way did the Church of Pentecost include children as part of the faith community?

These questions will be answered with the intention to include as much as possible indigenous writers from different spheres of ministry and secular life from Africa and in particular from Ghana. African and Ghanaian writers place the research within the African and Ghanaian context influencing important understandings when Ghanaian history and ministry perspectives are interpreted and reflected on. With this approach, I try to take notice and acknowledge the important contributions made by Ghanaian scholars, and the seriousness of their perspectives on the important issues arising from the research.

The first part of the chapter explores an overview on the history on how Christianity came to Ghana through various missionary initiatives within a particular religious environment and how it influenced the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost. The wider historic developments within the Ghanaian religious landscape and the church arena in Ghana, although only cursory, will

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also assist in discovering factors that could have influenced the growth and influence of the Church of Pentecost as well as the Church's contribution to establish Christianity in Ghana. The Church of Pentecost's historic road of denominational development within Pentecostalism also touches on the Church's core values, organisational structures and the way the church functions as a denomination. The historic overview may also reveal in which way the historic developments of Christianity in Ghana influenced the Church of Pentecost's ministry approach to children.

2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY IN GHANA

It is important to understand how Christianity developed amidst a particular religious environment in Ghana because it will provide valuable insight on influential factors on the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost. Related issues like people's primal spirituality and the relationship between Christianity and Ghanaian culture and tradition are also discussed. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity to consider the various missionary approaches in bringing Christianity to an African country and how these contributed to the enculturation of Christianity and eventually shaped the ministry practices of the church and in particular the Church of Pentecost. Debrunner (1967:18) points to the fact that Christianity became a way of life in Ghana about 500 years ago.

Four distinct eras of Christianity namely the era of pre-Christian influence, Early Missionary era, era of Independent churches and Early Pentecostalism in Ghana provide a historic roadmap on the development and growth of Christianity (Koduah, 2004:17–56). These four eras contributed in different ways in shaping the spirituality of the nation that in turn provided the religious environment shaping the ministry practices of the Church of Pentecost. The four eras will henceforth be discussed with a focus on those aspects that can assist in exploring the research

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question of what were the ministry strategy of the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost focusing on children between 1970 and 2010?

2.2.1 The era of pre-Christian influence

Long before the first Christians reached the country Ghanaians already practiced religion in various forms and practices. Koduah¹⁹ (2004:17), the current General Secretary of the Church of Pentecost and academically accomplished scholar, shows that Ghanaians were already involved in African Traditional religion and Islam before the arrival of the early missionaries. Ghanaians are typical Africans (:17) and as such very religious by nature. In this regard he refers to Mbiti who described African people as “...notoriously religious” (:17). In his discussion on religion and politics in Ghana Pobe (1992:2-3) also seems to support the notion of embedded religiousness referring to Ghanaians as “homo religious”. He (:2-3) describes Ghanaians as “[h]omo ghaniensis as a homo radicaliter religious...” which seems to imply that the Ghanaian is a radically religious person, religious at the core of her being.

Anim, currently the Dean of Theology and Mission at the Church of Pentecost University, uses another concept to express Ghanaian religiousness. In a personal unstructured conversation on 10 November 2011, Anim refers to it as Ghanaian’s “primal imagination” – a concept that refers to the deeply embedded religiousness that was and will be part of each person in Ghana. This being the case, it is an

¹⁹ Koduah holds a Master’s degree from the University of Manchester and pursued a Ph.D. program with the University of Ghana, Legon. He also completed a Ph.D through the South African Theological Seminary. He wrote a number of works reflecting on Ghanaian church history, Christianity in Ghana and social issues within the Church of Pentecost and the Ghanaian society.

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important issue to consider in discussing Ghanaian spirituality. In a more or less semantically compatible sense Bediako (2000:xiii) calls it “pre-Christian memory”. The focus on the supernatural was what contributed to an apparent struggle between the evangelical approach to the spiritual world and the traditional relationship with the spiritual world during this pre-Christian era (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:7-8). Within the Ghanaian tradition the proverb “Obi nnkyere abofra Nyama”, would suggest that a sort of born-in relationship exists between a child and God. The proverb suggests that “the child knows God by instinct – nobody need to show God to a child” (Asirifi-Danquah, 2008:1). The implication is that since a child has a sense of the existence of God, that “sense” can be nurtured into maturity as the child grows up.

Both the African Traditional Religion and Islam seem to have influenced Ghanaian’s religious practices in various ways in the early sixteen hundreds. The Islamic faith in the North appeared to influence Ghanaians in practices of fortune telling, preparation of charms and amulets for healing and war purposes (Koduah, 2004:20). Islamic faith seems also to have influenced the culture and warfare practices of the Asante people who were the dominant rulers at that time (:20). Notwithstanding the fact that it is not clear if Islamic faith actually preceded Christianity in the North of Ghana, Islam initially seems not to have transformed the religious system of Ghanaians in a significant way (2004:21). Evidently, African traditional religious beliefs appear to have dominated the religious environment in the pre-Christian era (:21).

It is contended that Traditional African beliefs and faith practices centred around the mystical aspects focussing on things like the Supreme Being (God), gods, divinities, ancestors, spirits, witchcraft, magic, medicine, taboos, death, afterlife, reincarnation, moral values, sin and punishment (Koduah, 2004:18-19). These beliefs and practices within the Ghanaian society seem to have contributed to the

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spiritual environment when the missionaries entered into the history of Ghana. It is also stated that Ghanaian religious thought is essentially theocentric and theistic where God is at the centre of it all (Asifiri-Danquah, 2008:6). It may be postulated that the pre-Christian era in a way prepared the Ghanaian people to receive the Christian message (Koduah, 2004:17-18). It is therefore important for this research to acknowledge this vital issue of pre-Christian religion when discussing Christianity, religion and spirituality and ministry approaches within the Ghanaian context. It should be noted that historical accounts sourced up to this point made no specific reference to children and where they fit into the pre-Christian era. However, it could logically be accepted that children were ever-present at every level of Ghanaian life including exposure to Traditional religions and/or the Islamic faith during this period in history.

The pre-Christian era was succeeded by the early missionary era when Christianity initially came from outside Ghana and influenced the nation in various ways.

2.2.2 The Early Missionaries era

The historical marker for the starting point of the second phase was when the Roman Catholic Church reached Ghana as early as the late 14th century through Portuguese trade activities. It marks a historical point in history where Christianity came to Ghana through people who had their own understanding and experiences of Christianity which they then presented to people who lived already with their own and unique spirituality. Ntummy (in Koduah, 2004:ix), a former Chairperson of the Church of Pentecost in 2004, is of the opinion that when the Portuguese merchants built the first chapel in the Elmina Castle in 1482, they did not realize that a “fire had been lit...” which was going to become a great conflagration to affect every fabric of the nation’s life. Ntummy (in Koduah, 2004:ix) hereby seems to acknowledge the profound impact that European missionaries made in bringing

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Christianity to Ghana. According to Debrunner (1967:18-19) the first mass in Ghana was celebrated at Elmina in 1842. The first converts of the Roman Catholic Church (1503) were said to include the King of Efutu who was then the ruler of the country (Koduah, 2004:22). However, no substantial growth in Christianity seems to have come from his and his elder's conversions (:22).

Several mission agencies (like the Moravian Brethren in 1737) followed the Roman Catholic missionaries (Okyere, 2000:33-34). Most of the Moravian missionaries apparently died in Ghana and the work did not progress much at that stage. The coming of the Basel Mission in 1828 seems to mark a new and seemingly more successful initiative by mission agencies in bringing Christianity to Ghana (:33-34). Missionaries from the Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, and Anglican Church followed later in more efforts to establish Christianity in Ghana (Koduah, 2004:22-23). The contribution of early missionaries to Ghana is emphasised by Ntumy (2000:23-24) who wrote that the missionaries and their ministries made an impact on the Ghanaian society which produced "...great Ghanaian statesmen whose lives have greatly influenced the country politically, economically and also in Christian circles." It is further important to note that virtually all earlier politicians in Ghana have been products of church institutions (Koduah, 2004:70). History refers to influential people like Kwame Nkrumah (President, 1959-1966) and Busia (Prime Minister, 1969-1972) who were prominent in the early political history in Ghana (:70). Other important leaders in Ghana like General Acheampong (Military leader, 1972-1978) and Rawlings (Military leader and President, 1981-2000) are said to have also attended Catholic schools as children (Koduah, 2004:70). Evidently, Bediako (2000:xiii) stress the fact that the spiritual/metaphysical "world" in which Ghanaians grew up retained its influence on people although they were Christianised. He (:xiii) refers to Nkrumah as an example of someone who attended a missionary school and later took the title for himself of a deity called "Osayefo" (redeemer). Bediako (:xiii) suggests that

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this choice of name is an indication of Nkrumah's perception and link between his own spirituality and the traditional spirituality in which he grew up.

More influences from the early missionaries had an impact on the Ghanaian society. Koduah (2004:60) is of opinion that early missionaries in Ghana also contributed positively to the development of the country in areas like agriculture, education, health, economy and general social fields. Ntumy (2000:17-21) seems to hold the same assumptions that Koduah postulated concerning the contributions made by the early missionaries. Ntumy (:17-21) also refers to other contributions from early missionaries like the introduction of schools, literacy work, improved agricultural technology, vocational skills, setting up of hospitals and better sanitation. One particular focus of interest for this research is the specific ministry approaches through early missionaries that affected children. As early as 1529, the King of Portugal instructed that the children of Elmina should be taught to read and write (Okyere, 2000:60-61). The Basel missionaries established the first boarding school at Akropong in 1843 (:60). The Wesleyan mission, the Church of England as well as the Roman Catholic Church followed suite and also established schools in Ghana (:60-61).

Since the various missionary strategies generally focused on aspects like church planting (evangelistic crusades), health (medical care), social development (social justice and protection), physical care (food and housing) and education (schools and vocations), the ministry could have influenced children directly or indirectly from an early age. Ntumy (2000:17-21), however, points out some mistakes made by early missionaries. For instance he argues (:17-21) that when missionaries for instance made schools the nucleus of the church it resulted in children who graduated from church with no emphasis on personal faith and relationship with Christ. Support for Ntumy comes from Okyere (2000:34-36) who maintains that by making church attendance obligatory with punishment for those who defaulted,

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Christianity became a system for children to comply with and not a personal experience of a relationship with God. It would appear therefore that the early entry of Christians in Ghana resulted in creating an environment where religiousness seems to take on a new meaning for Ghanaians. In general, Christianity in a sense proposed a different focus on moral values, ethics, a different understanding of governance and politics, different perspectives on social justice and models for social responsibility than the traditional way of interpreting life. On the whole then, the early missionaries seem to have brought children more prominently into the focus area of Christians through education and health services.

The church entered into Ghanaian's spiritual domain where the pre-Christian spirituality referred to in 2.2.1 and the coming of Christianity through missionaries seems to have created some form of tension between Ghanaians primal spirituality and the spirituality promoted by missionaries. This issue becomes more evident in 2.2.3. More than ten church denominations were founded in Ghana during the era of early missionaries (Opoku, 2005:7-8). Christianity evidently prepared Ghanaians for the next era of growth of the Independent Churches. The emergence of the Independent Churches and the specific reasons behind their rapid growth would provide more insight into development of an African ecclesiology.

2.2.3 The era of Independent Churches

There are a number of possible reasons for the emergence of the Independent Churches²⁰ after the early missionary era (Koduah 2004:27). Contributing factors

²⁰ Different expressions are used for the abbreviation AIC. Some authors refer to these African originated churches as: African Initiated Churches, African Instituted Churches, Africa Independent

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for the initial rapid growth of the Independent Churches *inter alia* include the enculturation of Christian ethics into the Ghanaian society, the mode of worship, the challenges to contextualise the gospel message, the struggle to understand and enter into the Ghanaian culture and the westernising of religion (:27). Ghanaians were introduced to Western practices like dress codes, marriage, and burials (Koduah, 2004:26-27). Additionally, later history points to more contributing factors for the emerging and rapid growth of the African Independent Churches in Ghana. Okyere (2005:52) sees the creation of separate settlements for converts as an attempt by early missionaries to prevent them from engaging in syncretism. He (:52) considers the creation of such separate settlements for converts and also the change of traditional names for Christian names as more examples of the contributing factors that prepared the way for the growth of the African Independent Churches in Ghana.

Barret (1986:161-162) suggest additional reasons for the growth of the African Independent Church. He feels that Ghanaian Christian leaders rebelled against a Christianity that had become over-westernised (:162). In this regard, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:10-11) seems to support Barrett's argument and posits an intercultural view of Pentecostalism that rejects conventional interpretations from Western Christendom as universally normative for Christian history. The emergence of the ministries of the prophets of the African Independent Churches was seen as a reaction to a Christianity that either denied or explained away the miracles in the New Testament (Larbi, 2001:68). The history of the African Independent Church in Ghana seems to be largely influenced by churches planted

Churches and African Indigenous Churches (Oduro, Pretorius, Nussbaum and Born, 2008:iv). In this thesis, I use the term African Independent Churches in line with the way most Ghanaian writers have used it in their works.

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during the early missionary era (cf. 2.2.2). The actual emergence of the African Independent Church in Ghana apparently started with the ministry of the Prophet Harris, a Liberian (Koduah, 2004:31). Debrunner (1967:273) refers to four churches in Ghana that resulted from Harris' evangelistic outreaches in 1914 namely Faith-Healing Church, the Twelve Apostles Church, the West African Water Healing Society, and the Kajirfeh Divine Healing Society. Later, a number of prophets who came from denominations like the Anglican Church, Methodist Church and Presbyterian Church, followed Harris and founded more African Independent Churches in Ghana (Koduah, 2004:32-33). This trend in growth of African independent churches and the continuous metamorphosis of older African independent churches into modern versions of themselves is deemed a reaction to an over-Westernised of Christianity and a quest to contextualise (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:ix; 15).

Consequently, a number of African prophets started to draw masses of people to their renewal and revival campaigns (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:19). The emergence of these new churches is considered as a first wave of Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana (:19). Ghanaians refer to the new Independent Churches as *Sunsum soré* churches (Spiritual Churches) (:19). Koduah (2004:30) explains this title as referring to "those who invoke spirits." By comparison, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:21) explains Sunsum as Spirit and soré as worship or church. He (:22) contends that these (Sunsum soré) churches belong to the same phenomenological type as Nigeria's Aldura (praying churches) and South Africa's Zionist churches. Although the designation of the name could underscore the Spiritual church's pneumatic orientation, it is also suggested that the Spiritual churches share the ethos of the Pentecostal movements worldwide (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:21). African Independent Churches in Ghana are also referred to as African Initiated Churches (Opoku, 2005:4). These churches are also described by some as "Prophetic Churches" with the emphasis on visions and prophecies (Koduah, 2004:31). The

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Sunsum soré churches could be considered as pioneers in the synthesis of Christianity and African religio-cultural conditions (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:40). The process of enculturation seems to be an attempt by the African Independent Churches to find ways that the Christian faith can speak to the African situation in relevant idioms (:40). Some broader characteristics of the African Independent Churches in Ghana include aspects like self-financing, -supporting, and -governing (Koduah, 2004:31). Subsequently, African Independent Churches emphasise prayer, healing, a more free form of worship, allow for prominent participation of women in the church, stress an African worldview, lack elaborate administrative structures and infuse African traditional religious practices into biblical values that result in some form of syncretism (:31).

The introduction of a traditional way of exorcising of demonic spirits and the introducing of traditional songs and dances with demonic connotations and spirit possession in some churches seems to have resulted in syncretism (Koduah, 2004:36-37). Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:22) is of the opinion that Sunsum soré churches are perceived differently from Traditional Western Mission Churches. They apparently consider themselves not only more African but rather as being churches in which the Spirit exists as experience and not merely as doctrine. The Christianity of Ghana's Sunsum soré is therefore seen as more an indigenous synthesis of Ghanaian traditional and Pentecostal beliefs and practices (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:40). Although there were concerns about possible syncretism, Ghanaians seem to find expression of their Christianity by re-living the biblical Pentecostal experience within an African setting (:21). The rise of the African Independent Churches seems to have brought some positives to the Ghanaian church (Koduah, 2004:38). It apparently helped to shift people's minds one step away from idolatry, brought the African context into a Christianity dominated by Western religion practices and so set the stage for the emergence of classical Pentecostalism (:38). The apparent absence of any historic account of children

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during this era seems to be linked to the traditional understanding of the place and value of children within the African tradition. It can however be imagined that children were present, although not as active participants to historic developments, but rather as joint travellers, participants and observers of history.

The fourth era in the development of Christianity in Ghana will consider a broad overview on relevant historic developments within Pentecostalism that in particular contributed to the birth and growth of the Church of Pentecost.

2.2.4 The era of Early Classical Pentecostalism

This era explicitly contributed to the birth of the Church of Pentecost. The spread of Pentecostalism all over the world entered the Ghanaian church environment by the early nineteen hundreds. At this point in history, role players like Anim and McKeown became prominent in the history of the Church of Pentecost. Peter Newman Anim (1890-1984) can be considered as the “father” of Ghanaian Pentecostalism because of the prominent role that he played in the early years when Pentecostalism came to Ghana (Larbi, 2001:22;494). The establishment of three main “Apostolic” Churches in Ghana is considered as an outcome of Anim’s work (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:23). Anim joined the Faith Tabernacle Church of Philadelphia, USA, and formed a Ghanaian branch in 1922. When the Faith Tabernacle Church did not approve Anim’s interest in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, he broke away from that church and affiliated his Ghanaian church with the Apostolic Church, UK. He then named his church “The Apostolic Church” (Koduah, 2004:40-41).

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Following this event, the Apostolic Church from the UK sent James McKeown and his wife in 1937 as pioneer missionaries to Ghana. McKeown is described as a pioneer missionary with little education and no training who came to evangelise the Gold Coast which was then a British colony (Leonard, 1985:4). McKeown started his missionary work by focusing on evangelising the Ghanaians and planting churches. He understood these activities to be part of his calling and assignment from the Apostolic Church back in UK. He seems to have followed a very simple missionary approach by focusing on loving the people, evangelising them and planting churches (:170-171). McKeown's approach to missionary work seems to have had a great influence on how the Church of Pentecost eventually emerged as a Church in terms of targeting the poor and oppressed people, allowing church autonomy and encouraging the apostolic model of church planting (:172). McKeown's missionary paradigm can be summarised by the following statement he made in 1945 in the "History of the Church of Pentecost (West Africa)" (Leonard, 1985:116).

As I look back, one supreme thought rises in my mind: why should a man of God ever have an anxious thought? Why can't he prepare the ground, sow the seed, eat, drink and sleep, and leave that silent power of nature to do her work? I feel deeply conscious of what one has called "unconscious blasphemy" – lack of faith in the creative power of the Word of God. It must grieve the heart of God to see His servants with whom He entrusted the power of His eternal Word, worrying about difficulties, pushing for results, interfering with the seed which can split rocks, open graves, unlock prison doors, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb and strength to the lame. Oh, the limitless power of that Word.

McKeown seems to have believed that the greatest contribution he could make to the Ghanaians was to bring to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the

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Holy Spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to work in them to produce a Christ-like life. Leonard (1985) includes a number of Church of Pentecost members' account of the exemplary life of McKeown by which he have modelled what he preached. Leonard (1985:117) pointed to McKeown's ability to associate with the Ghanaians, his respect for them and his strong belief that they need to be self-sufficient and be empowered to do the ministry as Ghanaian Christians. McKeown also implemented Sunday school for children in the churches he planted (:42). Although no specific goals were mentioned concerning children, McKeown's ministry approach seems to suggest that he did recognise the importance of children in the Church. References to the presence of children at main Sunday services during crusades seem to support this assumption (Leonard, 1985:11).

McKeown appears to have struggled with the Anim group's extreme views on faith-healing which did not allow for any medicine or doctor's help (Koduah, 2004:42-47). This resulted in a church schism where Anim's group renamed themselves the Christ Apostolic Church whilst McKeown's group kept the name The Apostolic Church (Koduah, 2004:42-47). McKeown's group experienced another challenge as McKeown objected to the segregation between white apostles and black apostles by the Apostolic Church. This objection resulted in his dismissal from the Apostolic Church, UK. This incident led to the formation of the Gold Coast Apostolic Church in 1953. Another group broke away from McKeown's group and formed the Apostolic Church of Gold Coast. The similarities of the names apparently created confusion with the Ghanaians and it led to government intervention as to resolve the issue. President Nkrumah intervened directly and the Church of Pentecost was officially founded in August 1962 as an independent church (:46).

History further points to a number of church breakaways within Pentecostalism that resulted initially in mistrust, bickering, and acrimony (Koduah, 2004:48-49).

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The leadership of the various Pentecostal churches however changed the situation by deciding to work together (:49). Despite numerous splits within Pentecostal circles the Church of Pentecost was instrumental in establishing the Ghana Evangelical Fellowship in 1969 which became the Ghana Pentecostal Fellowship in 1977 and which again was changed to the current Ghana Pentecostal Council in 1981 (Koduah, 2004:48-49). The growth in Christianity is considered as an effort from the mainline mission churches as well as Pentecostals pursuing an aggressive evangelising drive among Ghanaians. The influence of Scripture Union, Bible study and Prayer groups and other related Christian fellowships are also mentioned as influences that fostered what Koduah refers to as “true Christianity” among Ghanaians (:57).

The classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana apparently placed their emphasis on the “Four-square Gospel” embracing Jesus as Saviour, Jesus as Healer, Jesus as Baptizer in the Holy Spirit and Jesus as the soon coming King (Koduah, 2004:49-50). Koduah (:105) cautions about theological trends within Pentecostalism which either adds to the Four-square Gospel or to take away certain aspects of the gospel. The diverse theological interpretations contributed to various streams which apparently affected Pentecostal’s theology and ministry practices especially in the field of Deliverance Ministry and Prosperity (:105-114).

A Pentecostal framework called the “Independent indigenous Pentecostal churches” is proposed by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:16) by which he also includes the Church of Pentecost. This framework seems to align the Church of Pentecost with the independent and indigenous character of the independent Pentecostal churches in Ghana (:23). The emergence of the Church of Pentecost during the Pentecostal area did give some indication of a more intent focus on children through ministries by Scripture Union as well as implementation of Sunday school

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by some congregations in the Church of Pentecost. The focus on children seems to have become more specific at this particular phase in history.

In the next section, the focus is more specifically on the Church of Pentecost to develop better understanding of this Church's ministry strategies of how children were eventually included.

2.3 THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST IN GHANA

The previous discussion reflected on the Church of Pentecost's origin within the context of the broader Ghana's Christian landscape. The following discussion is focuses on the Church of Pentecost as an institutional organisation becoming and being Church in Ghana. The relevant issues with the potential to contribute to the development of the Church's ministry strategies and specifically their ministry with the focus on children, their ministry practices, and their organizational functioning will be considered. The first consideration is the religious environment where the Church of Pentecost emerged.

2.3.1 Religious environment in which the Church of Pentecost emerged

The historic overview on the pre-Christian era in 2.2 discussed the religious environment in Ghana with a view on Ghanaians' inborn religiousness that translated to them practicing African Traditional religions. This religiousness apparently encompasses all aspects of life in Africa (Quarshie, 2002:10). Bedakio (in Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:17), is of opinion that "[p]rimal religions generally conceive of religion as a system of power and of living religiously as being in touch with the channels of powers in the universe." There is seemingly a significant measure of credibility in the perceived resonance between Pentecostal and African primal religiosity (:17). Pentecostals see Pentecostal Christianity as the recovery of their primal spirituality (Cox, 1995:4-8). It is further indicated that Pentecostalism is popular in African cultures like Ghana because it affirms the

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reality of God and other supernatural entities (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:17). Taking into account the myriad of new religious movements, the growth of Pentecostalism in Ghana seems to represent a critical part of a national religious stirring which paved the way for the emergence of the Church of Pentecost (:14).

This religiousness of the Ghanaian people apparently played a significant role in preparing the coming of Christianity to Ghana. People of Ghana became members of the Church of Pentecost within this religiousness and developed their own understanding of Christianity within this framework. Christianity eventually became part of Ghanaian spirituality and existed through the Asante rule, colonisation period, military coups, and latter democratic governments. The emergence of the Church of Pentecost also contributed significantly to the growth of Christianity in Ghana.

2.3.2 The Christian environment for the emergence of the Church of Pentecost

From historical accounts it seems that Christianity became thoroughly a Ghanaian religion before Ghana attained independence (Debrunner, 1967:359). The following table is included to give some perspective of the growth trends of Christianity over a thirty-year period. The specific reasons for the claimed significant growth of Christianity over the period 1980 to 2009 are not clear at this stage. The following statistics will however highlight the impact of Christianity on the greater religious environment in Ghana and the religious growth trends of Ghanaian Christianity during the period 1980 and 2009 as part of the emergence history of the Church of Pentecost.

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Table 1. Religious composition of Ghanaian population 1980-2009²¹ (Koduah, 2004:68)

Religion	1980	1991	2000	2009
African Traditional Religion	21.4%	31%	11%	8.5%
Christianity	62.6%	52%	69 %	68.8%
Islam	15.7%	17%	15.6%	15.9%
No Religion	2%	-	6.2%	6.8%
Total	100	100	100	100

Although the statistics claim significant shifts in religion compositions, Koduah (2004:68) cautions that other studies points to the inclusion of a large number of nominal Christians in the figures. Despite such a possibility, statistics confirm that by the year 2000 Christianity has succeeded in overtaking the two main religions that came before it – African Traditional Religions and Islam (:59). The decline to 52% in Christianity between 1980 and 1991 seems to reflect the apparent struggle within Christianity in the search to contextualise and the rise of the African Traditional Religions. The stabilisation of the situation between Christian churches

²¹ 1980-2000 by Koduah, 2004:59,68. 2009 from CIA World Fact book, <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>; World Christian Database 2008; Joshua Project, <<http://www.joshuaproject.net>>; Operation Wold, <<http://www.operationworld.org>>.

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then reversed the growth between 1991 and 2000 to 69%. The reason for the slight decline by 2009 is at this stage unknown. Even with these fluctuations, it seems clear that Christianity represents a significant proportion of the Ghanaian population.

The previous sections point to the central role that religion played in the emergence of also the Church of Pentecost. The growth of Christianity in Ghana during the early years was also supported by the growth of the Church of Pentecost through McKeown's evangelism and church planting strategies. The Church of Pentecost is classed as one of the younger Pentecostal Churches that contributed significantly to the growth of Christianity (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:15). In this regard Asamoah-Gyadu (:15) points out that the phenomenal growth in African Christianity came rather from younger churches than older Western churches. This growth within Pentecostalism was evident in the emergence of the neo-Pentecostal movement later in history of which the Church of Pentecost became part. The Church of Pentecost is currently the single largest Protestant church in Ghana (:23). It is also suggested that the growth of the Church of Pentecost can be attributed to effective evangelism and church planting strategies (Essel, 2011:4). The Church of Pentecost's unique ministry apparently made it a significant external factor accounting for the current peripheral status of the Sunsum soré in Ghanaian Christianity (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:23).

Therefore, if the Church of Pentecost is as prominent in the Christian history as this study suggests, there could be value in finding out why and how the ministry practices contributed significantly to the growth of the Church. Possible clues may present themselves when one considers the presence of the church of Pentecost during the rise of Pentecostalism in Ghana.

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2.3.3 The Church of Pentecost within Pentecostalism

History places the emergence of the Church of Pentecost amidst dynamic developments within global Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in the early nineteenth hundreds. However, it appears difficult to clearly define and classify Pentecostal and Charismatic movements due to the growth, diversity, and multiplicity of the movements (Asamoah–Gyadu, 2005:1). In sub–Saharan African countries like Ghana the expression “Charismatic” is used more in reference to the new wave of independent Pentecostal movements (:1). It is also referred to as the first wave of independent Pentecostals that reached Ghana.

Notwithstanding their indigenous roots, it would seem that Ghanaians are greatly inspired by American influences like neo-Pentecostalism, televangelist movements with their mega-church philosophies aiming to translate people’s salvation into practical everyday achievements in business, education, economics and family life (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:2-3). It is contended that an indigenous Pentecostal spirituality that encapsulates values, beliefs and practices, gives Pentecostals their distinctive Christianity (:7). Pentecostalism in particular is not articulated through credal formulae due to the oral nature of culture and religion in general in Africa (:8). He (:23) refers to a second wave of Pentecostal churches that influenced Christianity in Ghana in which he includes the Church of Pentecost. The second wave is considered to be Pentecostal denominations that were supported by Western mission activities (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:23). McKeown’s role in the history of the Church of Pentecost seems to suggest that the Church could initially also be classified as a Western mission church. It is asserted that although the Church of Pentecost identifies with the classical Pentecostal tradition, the Church has a unique indigenous character ((Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:23). The Church of Pentecost is said to have acquired an indigenous character which is different from say, the Assemblies of God, whose American imprint after sixty years of existence in Ghana is still obvious (:23). The indigeneness of the Church of Pentecost

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seems to suggest total freedom from any outside control and structures that created a Church where the Ghanaians made all the decisions from the beginning in terms of church culture, form, and function. Pentecostals, and in particular the Church of Pentecost, apparently contributed to a number of valuable ecclesiological principles like a well-developed ministry focuses, structures and systems to manage the ministry, self-financing policy, and introduction of simple indigenous form of worship (Koduah, 2004:53-54). The history of the emergence of the Church of Pentecost within Pentecostalism also suggests that McKeown's influence (cf. 2.2.4 paragraphs 3-6 above) touched more aspects of the Church's ministry. These would include aspects like the focus on relationships, mission orientated ministry, contextual approach to church planting, strict ethical code of practices, and effective governance of church and acknowledgement of children by developing Sunday school classes and investing in training of children's workers. The rest of the study may shed more light on where and how children were affected by being a part of the ministry of the Church of Pentecost with the focus on children.

The Church of Pentecost therefore emerged as a Pentecostal church impacted by and impacting on history shaping its form and function as an indigenous Ghanaian church.

2.3.4 The emergence of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana

The Western European missionary heritage of churches in Ghana like the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican can be distinguished in terms of architectural buildings, Western mission patterns of ministry, clerical accoutrements, liturgical forms and hymnody, creeds, and infant baptism and confirmation (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:14). It is argued that although these churches function with indigenous leadership they are still considered as traditional Western missionary churches (:15). The various historic influences

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coming from the traditional religions, early missionary engagements, development of the Independent churches in Ghana as well as Pentecostalism seem to have influenced the identity and character of the Church of Pentecost in terms of form and function. Hendriks (2004:37) seems to support this assumption of identity by proposing that denominations can be distinguished by their faith traditions that have shaped their liturgy, polity, and membership.

The Church of Pentecost's phenomenal growth, indigenous character, self-supportive principles, self-propagating nature and self-governance, and presence in the Ghanaian faith community and society in general, provide a particular picture of the identity and character of the Church (Essel, 2011:33-35). Role players such as McKeown seem to have influenced the identity and character of the Church of Pentecost in different ways such as establishing a "do it yourself church" – one which could feed itself with ministry and finance (Leonard, 1985:70-71). McKeown (in Leonard, 1985:117) also believed that evangelism was a top priority that influenced the ministry focus of the Church. Concerning compassionate ministries, for instance, he believed that people with changed lives would become the influence to address social needs (:72). Essel (2011:4) cited a number of possible reasons for the strong growth of the Church of Pentecost such as excellence in evangelism, effective church planting strategies and discipleship processes. These provide vital clues about the way the Church functions. The role that children played in the emergence, growth and sustainability of the Church of Pentecost however, is not included at this point in the given reasons for the growth. It raises two possible questions. Are children's contributions to the building and preserving of the Church of Pentecost's identity and character acknowledged and valued but not specifically included in historic accounts of the Church? Or could it be that the role and value that children bring to the Church have not been given the reflection they merit?

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The history, identity, and character of the Church of Pentecost influenced the growth, structures, and ministry approach of the Church. The Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile (2011) states the vision, mission, major values, activities and form of governance of the Church which contribute to the functioning and significant growth of the Church (:3).

2.3.5 The organisational structures, form and functioning of the Church of Pentecost

The Church's vision is "Planting And [sic] nurturing healthy churches globally" (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:2). The vision statement seems to suggest a missionary approach. Their mission states that the Church is to establish responsible and self-sustaining churches filled with committed, spirit-filled Christians of character, who will impact their communities (:2). It is believed by the members of the Church of Pentecost that it has been sustained over the years by its adherence to biblical Pentecostal values and submission to the leadership of the Holy Spirit (:3).

The Church functions with the following core values (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:3):

- Intensive prayer;
- Belief in the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit;
- Well-co-ordinated evangelistic and church planting strategy;
- Dedicated leadership;
- Responsible membership;
- Faithful adherence to a documented covenant with God;
- Indigenous worship style; and
- Self-supporting financial policy.

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This church seems to believe that their core beliefs are fundamental foundations for the Church's existence (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:3). Their tenets include their choice of core beliefs through a "Sola Scriptura" acceptance of the Bible and scripturally based understanding and interpretation of the Bible. These include the dogmatic/systematic theological aspects concerning God, depravity of man, Jesus as Saviour, repentance, justification and sanctification, the Sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), the gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit, eternal life, tithes and offerings and divine healing (:4-7). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are in particular emphasised by the Church of Pentecost as unconditionally given to believers to serve the body of Christ.

The absence of the value and importance of children and children's ministry as part of the church's core values does create a perception that children and their contribution, and potential for contribution, to the Church are not considered seriously enough. At this stage it appears that by including children in specific ministries like the Children's Movement, would be reason enough for the Church of Pentecost to argue that children are not totally absent in the ministry of the Church.

This creation of separate ministries could suggest that differentiation in ministry could also be considered as a core value of the Church of Pentecost. The ministry of the Church of Pentecost is supported by five specific ministry focuses (called movements): the Witness Movement, the Woman's Movement, the Youth Ministry, the Children's Movement, and the Pentecost Men's Fellowship (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:9). These ministries seem to fit into church life where the Church meets usually three times a week at local level (:7). Congregations gather on Wednesdays for prayer, a Holy Spirit baptism service on Fridays and congregational worship on Sundays. These activities are supported by

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a number of National programs like Easter and Christmas conventions, Bible Week in February, Mission Week in March, Founders Day in September, Remembrance/Pensions day in July and Ghana Pentecostal Week in October (:7). Each of the five Movements is also assigned a week in each year for their own weeklong program. In that particular week one day, once a year, is set aside where children's participation happens on national level in the form of different programs run by children. It is in particular this special week that is set aside for the Children's Movement that creates the perception that the allocation of such a dedicated day for children demonstrates something of the Church's seriousness about children.

Administratively, the Church functions within the following five-tier administrative structures (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:14-16):

- The General Council is considered the highest policy making body of the Church. This structure is also responsible for the election of the Chairman, General Secretary, the International Missions Director, and members of the Executive Council.
- The Executive Council functions under the leadership of the Chairman of the Church and executes policies and decisions of the General Council.
- The Area is the third administrative "rung" [sic] following the General Council and Executive Council. It is led by an apostle, a prophet, or a senior pastor. He is assisted by a six-member Executive Committee in the day-to-day running of the area through the Area Presbytery. This Area Presbytery is the co-ordinating and highest policy-making body in the area. It consists of the Area Executive Committee members, all Area Movement leaders, their assistants and Chairmen of Area Committees, all District Executive Committee members, two Deacon's representatives from each District/Worship Centre, three deaconesses' representatives from each District, all other serving ministers in the Area and all ministers wives in the Area.

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- The District is a further division of the area and is supervised by a pastor or overseer. The district pastor/overseer administers the district with the assistance of a six-member District Executive Committee. The District Presbytery is the highest policy-making body in the District and decides on matters affecting growth, development and welfare of the Local congregations.
- The Local Congregation forms the base of the five-tier administrative structure of the Church. It is headed by a presiding elder who acts on behalf of the district pastor and sees to the implementation of decisions taken by the district pastor, with the aid of all elders, deacons, deaconesses, and committee and movement leaders in the congregation.

Furthermore, the Church of Pentecost operates with a basic financial philosophy of self-support. This is based on a professed covenant between its founding fathers and God in which the Church commits to refrain from borrowing externally for the funding of its projects and other financial commitments (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:17). Tithes and offerings are the Church's primary sources of funding and account for more than 90% of the Church's income (:17). The remaining income is from the five Movements in the Church and donations.

The financial administrative system is centralised and run from the Head Office in Accra. The Finance Board has the task of the running of the Church's central funds and is regularly audited by the Internal Audit Department (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:17). There appears also to be a deliberate effort by Church leadership to expose children to the structures and operations of the Church by having regular groups of children visiting the Church Headquarters throughout the year. The Church of Pentecost appears to be driven by the core value of being a missionary orientated church and by 2010 they planted Churches in 83 different countries (Church of Pentecost Comprehensive report, 2010:312). Some of these churches have already attained full autonomy like the Church of

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Pentecost in Benin and Cote d'Ivoire (:21). The Church recognises two categories of missionaries namely, Ministerial Missionary and Associate Missionary (Comprehensive report, 2010:24). The Ministerial Missionary is someone who holds apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, or pastoral credentials and is appointed to office by the Executive Council with the approval of the General Council. The Church also employs the services of professional members like accountants and doctors as Associate Missionaries in the mission fields (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:24). The Church's membership grew internationally at a rate of over 7% per year since 2006 to 2010 (Church of Pentecost Comprehensive report, 2010:312). In 2010 the Church of Pentecost recorded a total membership of 1 703 585 (Church of Pentecost Comprehensive report, 2010:312). The Church's mission orientation is supported by statistics indicating that the Church grew with 379 Assemblies in Ghana during the period 2009-2010 alone (Church of Pentecost Comprehensive report, 2010:312).

Furthermore, the Church's quest to provide educational, health and relief services, and to address social needs among its members and the communities in which they exist, led to the formation of the Pentecost Welfare Association in 1980. The name changed later to Pentecostal Social Services (PENTSOS) (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:25). The Church also established a printing house for the Church called The Pentecost Press Ltd. The Church provides for more than 60% of its clientele (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:26). The Church also developed Pentecost Media (PENTMEDIA) for recording documentaries and other recordings that are available to the public (:27). In line with the Church's mission to bring the Gospel to the lost, the radio and television ministries were launched (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:27).

The Church also established the Pentecost University College with a mission to yield well-informed clergy for the 21st Century church and to additionally equip its

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products to impact society positively in all areas of human endeavour (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:28). The College also organises lay leadership training courses for church officers and the wives of its ministers to sharpen their skills for optimal output in the holistic development of the members of the Church (:28). The trainings seem to be directed on issues pertaining to adult ministry needs and it is assumed that focus on children should be dealt with by the Children's Movement. In 2010 alone, there were over thirty-nine thousand seven hundred lay leaders trained in various areas such as leadership, Old Testament survey, marriage counselling and primary healthcare (Church of Pentecost Comprehensive report, 2010:312). Although the Church of Pentecost considers the development of Church members in lay leadership positions as important for the Church's future there is an apparent absence of a focus on children issues in the training programs. The training of workers in children's ministry is seen as the responsibility of the Children's Movement. Whilst their development is encouraged by leadership, it seems that the other ministries enjoy a more specific focus in the Church concerning resource allocation, focus in Church Council meetings, theological debates and priority in ministry activities according to the yearly calendar. These lay leaders are considered part of the Church's ministry force but the Church seems to ignore the possibility of children-orientated trainings which could be included in the other ministry training and practices. In 2010 alone, more than sixty-nine thousand lay leaders were trained as part of the ministry team of the Church (Church of Pentecost Comprehensive report, 2010:312).

The organisational structure, potential human resource capacity, and supportive statistics of the Church suggest that the Church could provide valuable clues on good ministry practices and governance. They also raise interest in how these strengths explain and support the Church's ministry strategies with the focus on children. It furthermore opens up the discussion to consider the ecclesiological

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underpinnings associated with the way the Church of Pentecost functions, its theology and understanding of children's ministry.

Given the above picture of the Church of Pentecost, it would therefore be important to explore how the children's ministry functions and fits into the ministry strategy of the Church.

2.4 CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST

Exploring the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost up to this point has included various aspects (historical and current) that have influenced the birth, growth, and current functioning of the Church. This section's focus is on the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost. Regarding other contributions to the children's ministry model of the Church of Pentecost, the study acknowledges other important contributions from the children's ministry in Ghana outside the Church. Due to the scope of the study I would not expand on that part of the history. This discussion reflects on contributing factors that shaped the children's ministry in Ghana with the focus on the Church of Pentecost and which can be considered as an outcome of previously discussed historic influences on the church. The following part reflects on contributions by Ghanaian scholars on the children's ministry.

2.4.1 Academic and theological contributions concerning children's ministry in Ghana

Developments in the field of children's ministry in Ghana and specifically the Church of Pentecost could only be correctly understood when considered in terms of the broader historic landscape of Christianity in Ghana. The historic overview on Ghanaian Christianity and church planting in the previous sections provided some information on the religious environment where Ghanaians developed their ecclesiology and theology. Some of the critical factors that emerged from the historic overview include the influence of primal religiousness, influence of culture

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and traditions and the influence that missionaries had on the ministry practices of the church. Various denominations in Ghana developed their children's ministry models mostly in line with the prevalent denomination culture and perspectives that came to Ghana as part of Christianity. Although the theological position of African churches on children would be a critical consideration in this study, few official documents or academic works could be sourced that focus on children's ministry. Subsequently, it can be assumed that the particular ministry approaches by missionaries and church denominations in different ways influenced church's ministry approaches to children.

Writers like Koduah (2004), Opoku (2005) and Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) have produced works which reflect on the development of Christianity and in particular Pentecostalism in Ghana. Their works touch on challenges in the church and society in general and propose a number of possible reasons and solutions on problem issues related to understanding church, theology, history and children and children's ministry. These writers represent a small group of Ghanaian academics who specifically include references on children and children's ministries in their works. However, their academic works does not focus solely on children's issues but their perspectives forms part of their broader focus in their fields of interest such as ecclesiology and ministry practices. This apparent absence of focused theological work in the field of children's ministry in Ghana has resulted in the reliance on reflections from Ghanaian academics that focus on topics that touch on aspects that could be interpreted as reflections or perceptions concerning children's ministry. In the following paragraphs, some reflections in the works of Koduah (2004), Asamoah-Gyadu (2005), Opoku (2005) and Darku²²(2005) are

²² Darku is ordained Baptist pastor with a PhD serving in various positions within missions such as director of the Ghana Evangelism Committee and Administrative Secretary of the Christian

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discussed and some Ghanaian perspectives on children's ministry are developed. This discussion will also include some findings from a research project done in Ghana by One Hope Ministries²³ concerning Ghana's children and youth.

Because Koduah is a part of the Church of Pentecost's executive leadership and he has played a prominent role in the Church's ministry to children and in particular the youth age group in his early ministry, his views are important and could be indicative of how Church leadership think about children and youth. Koduah (2004:159) posits that in order for Ghanaian Christians to guarantee a brighter future, it will have to take a more proactive approach to Children and Youth Ministries in a fast changing environment. He (:159) also considers the youth (by which Koduah includes children) as leaders of tomorrow. Koduah (2004:159) is of opinion that because today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow, the church in Ghana must re-examine and properly address the needs and aspirations of its children and teenagers which constitute 50.8% of Ghana's population. In this regard Koduah (:159) suggests an intensive education to be undertaken among church leaders to promote a more positive perspective about the youth and children. Koduah (:159), also contends that winning, training and maintaining children and youth will both guarantee mature membership in churches and even reduce levels of crime in society. The emphasis is placed on recruiting and deploying full time pastors for the children's ministry, separate

Outreach Fellowship. He wrote a number of works focusing on contemporary issues in Ghana like "Total Evangelism: Proclamation, Social service, Healing and Deliverance" and "Holistic City Evangelism."

²³ One Hope Ministries is an International child and youth orientated ministry who also conducts empirical research projects in specific places and contexts in supporting the work of the church. This specific research was conducted in 2008 and is available on <<http://www.onehope.org>>.

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services for adults and children, better programs and the development of a more positive perceptions on children within the church (:159).

Although it appears that Koduah has only the children's best interest at heart, his futuristic view on children as "becoming" and his inclination to see children as objects of ministry, however, should be explored more. One wonders if the allocation of more full time Pastors for youth and children's ministries, creation of separate halls for parallel services with adults would be enough to provide a contextual environment for children's spiritual growth and fully include children into the ministry of the Church (Koduah, 2004:159). The apparent absence of any formal theological reflection on children in the archives of the Church of Pentecost and the exclusion of children in the core values of the Church creates the impression that children, their value and worth for the Church, are not yet fully explored, accepted or adequately addressed.

Another contribution to the discussion on children in Ghana comes from an academic and theologian who made some observations about children whilst researching Pentecostalism in Ghana. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:119), stress the importance of including a focus on children in the church by linking church growth with the ability of Pentecostals to retain their members and offspring and to provide answers to their ultimate questions in life. He (:119) therefore postulated that the neglect of youth and children's ministries by the Sunsum soré was one of the most serious reasons for declining membership. Another factor mentioned is the various struggles by other ministry agencies like Scripture Union to be contextually relevant for young people in the face of the rising of Charismatic Ministries (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:109). The implementation of children's services and the integration of young people in church life by recognising their ministry gifts is one of the outstanding features of the renewal coming from new churches in Ghana (:119). Asamoah-Gyadu's (:85-86) theological presupposition regarding

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children is that in the life of the local body of Christ, the ministry to children should be considered as important as the ministry to adults. His positive views on the ministry of the Church of Pentecost and children nevertheless raise interest to understand better what is meant by children's integration into church life as part of the church's ministry practices and what recognising of children's gifts for ministry would imply for children and the church. Would integration into church life mean that children are also included as participants of church life or are they only receivers or observers of church life? Are children just a valuable ministry strategy in church growth?

The following contribution comes from another theologian and academic who is in a leadership role in the Church of Pentecost. In a paper prepared for the Compassion Vision Casting Conference in Accra, Opoku (2005:2-7) included some historical information on the state of the church in Ghana. His contribution to this discussion seems significant due to his current role as the President of the Church of Pentecost. His views could therefore be interpreted as representative of that of the Church. He (:2-7) included a brief historic overview on Christianity and the church in Ghana pointing to influence that history had on the development of the ministry environment where children are to be ministered to. The importance for the church to "catch children young for Christ" is emphasised and it is argued that children will be exposed to post-modern philosophies as they grow older, which he considers as a very negative influence on children (:2-7). He seems to question the church's ability to respond to humankind's search for solutions to both spiritual and physical issues as part of family and church (Opoku, 2005:10). Opoku (:7) included findings of a survey he conducted on children's ministry in Ghana in the paper he prepared for the above mentioned Vision Casting Conference in Accra. Twenty-seven Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations were surveyed which included the Church of Pentecost (:7). The survey focused on children's workers' perspectives on children's ministry and training, children's programs and

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children's perceptions on church and children's ministry. The surveyed churches indicated that they all ran Sunday schools or have children services. Their programs represented a large variety of activities such as preaching, teaching, storytelling, scripture reading, memorisation, and games (Opoku, 2005:7). Children's workers indicated that churches generally value and encourage training of children's workers (:8). Children's responses on Opoku's survey indicated that they feel that they need more money from their churches for children's programs, good quality programs from the church and moral support (:9). Whilst Opoku also seem to consider children as a valuable future asset for the church which carries similar sentiment as stated by Koduah in above, he also showed that he acknowledges the value of listening to children by including children directly in his investigation (:9). The focus on the various Sunday schools and children's services suggests that he still has the more traditional approach to children's ministry in mind where children are ministered to within a separated ministry context. As his paper did not intend to offer any clear theological statements on children, it is difficult to define his position about the value and worth of children as contributing members of the church.

The next contribution comes from a Baptist pastor who challenges the ministry of the church in Ghana and brings the importance of families into the conversation. Darku (2005:vii) is of opinion that the Ghanaian government fails in responding to the social and political needs of people in general. He (:vii) contends that in the light of poverty and political instability the church should become more holistic in ministry. Such an holistic approach should in the first place focus on family life where children constitute 37.3% of the average Ghanaian household (Darku, 2005:vii; 11). He (:29) points to the influences of economic factors and rapid social change which affects the concept and functioning of families. Problems like divorce, teenage pregnancies, drugs, and ill-discipline, are considered as outcomes of dysfunctional families. Darku (:78) feels that most churches do not

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investigate and attend to matters pertaining to families and therefore children are suffering. He appears to have much compassion for children and proposes a number of ways to address the needs of children with a focus on the family. Darku's (2005:79) concern is with children ending up delinquent, misbehaving, stealing, using drugs and becoming part of other social ills. It would seem that these children referred to, are characterised by "doing these wrong things" needing intervention from the church as objects of ministry. These reflections can be considered as a valuable contribution to understand the plight of some children in Ghana, the challenge for the church to respond and how some theologians could view such children. It encourages the question on how a ministry would work where children are part of the holistic engagement of the church in social and political life.

Another notable contribution to understanding the children's ministry landscape and influences on children and youth in Ghana comes from the organisation One Hope. The Book of Hope International research project called "Attitudes and Behaviors of Youth" published in March 2008, focused on responses from different age groups of children and young people. Although the majority of children surveyed were over the age of sixteen years it still provides some indication of what could be discovered if such research was directed on a lower age group as most reflections are on issues related to children from all ages. Ghanaians and Africans in particular do not necessarily make the same distinction between children and youth as used in Western paradigms, when children are referred to as discussed under concepts in 1.9.5. The population for the research included children from both rural and urban settings. Four thousand one hundred and eighty-four children were selected through stratified random sampling. Respondents indicated that 21% of their parents was divorced while 3% indicated that their parents divorced but remarried. A further 16% reported that one or both

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parents died. This picture seems to support Darku's (2005:28) argument about the brokenness of family life in Ghana.

From a religious perspective, the finding that 88% indicated they have a Christian affiliation and 90% believe that the Bible is true seems to support the positive perceptions about an embedded Ghanaian Christianity. The findings from the research could be an indication that somehow young people have been influenced by Christianity. What the exact inputs of the church were is not sure at this stage. It seems possible that the historic developments in the Church of Pentecost contributed much to the current children's ministry model of the Church.

The different views of the four ministry leaders discussed in previous paragraphs seems to reflect perceptions of how they view children and think about children in the church. These perceptions can be summarised as:

- A futuristic perspective of children to become mature and contributing members of the church when they reached adulthood (Koduah in 2.4.1);
- Serving children in the church is dependent on aspects like good leaders, good facilities and parallel Sunday Services (Koduah in 2.4.1);
- Children will become the leaders of tomorrow (Koduah in 2.4.1);
- Sustainability and growth of the church is dependent on children (Asamoah-Gyadu in 2.4.1);
- Ministry to children is as important as the ministry to adults (Asamoah-Gyadu in 2.4.1);
- Children should be integrated into church life (Asamoh-Gyadu in 2.4.1);
- Children should be reached for Christ whilst still young (Opoku in 2.4.1);
- The church needs also to listen to the voice of children (Opoku in 2.4.1);
- Healthy families are critical for the well-being of children and society (Darku in 2.4.1); and

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- The church has a responsibility to respond to children's delinquency and the source of it (Darku in 2.4.1).

The discussion does not as yet consider any specific children's ministry model. The focus of this study is more concerned with exploring the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children within a wider framework of the church. The following section will explain the ministry of the Children's Movement in the Church of Pentecost which can be interpreted as a ministry strategy, culminating in a children's ministry model of the Church.

2.5 THE CHILDREN'S MOVEMENT

The Children's Movement is part of the five ministry movements of the Church of Pentecost as mentioned in 2.3.5. The number of children under the age of 13 years totalled 540,544²⁴ by 2010. The specific children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost is described in terms of a historic time line and ministry developments shaping the ministry focus, the structure and objectives of the ministry.

2.5.1 The ministry focus and supportive organisational structure of the Children's Movement

Sunday schools and catechism were part of the ministry introduced by the early missionaries. McKeown apparently introduced Sunday schools in newly planted churches as early as 1937 (Leonard 1985:43). It appears that Sunday schools in the Church of Pentecost were not formally organised but steered by the Church until the 1970's (Church of Pentecost, 1974:25). Although Sunday schools were

²⁴ These figures were published in a statistical report the Children's Movement received from the Church of Pentecost Statistics and Records Department in 2010. It contained growth patterns of children in the ministry of the Church between 1972 and 2010.

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started in the different local assemblies, there were initially no formal structures and leadership on national level.

Missionaries like Me Mills apparently played an important role in the children's ministry of the Church and contributed to administration, programs, and materials in the early to mid-1970's (Church of Pentecost, 1974:28). Congregations started Sunday schools and were supported by faith-based organisations like Scripture Union and Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) in early years (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:109). The influence of Scripture Union and Child Evangelism Fellowship was also mentioned in other Church Council reports (Church of Pentecost, 1974:29; Church of Pentecost, 1975:26). These organisations provided training for Sunday school teachers and initiated children's ministry activities like clubs during weekdays.

In 1972 Apau-Asante, a Regional Apostle of the Church of Pentecost, was elected as the first leader to prepare the launching of the Children's Movement. The Children's Movement was officially established at a Council meeting in Kumasi in April 1973 (Church of Pentecost Children's Movement Report, 1974:1). Apostle Apau-Asante tabled the first report of the Children's Movement at the 12th session of the national Church Council meeting held at Asamankese 5 to 11 April 1974 (:1). The Children's Movement functioned with a governance structure of three members, the General Leader, Deputy General Leader and Secretary until 1994 (:1). In 1994, the ministry was more formalised and the Church set up a directorate [steering committee] with a seven member Executive Committee to run the Children's Movement (Church of Pentecost Children's Movement Report, 1974:1).

The Church's ministry approach to the children built on the Church's core beliefs and values and ministry approach as discussed in 2.3.4. A first indication of this is found in a report by Apau-Asante (Church of Pentecost Children's Movement

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Report, 1974:3) where he stated that “[t]he movement is of great importance to the church because it serves as Nursery ground [sic] for the Church from where the children are prepared both spiritually and physically to join the women’s movement, witness and Pentecostal Students and Associates (Pensa).” The ministry is described as “the cradle for their future leaders, Pastors, Evangelists, Teachers, and Prophets etc. [sic]” (:3). This statement gives a reflection of the Church’s commitment and serious focus on children and points to the Church’s understanding of its responsibility to prepare children to join other adult ministries later in their lives. It furthermore creates a futuristic expectation of what children eventually would become.

The Church of Pentecost’s Children Movement’s 10-year strategic planning document (2005) provides a brief overview of the historical developments of the children’s ministry since 1972 until 2004 and indicates the focus areas for the following 10 years. The document points to the numerical growth in children which were only 5 251 in 1974 and became 300 040 in 2004 (Church of Pentecost Children’s Movement 10-year strategic planning document, 2005:1). The Children’s Movement leadership also set targets of reaching a membership of one million children by end 2014 which the Executive Committee seems confident to achieve (:1). The vision statement that drives the Children’s Movement states “Winning and nurturing children to grow in the Lord” (Children’s Movement 10-year strategic planning document, 2005:1). The Movement considers its mission to lead children to Christ in the first place. This approach to the mission of the children’s ministry seems to be in line with the Church of Pentecost’s tenets which acknowledge man’s depraved nature (tenet 3), the belief that man needs a saviour (tenet 4) and aspects of repentance, regeneration, justification and sanctification (tenet 5) (Church of Pentecost Corporate Profile, 2011:4-7 as mentioned under section 2.3.5).

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They aim to help children to grow up in faith, according to Luke 2:52, to grow mentally, physically, socially and spiritually to take up the mantle of leadership in the near future (Church of Pentecost Children's Movement 10-year strategic planning document, 2005:1). This statement seems to underscore a futuristic understanding of where children would eventually fit into church life at a later stage.

2.5.2 Ministry objectives of the Children's Movement

In his report to the Church Council the Children's Movement leader Apau-Asante proposed ministry activities such as open air meetings, rallies and conventions for children with the aim of soul winning (Church of Pentecost Children's Movement Report, 1974:1). The report also proposed that annual examinations should be taken to test children's scriptural knowledge (:1). The Church of Pentecost (1974:29) also stated that the Children's Movement realised that Ghanaian local languages should be available so that children could be served within their own dialect. Another notable aspect of the report was the arrangement that a children's service should be presented quarterly as part of the main service and that children should officiate [children take part and lead the program] the meetings (Church of Pentecost, 1974:29). These aspects in the report suggest elements of more inclusiveness of children in the ministry of the Church. There is however, also a hint of greater emphasis on differentiation in the Church when the way the various ministries are structured and run are considered. The emphasis in the various ministries, like the Children's Movement 10 year strategic plan, seems to focus on each specific group's interests which in turn could contribute to separate families in the general life of being church. The approach on local languages also suggests that the Children's Movement did consider some aspects of culture in their ministry approach. According to the report, there were also deep concerns on the training of the Children's Movement leaders to be well prepared to guide the children in spiritual growth (:29).

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Since 2004 the Children's Movement goals have been more defined and supported by their core value statement (Church of Pentecost Children's Movement 10-year strategic plan, 2005:1). Their objectives for the children's ministry are:

- The evangelisation of children, effective training of children's workers, holy living, reliance on the Holy Spirit in ministry, prayer and fasting and offering and giving (Church of Pentecost Children's Movement 10-Year Strategic Plan, 2005:1);
- Training of children's workers and children's Movement leadership which seems to enjoy a major focus in their 10 year strategic plan ending in 2015 (:1);
- Utilising electronic tools for ministry, parental counselling and scholarship for children and leaders (:5);
- The development of a Resource Centre for children's ministry (:5); and
- Translation of the Syllabi into vernacular languages (:5).

The Director of the Children's Movement, is appointed by the Executive Counsel of the church of Pentecost and has an office in the Headquarters in Accra. The rest of the Children's Movement executive committee members are selected by the area leadership of the ministry. The Children's Movement ministry goals are managed by selected committees and people appointed in leadership positions.

Following is a summary of significant aspects that emerged from chapter 2 concerning the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost.

2.6 SUMMARY

The Church of Pentecost emerged from the Ghanaian church history as an indigenous church reflecting a particular African missiology and ecclesiology that shaped its vision, mission, and ministry and core beliefs. Being a Pentecostal

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church seems to resonate with the more embedded spirituality of Ghanaians and is considered as a telling reason for the exceptional growth of the Church. The suggested indigenous character of the Church of Pentecost and emphasis on self-sufficiency both challenge Western perspectives on missions and ecclesiology and ask for much deeper discussion on how it has shaped or should have shaped ministry practices of the Church of Pentecost. It appears that the combination of McKeown's modelling in ministry in the areas of spirituality, evangelism, governance, finance and Christian ethics as well as the leaders' understanding of their African heritage contributed to a principle centred, well organized and run African church. It is however debatable on how much of this understanding translated into the children's ministry strategies of the Church of Pentecost. The Church of Pentecost evidently considers children as important future assets for the Church when conversations in the General Assembly Meetings over the last forty years are considered. The Children's Movement responded by contributing intentionally to the Church's ministry through the development of strategic plans for the children's ministry. One such example can be seen in the children's ministry vision to win and nurture children – which seems to accentuate the Church's focus on missions. Church activities like prayer nights and participation through choirs in main services included children in some ways in the Church's ministry. This could however be interpreted as more of a non-intentional ministry strategy as the initiatives seems to come mostly from the children's workers and children. Devoted/holy living, recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit, offerings and prayer and fasting are areas of church life where children seem to follow adults.

The well-developed ministry structures, children ministry syllabus and training strategies for children workers, and the dedication of pastors for the Children's Movement seem to reflect the denomination's philosophy of excellence in ministry and expectations for a well-run children's ministry. Such expectations however

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raises another question: Is the emphasis on the ministry running effectively in terms of organisational goals or does it reflect the church's concern for children to be more integrated in Church life where they become fully part of the ministry? Chapter 4 will develop an empirical methodology for finding more answers for the questions posited in 1.3: How adults of today remember their experiences of church as children in the Church of Pentecost and in which way did the Church of Pentecost include children as part of the faith community. The answers from the focus group questions dealt with in chapter 5 could provide more insight and will be interpreted in support of what the literature review rendered.

This part of the study raised a number of significant themes that created the environment for the development and operationalisation of their children's ministry strategies and is summarised as:

- Indigenous character. The Church of Pentecost emerged as an indigenous Pentecostal church in Ghana developing a unique character and way of functioning;
- Holy Spirit centred. The Church of Pentecost, as a Pentecostal church, places a uncompromising value on the presence, work, gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- Missions driven. A significant character of the Church of Pentecost is its missions orientation which resulted in a prolific growth of the church;
- Efficient functioning. The Church of Pentecost is considered to be a well-functioning church with a clear vision, mission and value system guided by their tenets;
- Outward orientation. The Church of Pentecost is considered as an influential church in the Ghanaian societies and;
- Differentiation strategies. The Church of Pentecost seems to follow a strategy of differentiation for the ministries;

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- Adult preference. The establishment of the Children's Movement is understood as a ministry strategy within the differentiation paradigm as children are separated from adults in most of Church life;
- Efficiency in children's ministry. The Children's Movement are run with similar efficiency as the other ministries of the Church;
- Unclear theological position regarding children. The historic overview revealed no formal declared theological positions of the Church of Pentecost regarding children;
- Incomplete list of tenets. The tenets of the Church of Pentecost does not include a specific focus on children;
- Exclusion in ministry. Children seems not to be included in the other ministries of the Church; and
- Futuristic expectations. Children are considered as future contributors to the Church.

In conclusion, the impression prevails that children are seen/held as future gains for the Church of Pentecost or even as objects and agents of ministry practices. Whilst all of these views represent elements of important truths, they also leave questions concerning how existing views on children and children's ministry practices align with biblical perspectives. Chapter 3 will explore some biblical perspectives on children and church which will contribute to the recommendations in chapter 6. The focus of the following chapter is exploring what biblical and theological underpinnings could be discovered in the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) concerning the church as a particular faith community that could provide insight on how children could be an integral part of church life that could serve as suggestions for the Church of Pentecost.

The usage of biblical perspectives and discourse from theologians to interpret themes about the nature of the church and the church's ministry that

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accommodate children brings the research then to the normative task of Practical Theology (Osmer, 2008:4).

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CHAPTER 3

A BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review in chapter 2 raised a number of important issues such as the early religious environment in Ghana from which the Church of Pentecost emerged (cf. 2.3.1-4), the influence of missionaries and missionary strategies in establishing Christianity and influencing the emergence of the church in the Ghanaian society (cf. 2.2) and the way children were accommodated in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost (cf. 2.3.5; 2.4 and 2.4.1) which potentially influenced the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. The religious environment where Ghanaian children grew up, the early missionary paradigms and just the presence of children in history would have influenced the way the Church of Pentecost developed their particular ecclesiology and contributed in developing their ministry strategies. This chapter will therefore aim to explore some Biblical perspectives on a church²⁵ through a lens where children are an integral part of church life. In the light of the findings of this chapter, the study will contribute to the theological underpinnings that can serve as suggestions concerning children's ministry in general and in particular the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost in chapter 6.

In 3.2 the exegetical methodological approach and challenges for this part of the study is set out. In 3.2.4 some key issues that could have bearing on the

²⁵ The concept "church" in this part carries a number of the meanings. It will mostly refer to the broader Body of Christ as representing the church. In cases where the meaning have a more nuanced application it will be indicated as a denomination with a capital C in church or a faith community, Christian village community or a congregation.

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interpretation of church are also considered in the light of comments from African theologians. The first objective in 3.3 is to reflect on references in the Old Testament to develop an understanding of the nature of the gathering of the people of God which continued in the New Testament. The focus on the Old Testament will be dealt with descriptively. The implications of this focus on the gathering of God's people will come to the fore in chapter 6 where I will make suggestions in the light thereof. This is followed by an exposition of relevant texts in the book of Acts with the objective to develop biblical underpinnings for an interpretation of church. A key aspect that guides this research therefore focuses on developing a biblical rationale for interpreting the concept of church as a particular environment for all people where children are integral part of church life and which will also contribute to the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 6. The discussion joins current theological discourse on child theology in the church²⁶ that will necessarily include African perspectives.

3.2 A CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPT OF CHURCH

This study sourced relevant information from both the Old Testament (focusing on specific texts referring to Israel as a people of God) and the New Testament (specifically the narrative of the book of Acts where there are reflections on the church) to explore the essence of being church and where children fit in. In defining the nature of the church both, the empirical-dynamic²⁷ as well as the

²⁶ John Collier (ed) in *Toddling to the Kingdom* (2009) considers children as the most oppressed social group and calls for a theology that develop perspectives on the understanding what is meant by "The Kingdom of God" and how to live in it when a child is placed in the midst of the church (Cover page).

²⁷In his work *Christian Theology* Millard Erickson (2013:592-593) points to the postmodern orientation whereby modern theology is said to be less interested in the essence of the church,

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biblical-philological²⁸ approach are acknowledged (Erickson, 2013:952-958). Exploring the narrative and relevant texts regarding the church in the book of Acts will come from a biblical-philological definition of the church whereby the concept is understood in light of two backgrounds namely, that of the Old Testament and that of classical Greek (:954). When the church is interpreted as also a dynamically becoming entity (empirical-dynamic approach) it creates in this study a healthy tension with an understanding of church developed through a contextual theological approach. The empirical-dynamic approach suggests a focus on what the church is to be emerging inductively from its engagement with what it is (empirical-dynamic), where the condition of the world and the problems within it shape what the church is to be (Erickson, 2013:952). An argument levelled at such an approach is that the concept of church could be defined through other disciplines like the social sciences, biology or anthropology rather than dogmatic or systematic theology, and which could challenge the church's traditional perspectives on the doctrines of the church (2013:953).

3.2.1 Exegetical considerations noted for interpretation of the Bible regarding the church and children

Friedl and Friedl (2002:444) propose a methodology of exegesis, which reflects recent developments in European and African Christian tradition with

what it "really is" or "ought to be," than in its embodiment, what it concretely is or dynamically becoming. The shift in emphasis is therefore more from a theoretical essence to empirical presence (2013:592-593). The church is therefore now viewed as dynamic – an existentialist interpretation.

²⁸ The biblical-philological definition of church is developed through the exposition of Old Testament and New Testament Scripture. The meaning of the New Testament concept of church must be seen against two backgrounds, that of classical Greek and that of the Old Testament (Erickson, 2013:954).

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acknowledgement to the Jewish tradition of interpretation. Exegesis is herein considered as only a means serving the understanding that a community of faith has of Scripture in regard to the issue of church and children's presence in the church, and is not an end in itself (Friedl & Friedl, 2002:444). Concerning a biblical exposition and interpretation of the relationship between the life world of Jews (Old Testament and New Testament) and the church, Carson²⁹ (1984:130), proposes a "*new hermeneutics*" that teach scholars to be careful and self-conscious about their limitations and prejudices when the Word of God is approached. His work on *Exegetical Fallacies* raises a number of challenging issues which contribute to the development of serious word-, grammatical-, and logical fallacies when the Bible text is interpreted. Supporting such possible dangers associated with the interpretation of the Bible, Mounce (2006:xiii) refers to the fact that words in the Bible have a semantic range which open up the possibility for a "bundle of meanings" which could lead to wrong conclusions. Whilst words have a range of meanings it is the context of the sentence primarily that determines what any one word means in any one verse (Mounce, 2006:vii). Consequently, the approach to the study is firstly to admit the study's possible shortcomings whilst attempting to find correlation between the Hebrew text, reflections on Hebrew thought in the Old Testament and the New Testament perspectives on the church (in particular the book of Acts), when relying on the Hebrew or Greek text. The study also acknowledges the complexities in interpreting the world of the Bible for the reader today. It is therefore expected that contextualisation will result in differing interpretations when considering what it was meant to say for the people of that time and what the implication is for the reader today living in a particular context.

²⁹ D.A. Carson is a New Testament lecturer at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and obtained his Ph.D. degree from Cambridge University.

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The study will therefore rely on the opinions of others and what could be understood when applied to the context of the Church of Pentecost.

3.2.2 Current hermeneutical approaches when church and children are considered

Another insightful hermeneutical approach to interpret the Bible in terms of the church and the place and role of children in the church, comes from the Child Theology Movement. Contributions came from people like Marcia Bunge (2004), Keith White (2009), Swaroop (2011) and Grobbelaar (2012). Their works appear to encourage deeper thinking and more conversations which challenge prevailing theological perspectives on why and how children should be included in the ministry of the church and what children can contribute to the church. It is considered as a theology for children and therefore of interest to all Christians (Collier, 2009:7). For example, emerging theological themes raised during the Now and Next Conference in Nairobi, 2011 included Children as signs of the Kingdom of God, the Church and the Child, Child Theology and Children in Mission (White, 2011:3). It created a framework for deeper theological reflection whereby various issues concerning children and the church can receive attention from a practitioner's perspective as well as theological and academic perspective. Other contributions made to the above conference came from Africans like Banda, Boyo, Nakah and Malherbe on topics like Children as signs of the Kingdom of God, Church, and Child Theology – A challenge to seminaries. The Child Theology Movement also placed an intentional focus on Africa with conferences in Cape Town, and two conferences in Ethiopia. Grobbelaar contributed further to the African conversation within the Child Theology Movement with his work "*Child Theology And The African Context*" (2012). Collier (2009:7) posits a critical understanding about the Child Theology Movement in that it is not a theology, which has children and other issues relating to them as primary foci. It is rather a focus of "God in Christ" and the placing of children in the midst of the church as to

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bring a new perspective on the way God does things (2009:7-8). Child theology is therefore considered a hermeneutical activity where children become the hermeneutical lens for interpreting Scripture (Grobbelaar, 2008:30, cf. Grobbelaar, 2012:6).

In the light of the African context of the study it will be important to reckon also with African perspectives on how to approach and interpret the Bible. The Bible plays a definitive role in the lives of African Christians and Nthamburi and Waruta (1997:52) indicate that the Bible is emphasised as a community document with a message for and to the community. The hermeneutical approach is thus postulated as a community orientation to the Bible where individual roles and concerns are subordinated to the destiny of the community (:52). Some of the common themes that arise within African hermeneutics are the faith in the community and sense of belonging to a visible distinct community, which in this study is considered as a gathering of the people of God (Nthamburi & Waruta, 1997:55). Moila (2002:5) expands even more on the welcoming environment of the African community when he approaches an understanding of church through the hermeneutical lens of hospitality. He (:5) contends that in line with the New Testament idea of church, African Christians perceive the church as a fellowship of Christians rather than a building. The “hospitality” paradigm remains a very important consideration for African ecclesiology and exploring this theme further is encouraged by Coetsee and Grobbelaar (2013:17-19) in their work “*A church where children are welcome.*” A historical-critical exegesis route dealing primarily with the original intention of author(s) during the exploration of the being of church as a particular environment that accommodates African expectations, will imply that the text (the object of the research), has intrinsic meaning and that the readers (exegete) should uncover the meaning through scientific activities (Friedl & Friedl, 2002:445). A critical study of the Bible, or biblical criticism, is another important approach to consider in light of this study. It involves applying certain

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principles and methods to the biblical text, with the aim of helping the reader to understand the Bible (Obeng, 1997:8). He (:8-12) singles out six Biblical critical methods³⁰ to be used in rooting the Scriptures in Africa which is acknowledged herein but not explored further in this study as it would result in shifting the focus of the study to a much wider field of enquiry. The use of critical methods to understand the Bible would aid interpretation within the African context and in the translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongues (Obeng, 1997:8). Textual criticism would for instance help the interpreter(s) to get back as close as possible to what the biblical writers set down in their original manuscripts, whilst historical criticism explores the historical circumstances in which the narrative or text came into being (:9). Magessa (1997:32) proposes the following elements as liberating hermeneutics that reflect an African approach to exegesis:

- The purpose of interpretation is no longer to seek information of the past, but to illuminate the present with the light of God-with us;
- The leader of the interpretation is no longer the exegete but rather it is a community activity in which all take part;
- The social position from which the interpretation is carried out is that of the poor and marginalized; and
- A reading, which connects the Bible with life, is necessary, ecumenical and liberating.

This study acknowledges the importance of the African hermeneutical perspectives posited in this section and will keep them in mind when the Bible text

³⁰ Obeng (1997) in *The Bible in African Christianity* in a contribution to *Essays in Biblical Theology* proposed six methods to approach the interpretation of the Bible namely: Historical Criticism, Textual Criticism, Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Traditio-Historical Criticism and Redaction Criticism.

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is interpreted and applied to the church in Africa. The following key elements are noted that may influence the interpretation of the major themes of this study namely the church and children.

3.2.3 Key elements that can influence African hermeneutics for defining church

The historic overview in 2.2.2 in chapter 2 with the focus specifically on the Church of Pentecost, points to the importance of considering the concept of church also from an African perspective. This part of the study attempts to find a broader perspective on what we call “church” and to see *what* in the narratives of the Old Testament reveals a relationship between the concept of the people of God in the Old Testament and what the book of Acts reveals about the church as a welcoming environment in the New Testament. Consideration is given to the possible danger that in the process of contextualisation in this study that practical concerns, rather than biblical teaching, could dictate the understanding of the church (Erickson, 2013:952). It could be asked to what extent the church should use such cultural realities as a part of its practice of contextualisation (van Gelder, 2007:10). The challenges concerning contextualising of the message of the Bible and the fact that the focus of the study is on an African church, necessitates the inclusion of a few key perspectives raised by Africans. Obeng³¹ (1997:16) in *The Bible in African Christianity* is of opinion that it is important to understand the cultural, and intellectual milieu of the biblical world in order to interpret that to suit the African context. The African context is seen by some African theologians as similar in some respects to the Old Testament world but Obeng (:16) concedes

³¹ Emmanuel Obeng has been Professor and Chairman of Religious studies at Moi University, Kenya. He is a Ghanaian with a doctorate from the University of Aberdeen.

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that it is strikingly different in terms of the needs of African Christians. To draw parallels between biblical themes and that of African culture and religion seems common among African biblical scholars (:16). It implies however, the possible imposition of Jewish cultural values over that of Africa which could be viewed as a denial of God's revelation and self-manifestation within Africa's cultural values (:16).

It is to be expected that the hermeneutical processes in Africa also face the challenge of language which is critical for interpretation when meaning and understanding of text is pursued from a biblical perspective. The need to translate the Bible in a mother tongue and the African context are therefore two other critical issues which are considered as pillars for theologising in Africa (Quarshie, 2002:10). Well researched Bible translations, Bible Commentaries, and theological handbooks were developed over many years in most parts of the world which provide a rich resource for researchers when a subject like the church is investigated from a biblical perspective. The issue that may influence the interpretation of church from an African perspective could be found in what Obeng (1997:23), observed namely that aids to Bible studies like commentaries, dictionaries, and concordances written from an African perspective, in order to distil for the common reader the findings of more technical scholars, are not readily available. Although there were some encouraging developments in recent years concerning this issue, the hermeneutical approaches cum perspectives in the process of interpretation, still rely mainly on data developed in and from non-African scholars' input on biblical perspectives on the church. This seems particularly true where biblical reflection was used as point of departure for constructing a workable and contextually applicable definition of church. Quarshie (2001:6) also contends that Biblical studies as an academic discipline are the least developed areas in theological studies in Africa. This alleged shortage of African

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developed resources like commentaries and dictionaries creates the perception that the African student of the Bible, even if physically situated in the African context, may have adopted the economic and class biases of the North in their works due to training, social class and other circumstances (Magessa, 1997:26). Magessa (:25) furthermore claims that Indigenous African Churches interpret the Bible more pastorally than academically and therefore interpret the Bible to suit pastoral situations in their areas. The implication for this assumption is that popular interpretation is no longer aiming to interpret the Bible, but to interpret life with the help of the Bible (:31). It also implies a continual re-interpretation where new socio-political and religious experiences of people are taken into account as an essential part of biblical hermeneutics (:36). Friedl and Friedl (2002:463) refer to Mbiti who postulate four sources to consider for doing exegesis in Africa which is taken into cognition during the interpretation processes in the study:

- The Bible as basic source for interpretation. This choice suggests that the Bible will serve as the basic source and normative point of departure in the discussions that follow.
- The Christian heritage enriched the church in Africa and influenced the theology, Christian concepts, music, liturgy and symbols. As such it also influenced the practices of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana.
- African culture implies the consideration of an African worldview and its values. The relationship between African culture and religion appears to have a similarity to the basic structure of Israelite life as described in the Bible. African culture represents values and traits like family loyalty, strong group awareness, and a weak sense of individuality (Van der Watt, 1999:142). Van der Walt (1997:29) posited a similar view in his contention that Africans emphasise community whilst the developed (Western) world emphasises the individual as paramount. In this respect, it can be indicated that the African culture exhibits a marked resemblance to the dyadic

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collectivism (Rousseau, 2010:139) prevalent in Mediterranean culture which, as such, is the culture in which the Bible came into being.

- African history has shaped the way in which African people see their reality and find a way to construct a life within this reality.

The above-mentioned issues should be read in conjunction with the African hermeneutical prepositions stated in 3.2.2. It will collectively inform the processes involved during interpretation of text and application to the church. The focus in 3.3 is now on developing biblical perspectives on the expression “people of God” and to consider what it might mean for the church and for children.

3.3 THE PEOPLE OF GOD³² IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In this part, the choice is made to explore the concept of “people of God” from an Old Testament perspective in order to develop better understanding of its composition, purpose and relationship with God. There is also an intentional effort to explore the possibility that some characteristics found in the gatherings of the people of God in the Old Testament might be indicative of what God intended for the church as a faith community in the New Testament. This section joins current theological conversations in the field of Practical Theology postulating the church as an intergenerational space that creates a more inclusive and welcoming

³² The concept “people of God” is in this chapter treated as a much wider and inclusive expression of a gathering of God’s people, gathering at different places for different reasons (in particular for religious reasons) where children are included.

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environment³³ for all people. It also joins African discussions on African Christianity³⁴ where Africans' theological perspectives on the church are noted. In 3.3.1 some assumptions and choices are clarified for interpreting the Old Testament text where people gathered as an assembly and as people of God.

3.3.1 Assumptions that influence the interpretation of the gathering of God's people

Exploring the Old Testament to understand more about the people of God, will draw on a biblical-historic understanding of how God's people of the Old Testament were viewed by some of the authors of the Bible and how this gathering eventually became a new and different people group in the New Testament church. The approach to the Old Testament is a conscious effort to read the Bible in its original context by taking into account the relationship between the oral tradition of handing over of the narratives from generation to generation and the complexities of capturing these narratives in written form. The situation (when, where and why the people gathered), contents (what happened at these gatherings) and message (what did the authors want to communicate about these

³³ The conversation includes works like: 'n Ondersoek na die bediening van laerskool kinders in en deur die gemeente as intergenerasionele ruimte (Grobelaar, 2008); various reports on meetings of the Child Theology Movement in Penang, 2002 (Collier, ed. 22 – 28 June 2002), Houston 2005, (Campagnola & Collier, eds. 6 – 8 May 2004), Penang, 2004 (Collier, ed. 28 June – 3 July 2004), Cambridge, 2006 (Collier, ed. 8 – 10 September 2004); *A Church where Children are Welcome: A New Paradigm for Children's Ministry in Africa* (Coetsee & Grobelaar, 2013); Dan Brewster in the work *Child, Church and Mission* a resource book for Christian Child Development workers (2005; edited 2011).

³⁴ The discussion also drew from perspectives from African Theologians like Kinoti, Mugambi, Obeng in the African Christianity series on *Interpreting the Bible in African Christianity* (1997). It also include papers available at the Christaller Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology in Ghana in An International Journal of African Christian Thought called "Themelios" by writers like, Bediako, Howel and Qarshie.

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gatherings) will be considered as closely related in the interpretation process (Boshoff, Scheffler & Spangenberg, 2000:14).

The use of particular words and phrases from the Bible in any investigation could be misleading when taken out of context and so interpreted to suit a particular view. The complexity associated with a semantic approach to the Bible is herein acknowledged and considered in the exploration of the concept of church that creates a particular environment. The fact that words and phrases in Scripture have more than one meaning as stated in 3.2.2 – which Mounce (2006:vii) refers to as a “range of meanings”- will have bearing on the interpretations developed in this study and the results are considered to be possible understandings of the word or phrase rather than a factual finding (cf. Carson 1984:25;128; Erickson 2013:945; Mounce, 2006:vii). The most appropriate meaning for a word when used for a particular interpretation or explanation will therefore be dependent on the context and background of the situation where that word is used initially. When specific words are used in arguments in this study it is considered to be an attempt to clarify a meaning which is assumed to be supported by a wider body of evidence found in and outside the narratives. The Israelites as a gathering of God’s people in the Old Testament will (initially) be interpreted in terms of what it could imply for the church if such a gathering is considered as people in a special relationship with God and each other and then be developed further as concept within a broader framework of church. Therefore the following section will focus on the different ways, reasons and purposes for God’s people to gather in the Old Testament.

3.3.2 An Old Testament perspective on the gatherings of God’s people

In the following argument, two Hebrew terms are considered that are held by some scholars as indicative for the development of the New Testament concept of church namely *qāhāl* and *edah* (Erickson, 2013:955). The first term, *qāhāl*, refers

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to a summons to attend an assembly and the act of assembling (:955). It sometimes denotes the assembly of God's people for a variety of civil reasons. For example, they assemble to hear the song of Moses (Deut. 31:30 New Living Translation³⁵ "So Moses recited this entire song to the assembly of Israel"), to see Solomon crowned as king as in 1 Chronicle 29:1 "Then King David turned to the entire assembly and..." (Mounce, 2006:43). It does not necessarily point to the members of the assembly but rather to a designation of the occurrence of assembling (Erickson, 2013:955). There is the possibility that a religious significance could in some contexts be attached to the word such as in Deuteronomy 9:10 "...on the day of the assembly" – where it refers to Israel's gathering or meeting before God when they received the Law. The context sketches a situation where Israel encountered God in a place that is not a permanent meeting place (Mounce, 2006:44). A similar reference is found in Deuteronomy 10:4 when Moses spoke to the assembly when he received the ten commandments from God on the mountain "...as you were assembled below." *qāhāl* sometimes refers specifically to the assembly of God's people who gather to worship and praise God on special religious occasions (cf. Ps. 107:32 "[l]et them exalt him publicly before the congregation...."; Psalm 149:1 "...Sing his praises in the assembly of the faithful.", Joel 2:16 "Bring everyone - the elders, the children, and even the babies." (Mounce, 2006:44). At the coronation of Solomon people of God gathered with a religious intent in 1 Chronicle 29:20 "[a]nd the entire assembly praised the Lord, the God of their ancestors..." (Mounce, 2006:44). In Deuteronomy 23:1-3 *qāhāl* points to a particular place where God is and which determines the condition/s for those who enter into God's presence. In this case,

³⁵ Scripture references are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT) and therefore it is used generally in the study without referring to the NLT with each verse. Where other translations are used, it will be indicated from which translation the Scripture is quoted.

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the physically marred state of eunuchs for example excluded them and they were forbidden from entering God's presence. In verse 1 it states: (New International Version) "no one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord." (Erickson, 2013:955). Other usages of *qāhāl* seem to express more of a general assembly of the people as in I Kings 12:3 "...and the whole assembly of Israel...", also the assembly of women Jeremiah 44:15 "Then all the women present..." and children in Ezra 10:1 "...a large crowd of people from Israel -men, women and children..."; also Nehemiah 8:2 "...before the assembly which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand." (Erickson, 2013:955). Mounce, (2006:44) also points out that there was more generic uses for the word *qāhāl* which denotes any assembly of people like when David uses *qāhāl* to describe an assembly of wretched people in Psalm 26:5 "I hate the gathering of those who do evil..." The above discussion suggests that the gathering of God's people could be interpreted as a congregation and assembly with related characteristics of religiousness, conditional acceptance, inclusiveness and judgement.

The Hebrew term that seems more relevant for this discussion on the church is the term *ēdah* (Erickson, 2013:955). The emphasis of this term shifts from the place of the meeting to the people who gather as a meeting. More than half of the occurrences of this term in the Pentateuch are in the book of Numbers (Erickson, 2013:955). The fact that the term first occurs in Exodus 12:3 (NIV) "[t]ell the whole community..." suggests that the community or "congregation" of Israel came into being with the command to celebrate the Passover and the exodus from Egypt (:955). *ēdah* could also mean a gathering of people (for worship or legal matters) or even a herd or swarm of animals (Mounce, 2006:43). Most occurrences of this word are in Exodus to Numbers, where it denotes the "community" or "assembly" of Israel (:127). Mounce (:127) posits that the main distinction between *ēdah* and *qāhāl* for the most part, is that *ēdah* are Israelites gathered for a specific goal like

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as a worshipping community at Passover as in Exodus 12:3 “[a]nnounce to the whole community....” while *qāhāl* denotes a more general gathering for all Israel.

Another word to consider is ‘*am*’ which most frequently denotes a large group of people united by a familial relationship (Mounce, 2006:43). When used in the plural ‘*am*’ is also referring to the nations of the world (:504). Most frequently ‘*am*’ denotes a large group of people united by a familial relationship (:504). Through kin and clan one had status and protection and was always loyal to one’s people (:505). The Israelites was considered the ‘*am*’ of God as in Numbers 11:29 where Moses replied, “[i] wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets....” (see also Deut. 7:6 “[o]f all the people of the earth , the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure.”); also as God’s special people in Judges 20:2 “...took their positions in the assembly of the people of God” (:505). An outsider’s inclusion into the family of God is found in the New Testament in Romans 9-11, which suggests that Gentiles who believed in Christ have been specially grafted into the family of God within a special relationship (:505). In Romans 8:29 Scripture states, “[f]or God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters.” The focus on people in the above part rendered themes such as a faith community, and a family with characteristics of celebration, worship and relationships.

Lothar Coenen (in Erickson, 2013:955) consequently summarises the distinction between the two terms by stating that *ēdah* “is the unambiguous and permanent term for the ceremonial community as a whole whilst *qāhāl* is the ceremonial expression for the assembly that results from the covenant.”

An investigation of the (translated) Greek words in the Septuagint for *qāhāl* and *ēdah* shows that *ekklēsia* often equals *qāhāl* but never *ēdah* (Erickson, 2013:956). *ēdah* is virtually always translated *sunagogē* (:956). The use of the word *church* in

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the New Testament is somewhat dependent upon the Old Testament and the Greek world where the former designated the congregation of the Israelites (Elwell, 1988a:458). Erickson (2013:954), is also of opinion that the word “*church*” is derived from the Greek word “*kuriakos*”, which renders the meaning “belonging to the Lord.” In classical Greek the word “*ekklesia*” is found as early as Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato and Euripides and refers to an assembly of citizens of a polis [city] (Erickson, 2013:954). In the Greek world the word *church* designated also an assembly of people, a meeting, such as a regular summoned political body, or simply a gathering of people (Elwell, 1988a:458). Mounce (2006:110) finds also a relationship between *ekklesia* and *sunagogē*. The word *ekklesia* became the standard term to understand the New Testament church (:956). Although the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) authors made use of *ekklesia* to describe the congregation of Israel when it gathered for religious activity, *ekklesia* does not seem to render the same force of meaning to indicate the church in the New Testament. In Deuteronomy 31:30 we read “and Moses recited the words of his song from the beginning to end in the hearing of the whole assembly [*ekklesia*] of Israel” which would indicate a ceremonial gathering. Another reference is found in Judges 20:2 “took their positions in the assembly of the people of God” which speaks about a meeting [*ekklesia*] for soldiers going to war which in turn may be interpreted as both formal and religious gatherings for Israel (Mounce, 2006:44). Mounce (:44) contends that the prototype of the New Testament *ekklesia* lies not in the Greco-Roman history but in the assembly of God’s people in the Old Testament (cf. Acts 7:38) “Moses was with the assembly of God’s people...”), which developed into the Jewish synagogue as the gathering of the community of God (Mounce, 2006:44). The synagogue denotes what is brought together or assembled (Elwell, 1988a:701). A transliteration of the Greek word synagogue means “a gathering together” (Elwell, 1988b:2007). The word synagogue suggests then a assembly where Jews met for worship (Elwell, 1988a:701). Mounce, (2006:44) is also of opinion that synagogue

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can describe a Christian gathering or assembly. Although the *ekklēsia* may find its roots in the synagogue, it is not a subset of it but becomes the new term used for the gathering of various groups of Christian believers (:44). The proposed relationship between Israel and the church as the people of God contains several implications such as the fact that God takes pride of them, they are cared for and protected by God and God expects undivided loyalty from them (Erickson, 2013:959). This part suggests that the gathering of God's people can be interpreted as a synagogue, assembly or congregation where such characteristics as covenantal relationships, identity, ceremonial activities and safety under God's protection are found.

The significance of most of the Old Testament gatherings for this study was the inclusion of all family members as "God's people" in religious gatherings. The order in Deuteronomy 31:12 reads "assemble the people – men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns...." This is a relevant order from YHWH and particularly includes the children and foreigners. Although not always explicitly stated, the scriptures seem to suggest that religious gatherings could have also included children and foreigners when reference is made to gatherings of the people of God (cf. children in Ezra 10:1: "a large crowd of people from Israel - men, women and **children**...."; cf. children in Nehemiah 8:2: "before the assembly which included the men and women and all the **children** old enough to understand"). An even wider audience that included slaves is not completely out of the question. Romans 9:25 states "Concerning the Gentiles, God says in the prophecy of Hosea: "[t]hose who were not my people, I will now call my people." The inclusion and presence of children as part of the assembly or people of God is a significant fact in the context of this study.

The above section highlighted the following themes that describes significant aspects of the gathering of God's people:

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- Form. The Old Testament gathering of God's people could render descriptions of the gathering as a religious congregation, synagogue or assembly;
- Composition. The gatherings consisted of people qualified by words like covenantal, religious, acceptable and relationships;
- Character. The characteristics of the gathering of God's people rendered words like inclusiveness, welcome, worship, familial, relational and safety; and
- Function. The gathering function with elements like relational, ceremonial and judgement.

The environment in which God's people [adults] in the Old Testament allowed and accommodated children to be in their midst is another important matter to explore in the context of this study. The prominent role of family in the communal life in the Old Testament seems to suggest that continuation of the faith community (church) in the New Testament would underscore the high value placed on families in the faith community. The following section explores more themes related to the way family in the Old Testament functioned as a learning environment for children which could also be expected to be found in the church in the New Testament.

3.3.3 The family as primary context of learning about God

In Biblical times, the family was comprised of members of a household that included parents, children, relatives, servants and anyone else who happened to be within the house and was therefore under the protection of the head of the family (Perkin, 1988:768). In the Old Testament those who belonged to the household worked for common interests and accept responsibility for the whole group (:768). Collectively various households formed the local faith community which became the learning environment for children. In this regard Breed (2013:201) is of opinion that society formed an integral part of the learning

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environment for children and youth as they were not separately dealt with in the Old Testament. However, there is also evidence in the Old Testament that more emphasis on the smaller family unit increased to the detrimental of the Hebrew society, when mutual responsibility to each other within the faith community declined (:768). One possible reason offered for the shift to smaller families is urbanisation when families started to locate in villages. In this regard, Bimson (1999:242) states that it was a general practice to cluster two to three houses together in a village that accommodated extended families up to three generations. My interpretation is that it could still be considered a community of people where clusters joined to become clans. On the other hand, the Hebrew religion's emphasis on family [household] participation in certain celebrations strengthened the family bonds in the smaller household group (Perkin, 1988:768). The Passover, for example, was always celebrated as a family thanksgiving meal (cf. Ex. 12:3; 4; 46). In the Hebrew household it was the father's responsibility to maintain the family fortune and be the provider (:772). From nomadic times it was the father's authority that held the family group, or household, together (:769). Children sometimes joined their fathers in the fields, and their presence was always welcome (:772). As in all societies, children were children and there were times when children played together and laughed (:772). In this regard the prophet Zechariah refers to children's play as symbols of peace and God's blessing in the city in Zechariah 8:5: "[a]nd in the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls at play" (Mounce, 2006:106). Children also learned family trades, with boys following the father's skills, and daughters learning their mother's skills (Perkin, 1988:772). Mothers took charge of children's early education (cf. Prov. 1:8; 6:20), teaching them religious songs and prayers (Perkin, 1988:772). The father took over the responsibility for the further education of his son/s. Even community leaders became involved in children's learning experiences within the community as children frequently listened to the talk of elders at the city gates or in the villages (:772). Feast times were periods of great religious significance where

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family members participated in the symbolic rituals of their faith (Perkin, 1988:773). The church in the New Testament emerged amidst this life world of the Hebrew families and it was the families, also referred to as households (cf. 3.5.3), that seems to have become the face of the early church.

The fact that the narratives of the Old Testament were not initially in written form is very significant in understanding the critical part that people - and specifically families - played in learning about God, people, rituals and life skills. In order to secure the future of the Jewish community children had to be brought up in the ancestral faith (Strange, 1996:13). The goal for Jewish education was the practice of the Law and therefore studying of the Torah was a means of leading children in the practical path of obedience to the Law (:13). Wells (1999:62) points to the fact that many of the stories in the Bible like those in Genesis, was carried over from generation to generation through the oral tradition. Only later did it become text when it was committed to written form. Israelites considered their religion and transmitted historical traditions as very important and they [parents] taught these and lessons from everyday life to their children (Scheffler, 2000:72). The parent's lessons were learned from practical experiences of life and they developed proverbs, and laws, and instructions for them and their children (:72). It was a major responsibility of parents in Israel to educate their children in the ways of God (Erickson, 2013:708). Jewish attitudes in the New Testament period placed a strong emphasis on the careful education and upbringing of children born within the covenant (Strange, 1996:12). Children were to be a 'holy race'; not only born from a 'holy' union, but also growing up following the ways of their parents (:12). *lamed* is one of the twelve words used for teaching in the Old Testament and denotes teaching as well as learning (Erickson, 2013:708). It can also be interpreted as human activity where the teacher instructs on a variety of topics (:708). *lamed* can further refer to accepting instruction [attitude] like in Isaiah 29:24

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“those who constantly complain will accept instruction.” (Erickson, 2013:709), and also indicate training in various skills like battle in Isaiah 2:4 “and military training...” (:709). The most important lesson in the Old Testament is knowing and fearing Yahweh as in Deuteronomy 4:10 “they will learn to fear me...to teach my laws to their children.” (:709). Deuteronomy 6:7-9 also renders also a striking picture of what was to be learned and particularly the way of learning as it was supposed to have happened. Deuteronomy 6:7 (NIV) “[i]mpress them [commandments, teachings] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up... (v. 8) tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads... (v.9) write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 11:19 repeats the same instruction saying “[t]each them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Parents are therefore not to only instruct by words but also by a life that is consistent with such teaching (Mounce, 2006:708). Teaching can be considered an important input in the learning process which resonates with the New Testament *didaskalia* [instruction] implying both the content and the act (:710). The Old Testament reference to ‘*tora*’ generally rendered the meaning “law, regulation, instruction, and teaching” was originally used to describe the instructions for daily conduct that God’s people received (Mounce, 2006:710). It refers also to the everyday guidance parents give to their children as they bring them up in the fear of the Lord as in Proverbs 3:1 “My child [son] never forget the things I have taught you.” It seems to suggest both educational input and life skill development with children and it is therefore important to notice that this does not suggest a carry-over of knowledge but rather a relational journey together guiding children through stories, rituals, and life skills in a continued involvement and repetition to discover and learn about God and life.

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For adults it was a continual reminder about God and their responsibilities to God and fellow people, and for children it was an experiential learning experience. In Psalm 78:1-8, God's people are encouraged to continue "to tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord...." (Ps. 78:4 NIV). It was the failure of families to follow this way of teaching which Hosea later criticised by choosing names for his three children that symbolise the growing alienation between Yahweh and Israel (Boshoff, 2000:110-111). Another guiding element for the people of God in the process of learning was the place of the covenant in religious life. The Major Prophets carried the covenant between God and Israel as a major theme in the Old Testament (Samuel, 2012:90). It stresses the promise of an everlasting covenant God enters into with people (:90). Embedded in the idea of covenant are the themes of shalom and wholeness (Ezek. 37:26 "And I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant") and the theme of order, law and obedience (:90). In Hosea 6:6-7 (NIV) God states outright what matters: "for I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings. As at Adam they have broken the covenant." The looking forward to a new and everlasting covenant carried the expectations into the New Testament era with the themes of shalom and order which became part of the early church on religion. It is precisely the task of the family and faith community to create an environment where children can learn how to be part of the new covenant. Herein the family seems to be a critical contributor for creating and providing a conducive learning environment.

In summary the focus on the family as a learning environment rendered the following themes:

- Form. The faith community is made up by families and extended families;
- Function. The responsibility of the family as learning environment for children is described by words like learning, teaching, play, correction and guidance; and

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- Characteristics. The context seems to be defined by descriptive words like responsibility, co-responsibility, relational, supportive, religious, playful, communion, correction, learning, teaching and identity.

In the New Testament the focus shifted somewhat from solely the Jewish people as people of God, to include the Gentiles that became part of the people of God. One critical understanding that must be kept in mind in this study is that the Gentiles who later became prominent in the church, came from a Gentile world outside the closed-community tradition of Judaism, and the Old Testament religious assumptions were mostly absent in their perceptions. These people could therefore be expected to be understood as “outsiders.” A critical aspect then to reflect on next is the measure of inclusiveness of the faith community.

3.3.4 The people of God as an inclusive family

The children in the Old Testament contributed to the history as part of a family. The fact that there seems to be little particular reference to children in particular, the various historic accounts of the Bible should be understood in terms of the context and inclusiveness of how families functioned in the Old Testament. The Old Testament context reveals the importance of understanding family as a more inclusive concept. Scheffler, (2000:62) refers for instance to the period of the Judges as a time when the segmented Jewish community moved towards unifying through several factors like religious traditions, customs (or laws) and sanctuaries (:62). Scheffler (:62) claims that the basic unifying unit was the extended family with the *bet ab* or ‘father of the house’ as head which corresponds with what for instance is found in societies in Africa today (:62). The extended families grouped together in *clans* where they lived together on communion land (Scheffler, 2000:62). These *clans* were again unified as a tribe meaning people grouped together in a province or country (Scheffler, 2000:62; cf. Mounce, 2006:112). The *clans* regulated society, encouraging values and ensuring economic survival

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(Scheffler, 2000:72). Clan (*mišpaha*) is interpreted as a wider and more inclusive concept of a tribe of people [still related in various ways] like in Judges 21:24 “departed by tribes and families....”, whilst a family [*bet ab*] denotes a ‘father’s house’ as in Genesis 12:1 “and your father’s house....” (Mounce, 2006:112).

Another significant reference to the family is found in the word *am* which refers also to a general assembly of people and most frequently a large group of people united by a familial relationship. This correlates more with the New Testament word *genos* which Peter applied to the church when he said in 1 Peter 2:9 “you are a chosen people” (Mounce, 2006:505). The more significant inclusion into the extended family concept, and which resonates within the African context of extended familial relationships, is those outside the family’s direct relationships. Those “outside” included the foreigners in their homes which were normally slaves and freemen. It was especially when they travelled that the whole group was considered as one “family.” One such example is in Genesis 33 when Jacob met Esau on the way as he travelled with his two wives, their children, and slaves and his slave’s children as his family. The word for house (*bayit*) can also be interpreted figuratively for members of a family or household which can include servants as in Genesis 7:1 “along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants” (Mounce, 2006:344). The New Testament equivalent is the word *oikos* which is used of the Christian community as the “house of God” as in Hebrews 10:21 “among God’s own children [family of God]” (:345). By extension *ethnos* sometimes refers to non-Israelite Christians as in Acts 11:1 “...that the **Gentiles** received the word of God” (:505). The whole Christian community is seen as ‘family’ of God as in 1 Timothy 3:15 “...in the **household** of God” (:345). From the above reflections it can be concluded that the various references to tribe, clan, family, community, household and church express common features of a sort of inclusiveness

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concerning people that can accommodate nucleus families, extended families and even outsiders like Gentiles [children and adults].

The way that Old Testament families functioned within family life and were representative of the people of God, points to certain aspects which were destined to become part of the church in the New Testament. Rituals, feasts and other religious practices in the Old Testament became part of everyday life of the people of God and particularly within the household as pointed out in 3.3.3. A notable aspect is that in biblical times life was based on and embedded in religion which was part of family life. Religion was a socially inter-related entity inextricably bound up with all aspects of life (Rousseau, 2004:14; cf. Kloppenborg & Wilson, 1996:7). Religion involves generally a world-and-life view, a picture of reality and a conception of how individuals are to relate to the world in light of this perspective (Erickson, 2013:5). The outstanding criterion of religion, including Christianity, is belief or doctrine, feelings or attitudes, and a way of life or manner of behaving (Erickson, 2013:7). Religious *meaning*, consequently, was articulated in terms that functioned normally in the socio-cultural semantic substance that it had in everyday life (Rousseau, 2004:14). In all of this, the father as the “head” of the house took the initiative in leading the family in rituals like the Passover. This ritual was a family experience where the family met on a Friday evening and shared a meal that consisted of various symbolic elements (Jenson, 1999:190). The purpose of this ritual was to remember what God did in the past for each individual and for the bigger community and what they could wish for in the future. Every enactment of the ritual was a didactic experience that was actualised and dramatized for the children’s sake. Jews follow this practice to this day. The significance of this ritual for this study is the methodology of including children through experience in discovering God and God’s involvement with people. It is suggested that the core families collectively form the people of God, supporting each other in the journey on earth – much of what could also be expected of the

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church in the New Testament. The criteria for membership of God's people in the Old Testament appeared not to be based only on tribe, ethnicity, class, age, or any other criteria but rather on the choice to serve the only One God (cf. Deut. 4:35: "the Lord is God and that there is no other god."; see also Deuteronomy 6:4: "[t]he Lord is our God, the Lord alone.") As such, it created an environment where people became part of the people of God based on the choice to turn from their other gods and practices to acknowledge and follow the only true God. It is in particular in the New Testament that believers are adopted into God's family [people of God] as in John 1:12 (NIV) "Yet to all who received him [Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Norms and values developed throughout history under God's guidance and were repeatedly talked about in families. These norms and values were accentuated particularly during periods of reform like Ezra's reforms in worship, rituals, and a number of critical moral and ethical aspects that touched their life world and which became part of the learning experience of their children. It is vitally important to note the prominent role that the heads of families filled during the reforms. The fathers as heads of families both modelled and guided the family members [children in particular] in worship, stories, rituals and teachings which were part of the people of God's life world.

The significant themes that emerged from the above discussion and that could support the proposed inclusiveness of the faith community can be summarised as:

- Familial relationships. The faith community is an inclusive family with strong familial relationships;
- Unification. The faith community is unified through religious practices and customs under the head of the household;
- A new tribe. The faith community manifested as a clan or "new tribe" that regulates society, encourages values and ensures economic survival;

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- Welcoming. The faith community welcomes and allows “outsiders” into the family;
- Participation in religious life. The faith community is a participative community (participate in worship, rituals and feasts) that includes children; and
- Supportive. The faith community is a united and supportive community functioning with a particular identity.

Much of what is said in the above section is intimately bound to the particular cultural context in which the various communities functioned. It is therefore not the purpose of the study to argue a “one size fits all” approach for the type of family as prototype of the church that the study have in mind. It is rather an effort to find more ways to understand the people of God in the Old Testament and how to interpret the continuation of that relationship with God and others in the New Testament. The fact that families live in particular cultures which determine how they function and how children fit in is an important aspect to consider. It highlights aspects which might also be true for the type of culture needed for the church. The following section will try to paint a picture of the cultural context in which children in the Old and New Testament grew up.

3.3.5 The cultural context in which Jewish children grew up

The Jewish people find their identity as God’s people as far back as God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:7 “I am going to give this land to your offspring [seed].” (Millard, 1999:133). This people group developed and maintained their particular identity through things such as cultural practices and traditions. Children emerge in Jewish history as part of the story of the Bible through family life, the exodus story from Egypt, religious feasts, and religious and other gatherings and sometimes just present in the course of life. White (2003c:190) is of opinion that the Old Testament is much more than a record of the significance of individual children. Children and their childhood years seems very significant in the social life

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of Israel and in the way that the Old Testament is presented as a whole (White, 2003c:190). It appears that there were very little, if any, separation from adults in community life (:190). Children were generally well loved but their childhood was short and they were often regarded as labourers for the house or fields (Perkin, 1988:771). This presence of children presupposes that their life world provided a particular environment where they grew up and became the next generation of Jews. This environment provided opportunities for children to be educated, develop life skills and participate in general life and religious activities like the different feasts and celebrations (Perkin, 1988:768). Children in both the Old Testament and New Testament were active participants in celebrating feasts like Passover (referred to in 3.3.2) where preparation for the feast was a family affair (cf. Exodus 12:1-20). Scripture refers a number of times to the family as participants in celebrations such as in Exodus 12:6 “[t]hen each family in the community must slaughter its lamb” (Perkin, 1988:768). Children sometimes celebrated feasts such as the Festival of Purim through drama and plays (Jenson, 1999:191). Growing up, for a Jewish child, meant getting ready to take one’s place in the family and in the religious community (Strange, 1996:15). The environment where children grew up was also one of expectation for children to assure the future of the Jewish people through education, loyalty to the faith and following Jewish traditions (:10;11). For boys the first steps in becoming part of family were circumcision on the eighth day, as prescribed by the Law (Strange, 1996:15). Name giving was also an important part regards to children and in the early period of Israel’s history the name often took the form of an omen for the child’s future life (:16). The process of education and socialization resulted in emergence to adulthood marked for boys by taking the ‘yoke of the Torah’ and for both sexes by marriage, probably in the mid-teens (:16). Very little is known about how girls were prepared for adult life whilst history shows that boys were initiated into rituals and practices of the ancestral ways beginning at a very early stage of life (:17). It is also clear from the earliest days in the history of Israel, that childhood for boys

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terminated at age 13 with Bar mitzvah, and for girls at 12 years in their Bat mitzvah. Children married and became part of adult life at an early age due to the high mortality rate and low life expectancy, the fear of sexual indiscretions (more specifically girls), the economic situation, and future role expectations for children in the Jewish community (Strange,1996:18). For boys the Bar mitzvah was the defining moment at the age of 13 years when boys moved from childhood through initiation into adulthood. At this point Orthodox Jewish boys receive the law as a sign on their arms at their Bar mitzvah, a practice which remains up to today (Alexander, P. & Alexander, D. 1999:212). This age criterion changed after the Babylonian exile and boys were no longer initiated at 13 but much earlier at seven years of age. At that point in history boys were circumcised on the eighth day which implies that children were included in the covenant from the earliest days (Strange, 1996:15). The way that children were regarded in terms of their birth and growing up within the Jewish community could suggest a credible conclusion that Old Testament children were recognised as part of the Jewish history and in that sense part of the people of God from a tender age.

Strange (1996:1) reminds us that very little was documented in the New Testament about children specifically because people of the first century were not as reflective as we are today about things like the nature of childhood and its importance in human development. When we therefore read what the New Testament writers have to say about children, we need to know much more about what it meant to be a child in the first century in Judaea, or Ephesus, or Rome (:1). What can be discovered about children has therefore to be taken largely from incidental comments made by authors writing on other topics or those who just mention something about children of which some are factual and other fictional (Strange, 1996:1). Valuable contributions is made by non-Christian sources, both in Jewish and Gentile works like by Philo in Alexandria and the historian Josephus, which support Christian texts, the New Testament itself and writings of early

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Christians to illuminate the place and value of children in the New Testament (:2; 14; cf. Gundry-Volf, 2001:31-36). In order to avoid oversimplifying a picture of children in the time of the New Testament, the diverse and complex context where children grew up such as Jewish culture, Roman culture, urban settings and rural settings should be considered in any investigation (:31).

The significant aspects of the contexts where Jewish children grew up can be summarised as:

- Identity. A Jewish child finds identity both in ancestral history and with name giving after birth;
- Values. Communities value children according their own set criteria;
- Inclusiveness. The Old Testament points to inclusiveness and does not seem to encourage the separation of children in religious life from adults;
- Transferability. Children are intentionally prepared to carry over culture, values and skills to the next generation;
- Initiation. Communities determine entry points for children to advance to the following stage in life; and
- Diversity. The diversity of the various contexts where children grew up seems to determine the fate of children and also the response to children's needs.

In the following part a few examples where children played different roles in their communities in the Bible is explored.

3.3.2 Examples of the role of children in the Old Testament

Communities, and in particular the adults, respond in different ways to the presence of children in their midst. The way that children are accommodated and treated in a community seems to relate to various aspects like culture, tradition and the particular context where it happens. Literature found on Ancient Hebrew and Gentile cultures reveals similar tendencies (Strange, 1996:3). This study

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acknowledges that there were less positive pictures in history on the way children, and women, were treated in ancient societies as well as the era of the New Testament church. Accounts of brutality against children such as harsh physical punishment and even incidents where children were abandoned on the city trash heaps, are found in ancient literature (Strange, 1996:2). Roman history for instance, records accounts of where the father as "the law giver" could imprison his own son, scourge, put in chains, or even put him to death (Gundrey-Volf, 2001:33). The study will however, focus more on positive aspects found in early history, both the Old testament and New Testament periods and aim to discover elements which could would give insight into the way a Christian community could respond to the presence of children. Children in the Old Testament-Jewish context seem to have a fundamentally positive significance and role in societies (:34). Infant males who received the sign of the covenant (circumcision, cf. Gen. 17:10-14) were expected to assume covenantal responsibilities as members of God's covenant with Israel (:35). The fact that the narratives of the Bible do not place a particular focus on children is sometimes interpreted that children are not important or significant in the Bible. Following are a few examples where children can be found in the Bible and how adults responded to children. Some boys were dedicated to Temple service from a very young age and then grew up in the Temple to become a prophet, priest or judge. One such dedication of a child to the Temple, as in the case of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 1:24), occurred at a particular stage in the history of the Israelite tribes and for a particular purpose (Scheffler, 2000:77). 1 Samuel 1:24 (NIV) states about Samuel "after he was weaned, she [his mother] took the boy with her, young as he was...."; verse 28: "so now I give him to the Lord...." Dedication of this child to God could then suggest that the mother, as an adult, was convinced that her small child could be worthy and valuable in God's service. It further suggests that the people of God, the religious institution and the Sovereign God of the people, accepted the presence of the child in their midst.

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Another significant reflection on the inclusion and acceptance of children in religious and political environments was the kingship of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1 “Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king....”) who was chosen as king in Jerusalem at the age of 12 years, and even Josiah who was eight years old when he became king (2 Kings 22:1) “Josiah was eight years old when he became king....”). Notwithstanding their tender age, they not only ruled the nation as kings but these youngsters were also held accountable for the morality, ethics and obedience to Yahweh’s laws (see 2 Kings 21:10 “[t]hen the Lord said...King Manasseh has done many detestable things” and 2 Kings 22:2 about Josiah “He did what was pleasing in the Lord’s sight and followed the example of his ancestor David.” Their reign as very young kings (actually child kings), with probably the support of other leaders, does not seem to be singled out as a statement about their age or preparedness or even pre-experience in leadership. The historical account of their reign showed that they were not necessarily better or worse than their predecessors who were much older when they became king. Manasseh and Josiah who left two opposite legacies about their lives, and relationship with God and relationship with their people, do in a way reflect on how they were accepted as children in leadership by society despite their age and roles. The Deuteronomist furthermore included children naturally as part of the history, depicting the way people responded to the laws given by Moses (Scheffler, 2000:157).

Children are included in history as part of God’s story in the Old Testament and later in the New Testament playing specific roles at specific times and places. These stories were recorded by the early writers as text similar to any other story in the Bible and included in outside sources like the deuteron-canonical or apocryphal books, pseudepigraphical literature and Qumran literature (Scheffler, 2000:16). One such story from the Bible is about Moses’s sister – just a child

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herself- who played a very critical role in Jewish history around the life of Moses in Exodus 2. This incident seems important enough to be included in the YAHWIST (J) document (Scheffler, 2000:88). The role of the young captive servant girl in the healing of the Syrian General in 2 Kings 5:1-3 is also recorded as part of the Old Testament text. The inclusion of children as participants in the home-based worship of Judaism and the encouragement for them to observe the Temple-based rites also points to the intentional inclusion of children. At Passover for instance, children were to ask the important questions which elicited, year by year, the explanation for the Passover ritual as in Exodus 12:26: “[t]hen your children will ask, ‘What does all this mean? What is this ceremony about?’” (Strange, 1996:17). Children as part of the Bible story reflect something of the way society accepted children’s contributions to life and ways God includes children in the course of life. In order to know more about the children in Biblical times, the Jewish culture in which the children lived will receive attention in 3.3.3.

3.3.6 Summary of significant aspects of the Old Testament people of God

A number of significant aspects concerning God’s people of the Old Testament and the way children fitted into family life and society were highlighted in this part of the study. It is summarised as:

- People gathered for different reasons and in different forms expressing their identity as *God’s people*;
- Religious gatherings in particular, brought families, adults and children, in the presence of God;
- Religious gatherings created particular environments described by words like inclusiveness, welcome, relational, accommodating, correcting, responsibility and co-responsibility;
- Children’s presence was accepted by adults in general Hebrew life and they sometimes played important roles in history. In this regard children’s

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contribution and participation in religious life such as religious feasts, the temple service and responsibility in society, like kingship, is noted;

- Family, both in Old Testament and New Testament, was the primary context for children's learning. The people of God also assumed responsibility as a community for the children's learning and growth into adulthood; and
- A further significant aspect of the relationship between God and God's people is that this relationship did not result in creating a total exclusive society but allowed for inclusiveness. The faith community also accepted outsiders (foreigners) to become part of God's people.

Some relevant aspects of the findings from the Old Testament from the above discussion will also be considered in the next section. The study will in the next part focus on significant elements that may suggest a continuation of a sort of familial and communal relationship between God's people of the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament.

3.4 PERSPECTIVE ON CHURCH FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

The church in the New Testament is explored in light of what the book of Acts reveals about the church and children. In the following section, the background of the book of Acts is set out as the setting for the exposition of specific texts in Acts to explore some understanding of the beginning and coming into being of the church in the New Testament.

3.4.1 Elements taken into account for a contextual approach to the book of Acts

The *context* in which the books of the Bible came into being is a vital aspect to be borne in mind in all exegeses (Scheffler, 2000:12). Scheffler (:12) content that reading the Bible in its original context, an attempt is made to respect its true

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nature. Consideration of the socio-historical *world* is in fact a cardinal aspect of exegesis because the lives of author and first audience were inextricably entwined with the community and cultural milieu in which they lived (Rousseau, 2010:28). Since the biblical texts are the expressions of various individual or collective authors it could be assumed that their backgrounds, belief-systems, economical status and social stratification, contributed to a unique message for a unique historical situation (Scheffler, 2000:14). Approaching the book of Acts is therefore not taken lightly in this study due to the complexities associated with interpretation. Pelican (2005:11) quotes Origen who accentuated the difficulty of the proper approach to reading (and exegesis) of the Bible:

The Hebrews said that the whole divinely inspired Scripture may be likened, because of its obscurity, to many locked rooms in our house. By each room is placed a key, but not the one that corresponds to it, so that the keys are scattered about beside the rooms, none of them matching the room by which it is placed. It is a difficult task to find the keys and match them to the rooms that they can open. We therefore know the Scriptures that are obscure only by taking the points of departure for understanding them from another place because they have their interpretive principle scattered among them.

Pelican (2005:25) considers the theology of the book of Acts as primary means of theological reflection in both the Jewish and the Christian tradition. He avers that the writer of Acts was not acquainted with any Greek translation from the Hebrew other than the Septuagint and that he himself could not have made such a translation or even corrected the Septuagint on his own (Pelican, 2005:35). It seems therefore that in order to interpret the book of Acts by translating it into English with reference to the Septuagint where necessary is proposed as the preferred way to go (:35). In the light of the many critical and historic moments in the narratives of the beginning and advance of the early church, the book of Acts could be described as a book of frenetic action amid a constantly shifting scene

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(:23). As such, the book of Acts could be considered as a roadmap to develop better understanding of the mission, form, and function of the church as we experience it in the twenty first century. Bosch, (2012:125) however points out that the book of Acts remains a secondary source on Paul and not simplistically “fuse” Paul of the letters in the New Testament with the Paul of Acts. The text of the book of Acts is consequently approached with an open mind and honest and serious commitment to learn and listen to the text and acknowledge contributions from those who made it their business to develop a deeper understanding of what the text is meaning or ought to mean.

The following exposition of selected text in the book of Acts in 3.4.2 aims to capture biblical perspectives on the development of the ministry and ministry strategy of the early church where the ever presence and place of the Holy Spirit was experienced and where a particular ministry environment was created through the work of the Holy Spirit.

3.4.2 The Holy Spirit and the church in Acts

The scope of the investigation into the book of Acts is pared down to three key issues pertaining to this part of the study. *Firstly*, there is the element of deep spirituality in the early church through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit; *secondly* the type of ministry environment that was created in the ministry of the early church, its nature and mission and *lastly* the consideration of where children fit into the life of the early church. While the exposition focuses mostly on the birth, growth, and ministry strategies of the early church, the challenge is to continuously place the picture of children amidst the discussion, and to enquire where they fitted in the narratives. The fact that it appears that the early writers did not deem it necessary to include specific references to children should not be interpreted that children did not matter or were insignificant in the history of the church. It is the reality of the presence of children during the genesis history of the church in Acts

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that compels us to also consider their experiences and understanding of the early church. The most prominent influence in the becoming of the early church was the work of the Holy Spirit in people's lives. The presence and role of the Holy Spirit in the early church was the core element for defining the nature of the church. Much has been written and could still be written on the topic of the Holy Spirit and which presents unlimited possibilities for exposition. The focus in the following part is to reflect on the coming and presence of the Holy Spirit within that critical point in history and the effect it had on the world.

The coming and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit not only gave birth to but also shaped the character of the church in Acts. This character was contextually prevalent in the early stages of the church. The book of Acts does not convey any suggestions that God intended a particular design or model for the church. The way that the church is structured and how it should operate was not the concern of the author of Acts. It rather seems that God allowed for a rich contextual development of the church throughout history by the agency of the Spirit. The following refers to and discuss the working of the Holy Spirit in the church in Acts. The coming of the Holy Spirit brought the following aspects:

- **Dynamism:** The coming and presence of the Holy Spirit brought dynamism associated with the way the Holy Spirit works in and by people. It is important to note that to understand the New Testament teaching on the Spirit, both the continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament should be considered. The Hebrew word *ruah* renders basic three meanings which also suggests dynamism namely wind of God, breath of life and spirit of ecstasy (Elwell, 1988a:986). In the New Testament the word *pneuma* denotes also various interpretations like wind, spirit, breath and breath of life (:987). Eventually it had God's desired impact on the functioning of the church as can be expressed in Jesus' words in John 3:8 (NIV) "the wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where

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it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” The text creates a perception that the Holy spirit brought a sort of freedom to the church which seems different from a rigid form of functioning of the church as we generally find it today. The dynamic and mysterious movement of the Spirit creates life in people as individuals and also people as church which also imply that it can include anyone according to God’s choice.

- **Fullness:** The prominent eschatological occurrence in Acts 2:1 “when the day of Pentecost came” (NIV) or “when the day of Pentecost was fully come” (AV) emphasises the fullness (πλήρωμα) of the Holy Spirit as is stated by the Greek ἐν τῷ συμπληρούσθαι (Pelican, 2005:48). It also denotes the meanings “to fill completely of time, to approach, to come” (Rienecker & Rogers, 1980:265). The coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples at Pentecost fulfilled what Jesus referred to in Acts 1:4 (NIV) “but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you heard me speak about.” In Joel’s prophesy the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the godly was announced in Joel 2:28-29 “[i] will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy.” Jesus later told the disciples unreservedly in John 14:16 (NIV) “...and he [the Father] will give you another advocate to help you [the disciples] and be with you forever – (verse 17) the Spirit of truth.” In John 16:13 (NIV) it is reiterated: “but when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” At Pentecost (narrated in Acts 2) God’s presence in the church was constituted (at the time in the microcosm of 120 Jewish believers) and God remained with the church as is evident throughout the narrative of Acts. The theme “fullness” by the Holy Spirit was evident in the life of the early church and it could be expected to be still present in the church today. The inclusiveness of the work of the Holy Spirit came to the fore through experiences by non-Jews like the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius (cf. Acts 8:39; 10:44). The few encounters with children

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in the narratives of Acts could suggest that children can also share in the fullness that the Holy Spirit brings.

- **Guidance:** God the Holy Spirit fostered in the church sensitivity to and a complete dependence on God's guidance. Such guidance concerning God's way of doing things is for instance clear in Acts 10:11-15 where Peter was confronted by the Spirit to look differently at the Gentiles and to abandon his Jewish inclined (religious and exclusivist) perspectives on things. One must have understanding for Peter's reason for not wanting to eat something ceremonially unclean, he was after all a devoted Jew, and it appears valid when in Acts 10:14 (King James Version) he objects: "not so Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. The Lord answered Peter (v.15) "[w]hat God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Already here are the first indicators of a lifting of the covers of the mystery of Christ as revealed to the Ephesians in Ephesians 3:5 "but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets" regarding the place of the Gentiles in the church. The idea of the inclusiveness of foreigners and children with God's people could be considered as a mysterious act of God and is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 31:12 "[c]all them all together – men, women, children, and the foreigners living in your town...."

Erickson (2013:963) concludes that Peter's experience with the Holy Spirit revealed an important aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. It demonstrates that even if believers are set in their ways, even religious ways, they could become responsive and obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:14 "[f]or all who are led by the Spirit of God are **children (sons) of God**", Paul makes a poignant statement about the sons of God – they follow the Spirit. Their submissiveness to do God's will is enunciated in the leading/guidance metaphor but moreover, their true character is revealed: they

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are sons of God. Metaphorically, this designation does not only describe people who became Christian, but how they live. To be “a son of” was descriptive of a characteristic – logically, sons of God are people that imitate (literally mimic) God – they do as the Father does. In the early church new believers needed role models to show them how to live and therefore the encouragement in Ephesians 5:1 “[f]ollow God’s example in everything you do....” It is significant that the word *mimētēs* is used here to strengthen the imperative to the Ephesians to be followers of God. To *follow* God as in Romans 8:14 “[f]or **all who are led** by the Spirit of God are children of God” is demonstration of son-ship and synonymous to holy living (cf. Adewuya, 2001:83). Rom. 8:15 speaks about receiving “a spirit of son-ship” which indicates a new family relationship with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities (Rienecker & Rogers, 1980:365; Zodhiates, 1991:1411). Louw and Nida (1988a:509) describe *mimētēs* in the semantic field (41) of Behaviour and Related States and the subdomain of imitation (41D) as “one who does what others do” (cf. Mounce, 2006:352). Conclusively then, it might be said that the guidance of the Spirit has to do not only with acting on the Spirit’s prompting to do something in the functioning of the church, but also (even primarily) with being God’s children. In the context of this study, it places the church in a position where discernment to what God wants from the church, becomes a responsibility of the church.

- **Selection and empowering:** The coming and the presence of the Holy Spirit into the midst of the church manifested visibly in the lives of ordinary people who were selected for specific tasks and roles. In Acts 19:6 the author of Acts narrates an occasion where new converts were empowered by the Spirit:

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“[w]hen Paul placed his hands on them [new converts/disciples], the Holy Spirit came on them....” (NIV). The *textus a patribus receptus*³⁶ (TPR) states that “the Holy Spirit fell [ἐπέπεσεν] on them” (Pelican, 2005:51). The variety in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit appears to have endowed the disciples with inspiration and strength to follow Christ no matter what happens. It points also to the undoing of the milieu at the Tower of Babel by fostering communication and understanding of each other (Pelican, 2005:53). Apart from breaking down the communication barrier that came with what happened at the Tower of Babel, it also accentuates the continued authority and influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people and the church. The coming of the Holy Spirit thus brought a dynamism that was a reality in the lives of the people of the early church.

- **Unification:** The Holy Spirit brings unity. The Holy Spirit is present in a unified body. Ephesians 4:4-6 (NIV) stresses unity by saying “there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” In 1 Corinthians 12:13 (KJV) the means of adding people to the Body (church) and the nature of that Body is identified: “for by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body....” The spiritual depth of the new birth (John 3:3, 5) or birth from God (John 1:13) is stated imperatively: “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5 NIV). When and where the Holy Spirit comes into someone’s life, the Spirit fuses that person with the church. In 1 Corinthians 12 the Corinthian

³⁶ Pelican (2005:33) refers to the work of Boismard labelling the *textus a patribus receptus* (TPR) as text accepted by the earliest Church Fathers who reflected the Western text when quoting the New Testament.

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church is reminded that they are members of one body – they are “in Christ” and which then enables that person irrespective of age or standing, as one of God’s people to enter as one body into the presence of God. It would be virtually impossible not to see the deeply spiritual, welcoming, and accommodating environment created by the Holy Spirit for all who enter God’s presence and as such endows them with a particular identity as one with the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the unifying person that brings people from different backgrounds, nations, and cultures to a position of commonality. A significance for this study is that it would suggest *a priori* inclusion of children. In response to the imagery of unity as proposed by *body*, Erickson (2013: 961) suggests that it is indicative of a genuine fellowship within the body that transcends time.

Overall it can be said that the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit can be construed as sacred space created through individual believers and collectively the greater manifestation in the gathering of God’s people – God dwells in the church and 1 Corinthians 12:6 states “it is the same God who does the work through all of us.” The Holy Spirit gives God’s people an identity according to Acts 4:32 “[a]ll believers were with one heart and mind....”; sanctifies believers as in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “your body is the temple of the Holy spirit” and empowers them to be witnesses as in Acts 1:8 “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and tell people....” The nature of the church would as such be identified by the qualities that the Holy Spirit imparts into the church, namely the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23 “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control....”).

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in Acts first touched the lives of the disciples and then continued to work in the lives of people from other ethnic

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groups and backgrounds. The individuals that are mentioned in the narratives of the early church became expressions of the dynamism, fullness, guidance empowerment and unification that the Holy Spirit brought (cf.3.4.2). One of the significant themes that seems to bring all of the aspects together is the element of inclusiveness. In the part on the Old Testament, (cf. 3.3) it was argued that the God's people demonstrated a sense of **inclusiveness** whereby other non-Hebrews could join them. God is furthermore revealed in the Old Testament as the God of **all people** for those who choose to obey and follow God. The Holy Spirit also came for all people and it translated into creating what we know today as *church*. In the light of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the church, a few characteristics of the church in Acts needs to be highlighted. The following section will consider some significant features of New Testament church.

3.4.2.1 Unification

Important foci of the work of the Holy Spirit seem to be the formation of a gathering of God's people. The first group of people touched by the coming of the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 2:41 (NIV) "those who accepted this message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." This first group of people grew in numbers and became a group with an emerging identity. The Holy Spirit integrated people from all walks of life into an entity that were destined to pursue mutual aspects of life in worship and service. The first Christians became the first church and the carriers of the Good News about Christ. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit and unified as one "*body*" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). The emergence of the church into the outside world would imply that the "apostolic" church was also becoming the "catholic" church (:57). This "catholic" church appears to have become all-inclusive – a group better described as a gathering of God's people sharing a common abiding presence of the Holy Spirit participating in common Christian practices. Paul sees the church as a new race, which he lists

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it alongside Jews and Greeks in 1 Corinthians 10:32 : “[d]on’t give offence to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God.”

The various images and metaphors given to the church like a body, a temple or a building convey some perspectives on where and how Christians [church members] fit as Christians [God’s people] into it as a unity. The church seems to know itself to be the future people of God (Elwell, 1988a:460). To be a Christian, according to Paul, is to be incorporated in a unified community of persons growing towards expressing the reality of Christ in its common life and work as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:27: “[n]ow all of you together are Christ’s body....” (:460). The church seems sufficiently equipped with leadership and gifts to fulfil God’s purposes on earth as seen in 1 Corinthians 12:28 “here is a list of some of the members [unified body] that God has placed in the body of Christ: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers....” The church is also the avenue [unified body] through which God’s wisdom is made known to others as in Ephesians 1:17 “so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.”

The church was also a place where the people of God as a unified entity could experience fellowship and worship. The first Christians apparently had no separate church buildings in which to meet (Strange, 1996:72). Christians themselves are seen as the building blocks, which form the structure of “a holy temple of the Lord” which suggest that the community of believers is God’s building (Elwell, 1988a:460). When the Christians [church] came together for worship it was in homes of church members as seen in Paul’s reference to the church meeting place in his greetings to Priscilla and Aquila in Romans 16:5 : “please give my greetings to the church that meets in their home” (:72). Mounce (2006:110) is also of opinion that Paul never thinks about church as a physical structure but as a dedicated group of disciples of Jesus Christ. Further references to places of worship is also made in Philemon :2 “to the church that meets in your house”; and

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Colossians 4:15 “and those who meet in her house.” Strange (1996:70) argues that the pattern of Christian worship was not fixed or unvarying either from place to place, or over time. The emphasis seems rather to be placed on the people who meet as a unified body and not so much as the place of worship. It is furthermore not easy to form a clear picture of exactly what it was like to experience or take part in the worship of the early church. Neither is there in the narratives of the New Testament formal instructions to the early church for either the type of place or building or how a gathering should be (liturgically) structured. One such locality where Christians gathered and the reason for their gathering is stated in Acts 16:13. When Paul went to a gathering to worship he expected “to find a place of prayer” (NIV). Acts 16:13 is translated in the KJV as “we went forth outside the city by a river where was customary prayer....” προσευχή semantically fits in the domain of Communication (cf. Louw and Nida, 1988b:389) – the act of prayer – but under subdomain M, “pray” (:409) is explained as “a place where people customarily meet to pray.” As such, it would also refer to a sacred gathering place for unified body’s worship (Pelican, 2005:187). This perspective of a sacred place for Jewish worship is apparently supported by Mounce (2006:532) as a possible interpretation for *proseuchomai* in Acts 16:13 “some people met for prayer....”, and could denote a place of prayer such as a synagogue or temple, which is to be called a house of prayer as in Matthew 21:13 “[m]y Temple will be called a place of prayer....” A similar interpretation is also found in Zodhiates (1991:61) as place where people are “to pray to God.” The place of prayer before the coming of the Holy Spirit was the Second Temple which is considered the house of Jesus’ Father as in Luke 2:49 “in my Father’s house”, a house of worship and prayer as mentioned in Luke 19:46 “[m]y temple will be a place of prayer....”, and the place where Jesus (and also the Apostles) prayed and taught as in Luke 19:47 “[h]e taught daily in the Temple....” (cf. also 21:37; Acts 3:1-26; 4:1; 5:20). Israel also worshiped God in the synagogue like in Acts 7:7 (NLT) “[i]n the end they will come

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out and worship me in this place [synagogue]” and which seems to remain one of the places to which believers continued to go (Pelican, 2005:105).

Contrarily, in his address to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:48 (NIV) Stephen said “the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands...” It may be surmised that in the context of his address (Acts 7), before he was stoned (Acts 7:58), Stephen did not denigrate the Temple as a place of prayer but he severely criticised the formal religiousness of God’s people (which, effectively, brought shame on the place of worship). However, although the place was held as a sacred domain, a new order has come where communion with God is not restricted to a building but he now dwells in believers by the Holy Spirit (compare also John 4:21-24). When God’s people [unified body] gather at their *place* of prayer, they represent a particular identity – they are God’s people – and they collectively experience and participate in certain practices and rituals of the church like prayer and breaking of bread. Although the church seems to give permanence to the places where believing people gather, the place of worship would not be confined to a particular location and model. In Acts 2:42 (NIV) “[t]hey [the new converts] devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Jervell (in Pelican, 2005:57-58) notes that Luke does not speak of Christians primarily as “church” but as a people. This *people* came from diverse backgrounds, families, ethnic groups and became God’s people. The focus on *people* as the embodiment of church would furthermore emphasise the church’s identity as a gathering of people rather than a place of worship (:58). The unification character of the church seems to suggest that the church, in becoming an entity, bring people together through the work of the Holy Spirit to worship and serve God in ways and places, which are not necessarily fixed locations or fixed ways of worshipping and serving God. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church developed more understanding of what God expects from the church and what the church should be and become. The Holy Spirit

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imparted also dynamism and empowerment on the early church whereby ordinary people could live out God's purpose in their lives and become a community with specific characteristics. In becoming a community, more characteristics of the church in Acts emerged as discussed in the following part.

3.4.2.2 Communal

The Old Testament offers a broad concept for a group or village where the common Hebrew noun "*bat*" is used to indicate membership in a group (Mounce, 2006:765). In a geographical designation, it refers to a "town and its daughters" which means a "town and its satellite villages" (:765). The noun *hāsēr* could also denote a village but is in the Old Testament mostly used where it refers to the court of the Tabernacle as in Exodus 27:9 "[t]hen make a courtyard for the Tabernacle" (Mounce, 2006:142; Zodhiates, 1991:116). For an Old Testament devotee it symbolise the best place to be and expressed in Psalm 84:10 as "[a] single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else" (:142). The New Testament noun *kōmē* is used in the Gospels and Acts for a small community or grouping of houses (:765). Interpreting the church in the New Testament as a "village" community seeks to include some of the above elements like membership or being identified as part of a group, the deep collective spiritual association with the Tabernacle court and to be clustered within a small community as part of the greater community. Regarding the interpretation of the church as a particular community in this study, Nthamburi and Waruta (1997:55) posits that one of the common themes in African hermeneutics is the faith community and the sense of belonging to a visible distinct community. It calls for an environment where people are being accepted, affirmed, helped and cared for in the community of faith (:55). The New Testament church in the book of Acts can also be interpreted as a called-out gathering of God's people where the village community welcomes, invite and accept people into the church. The called-out people find their identity, security and meaning in life in the church as part of their extended family and clan.

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For such village community the life and well-being of the extended family is important and each member expresses loyalty to this extended family. Such village community is according to Rienecker and Rogers (1980:53) a community where people are welcomed as if they were guests that are received with open-heartedness. The welcoming aspect when received as a guest, resonates with Moila's (2002:5) perspective that the environment created in such community as one of hospitality. It suggests a sense of *koinonia* (fellowship) of men and women [and children] of all sorts and conditions united in Christ (Moila, 2002:5).

In this regard the concept "*uBuntu*" can be helpful as it represents a wide range of possible interpretations and carries with it a particular worldview and values that reflects something, which could be proposed as a "communal lifestyle." Whilst I am aware that there are critique levelled against the *uBuntu* life style, I am still of opinion that it represents a valuable concept and practices that can support the objectives of this study. In line with the African approach to life, an *uBuntu* presence in the church is proposed as Africans feel strongly that people are called to a life of community, participation, and sharing in the realm of God's kingdom (Grobbelaar, 2012:67). Van der Walt (1997:35) posits that the essence of *uBuntu* is communalism with its implications such as unity, solidarity and communality. By implication *uBuntu* calls for a church environment where the other person are allowed to be and to become which suggests an element of openness and acceptance for others (Teffo, 1999:197). *uBuntu* or humanness according to Teffo (:153), implies a basic respect for human nature as a whole and becomes a social ethic and unifying vision enshrined in the Zulu maxim '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye*' ('One is a person through others'). *uBuntu* suggests therefore a way of life where aspects like religion, compassion, respect and ethics becomes prominent shared values in the community. Traditionally, Africans learned their own worth and their role in life within the close relationships of a village (Oduro, Pretorius, Nussbaum & Born, 2008:175). I therefore concur with Grobbelaar

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(2012:40; 72) that the church could also be identified as a “village community” where children are welcomed into the community midst a network of relationships and associations with the adult world. The social structure of life in Africa proposes a family as a group of people or extended family (village community) where children feel at home, feel a sense of belonging, be understood, be heard and cared for. These elements represent some of the values that are expected to be found in the church when church is expressed in society as a village community. The community [village community] as an extended family will provide the environment where people [children] learn values and beliefs and receive training in early life (O’Donovan, 2000:155). The village community also provides the identity for a person as to receive a name and establish meaningful and enduring relationships within the family as well as the community. To conceptualise a Ghanaian family in precise terms, is according to Darku (2005:29), very difficult though it is universally agreed it is the basic social institution to which every individual in society belongs. When the values of the proposed village community are applied to the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost, it presupposes a sort of relationship between the African concept of a family and the Hebrew family. It therefore encourages the inclusion of a communal concept of church as an inclusive and extended family or even a clan as posited in 3.3.1 and 3.3.4. It is furthermore argued that whilst the metaphor of the church, as an *extended family or village community*, resonates strongly with African perspectives on life, it should not be seen as an exclusively African understanding of the church. It appears that compared to Westerners, the concept of family is interpreted differently by Africans. This is due to the individualistic nature of Westerners’ approach to life versus the communal approach by Africans (Grobbelaar, 2012:67).

The last characteristic dealt with here is the “welcome” aspect of the church. Being a welcoming faith community would presuppose interrelated elements of inclusiveness, hospitality and accommodating for the creation of welcome.

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3.4.2.3 Welcoming

The New Testament offers a broad understanding of church [expressed in the study also as a faith community] through a variety of concepts and images, each revealing a particular facet within the early church's understanding of itself, its nature and mission (Elwell, 1988a:459). The expressions of these facets would define the type of environment that could be expected from the concerned church. Some images like the church as a community of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:8; Acts 4:31-37), the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5), temple of God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17), bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2,3; Eph. 5:22-31) and people of God (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16b; 1 Peter 2:9), is constantly re-interpreted and used in the teaching of the church. Expressions based on metaphors like:

- the church became a community of caring and sharing people (cf. Acts 2:43-47; 4:31-37);
- church is a body to be incorporated in a community of persons that is growing towards expressing the reality of Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28); and
- church is a gathering where the presence of God is experienced through a living community (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9).

The above seems to find some commonality in qualities or characteristics related to a proposed metaphor of the church as a community or household of faith belonging to God. The household of faith represents an environment where parents care and be involved in every aspect of a child's life and broader life-world with an open-heartedness that only a mother or father who really cares could have. The Pastoral Epistles expressed a distinctive and characteristic concern for the church as a household like in 1 Timothy 3:15: "you will know how people must conduct themselves in the **household of God**. This is the church of the living God" (Strange, 1996:76). Churches of the second century were networks of patriarchal households to whom its constituent households belonged (:82). The

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church's front rank was composed of the "brethren" where the women and children, with widows as a separate category, were included under them (Strange, 1996:82). The conduct of the household of God determined the environment in that particular community. In this particular instance, it would have been the "brethren" that created the environment where women and children would have experienced a sense of either welcome or rejection.

The fact that people from various backgrounds (not to mention ethnicity) became the faith community in the New Testament would have challenged prevailing cultures and traditions. Breaking from the Jewish religious cultural mould and closed society in which YHWH is worshipped exclusively, allowed Gentiles to join and participate in the activities of the church. It seems to have created a more accommodating and welcoming environment in the church. It would appear therefore that God allowed for the design of the church to reach out to those outside the particular culture and people groups and also include the Gentiles as "outsiders" as a people for God's name into the church. Regarding this, Acts 15:14 (NIV) states: "God first intervened to choose a people for His name from the Gentiles." The inclusiveness of the church as a gathering of God's people also encouraged the participation and sharing in some commonalities in a way which unified the church. In this regard, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed 9 lists four identifying marks of the church as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church" (Pelican, 2005:58). The welcoming mind-set that is evident in the church seems to build on the unity of God's people, deep spirituality of its members and the presence of the church in the world in continuity of the apostolic traditions. The Apostles preserved apostolic continuity in doctrine (*didachē*), fellowship (*koinōnia*), social relations (*politeia*), the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7 "[o]n the first day of the week, we gathered to observe the Lord's Supper...."), and the sacraments along with apostolic prayer and worship (Pelican, 2005:59). Together with doctrine, fellowship, and prayer, "the breaking of bread" was one of the four marks of

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apostolic continuity defined earlier in Acts 2:42 in 3.4.2.2. Participation in rituals might be interpreted as signs of a welcoming, accommodating and hospitable church environment where members of the household of faith could feel included and part of.

The church had to become more organised and the Apostles delegated their responsibilities making church life a shared responsibility and commitment. By the choosing of seven men filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioning them to take care of temporal matters as in Acts 6:6 “[t]hese seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them”, the Apostles were free to take care of the spiritual matters of the first Christians. So, *firstly*, all Christians became more involved in the activities of the church. The inclusion of lay people seems to correlate with the way that Jesus modelled to choose 12 ordinary men to become the apostles and eventually the foundation of the church. *Secondly*, the laying on of hands seems to have become part of the ministry of the church touching and involving ordinary people in healing and ordination of people. It appears that the laying on of hands could also mean that it is a way of ordaining and sending specific people to roles of responsibility in the ministry of the church (Pelican, 2005:95). Another purpose of the laying on of hands in the New Testament was for administering a healing sacrament (James 5). James sees the church as source of divine healing through the prayers of local ministers [elders] in James. 5:14: “call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them....” The inclusion in the ministry of the church seems to portray a sense of inclusiveness.

The new church also seems to have focussed more on people’s needs and mutual support was demonstrated among members of Christ’s family (Pelican, 2005:142). One such example is in Acts 11:29: “the disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters [brethren] living in Judea.” The mutual

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support described here seems to be part of the pattern throughout the Acts of the Apostles (2005:142). Bosch (2012:51) posits that Jesus did not intend to found a new religion, but rather that the community around Him was to function as a kind of *pars pro toto*, a community for the sake of all others. This is in accord with what Jesus stated about Himself in Mark 10:45 (NLT): “the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others....” Bosch (2012:51) considers the quest by early Christians to survive as a separate religious group, rather than committing themselves to the reign of God, as one of the failures of the early church that consequently led to the movement turning into an institution. The early church furthermore failed when it ceased to remain a movement and turned into an institution (:51). Another apparent failure of the church at that stage was that it did not become a space [welcoming and accommodating] where Jews could feel at home and still embrace their own Jewish traditions. It rather became an institution characterised by going back to the law not grace, not embracing life but doctrine not pursuing mission but consolidation of the church (Bosch, 2012:51). It seems that at a very early stage Christians tended to be more aware of what distinguishes them from others than their calling and responsibility towards those others. John addressed this apparent lack of brotherly concern in the three epistles (1-3 John). There may be many more failures in the early church and even in the church as it stands today, but the emerging church already developed positive characteristics that accentuate the inclusion of all people [also children] in church ministry.

Among the people of God, there were also notable developments in terms of interpersonal relationships. One such development was that whilst there was the trend to become inwardly orientated there was a growing bond between Christians (Bosch, 2012:49). Being collectively identified as followers of Jesus, the Christians were speaking a new language and that language was love (:49). This love worked outwards to others but simultaneously created deep relationships between

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members. The aspect of relationship building between Christians seems very clear in the narratives of the book of Acts and Pelican (2005:283) describes it as the divine gift of Christian friendship. In the ranks of early Christians, the concept of friendliness – of not posing any threat to others but the exact opposite – was valued highly. Paul exhorts the church in Philippi (Phil. 4:5 “[I]et everyone see that you are considerate in all you do...”) to act in such a way towards all men that all will know their (Christian) friendliness (*epieikes*). Louw and Nida (1988b:749) explain this important concept (*epieikes*) in the semantic domain of moral and ethical qualities and related behaviour (:742) and the subdomain of gentleness and mildness (:749) to be gracious and forbearing. These qualities come to the fore in the six concrete acts of friendship that developed in the early church (Pelican, 2005:284-286). The qualities are:

- **Friendship is demonstrative.** The sincerity of the brothers, sisters, and children that accompanied Paul as friends to the beach in Tyre in Acts 21:5 “the entire congregation, including wives and children, came down to the shore with us” to bid Paul and his companions farewell, showed their genuine concern.
- **Friendship transcends disagreements.** The case between Paul and Barnabas regarding Mark serves as example (Acts 15:36-40).
- **Friendship reaches deep emotional levels in the relationship.** This was demonstrated in Paul’s farewell with the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:37-38).
- **Friendship between Christians left tangible mementos when one departed (died).** This was evident with the emotional reaction to Dorcas’ death and how her garments were remembered and cherished in Acts 9:39 : “the room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other garments Dorcas had made for them.”
- **Friendship is based on Christ’s friendship with people** – “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead I have called you friends....” (John 15:15 NIV).

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- **Friendship between believers is seen as an imitation of God's relationship with people.** God spoke personally with Moses face to face as one speaks to his very own friend (Ex. 33:11 "the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend ")).

3.4.2.4 Missional

The mission that God has for the church could be condensed by Jesus' words in Acts 1:8 (NIV) when Jesus promised those present that "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." It seems clear that Jesus regarded witnessing as the very reason for the disciples being. Van Gelder (2007:13) is of opinion that the church of Jesus Christ has always (from the beginning) been involved in witnessing by conveying the message of good news to others and as such be considered as a missional Christian community. The call to be a witness of the good news was to be understood by the disciples, and consequently by the church, as an on-going command and Christians would do whatever Jesus asked (Erickson, 2013: 972). Bosch (2012:37) point to the significance of Matthew and Mark's understanding that the first four disciples "*repented and believed*" in response to Jesus's calling that says "Follow me!" It implies the fulfilment of the disciple's destiny where following Jesus also meant being with Jesus and sharing in Jesus's mission on earth (Bosch, 2012:39). Early Christian mission in the book of Acts came also with some controversy as pointed out by Bosch (:43) in cognizance of the differences between the Hebrews (Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians) and Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jewish Christians). The Hebrews understood themselves as embodying and anticipating the restoration of Israel whilst the Hellenists believed that it would be the Spirit rather than the law that would guide believers' lives (:43). Bosch (2012:89) posits three significant eras in the history of the early church that became the focus of the church's mission on earth. The opening chapters of Acts relate to the first era

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namely the birth and growth of the church in Jerusalem. The next era in Acts portrays the expansion of the church into Samaria and the coastal plains until it reaches Antioch. The third distinguishable era in the history of the church relates to the missionary outreach in several directions. Bosch (:15) refers to the mission of the church in the early stages by quoting Kasting who stated: "Mission was, in the early stages, more than a mere function; it was a fundamental expression of the life of the church." Considering various episodes in the New Testament it becomes clear that the mission of the church to reach out to all the world taking the Good News there and be a worshipping, healing and serving community is an imperative for the church and not a matter of choice.

In 3.4.2.1 the coming and authority of the Holy Spirit was considered as inspiration and strength for the disciples. The experience that Cornelius had with the "man in shining clothes" (Acts 10:30, NIV), brought Peter to the understanding in Acts 10:34-35, "[i] now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right." The all-inclusive nature of the Jesus mission that embraces both poor and rich, oppressed and oppressor and sinners and the devout demonstrates what the nature of the early church was to become (Bosch, 2012:28). It is also postulated that in the Lucan writings the Holy Spirit as Spirit of mission is also the Spirit of power [*dunamis*] and therefore not only initiator and guide of mission, but also the one who empowers to mission (:116). The early church was also a missionary church moving out to the world. Acts 13:2-3 recounts the story. "While they [the prophets and teachers in the church of Antioch] were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed they placed their hands on them and sent them off." Luke's picture of church can then be said to represent a bipolar orientation in having an "inward" as well as "outward" orientation (Bosch, 2012:121). The "inward" orientation refers to the Eucharistic life of the community

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where the breaking of bread, teaching, fellowship and prayers are experiences within the community (Bosch, 2012:121). The “outward” orientation is where the faith community living the new life actively engages in mission to those outside the pale of the Gospel (:121). It is furthermore also important to notice that new converts could be considered as disciples of Jesus and not primarily church members (:122). Paul’s view of the church seems to have played an important role in the way that new churches were planted. The intimate link between Paul’s perspective on the apocalyptic and ethics seems to have significance for the here and now (Bosch, 2012:153). Paul regards the church as the community of the end time where believers cannot accept one another as members of a community of faith without this having consequences for their day-to-day life and for the world (:153).

Considering Paul’s missionary strategy in Acts, as in particular demonstrated in Acts 16, and the Pauline epistles seems firstly to be based on his worldwide vision. He then targeted regional strategic centres and chose cities that had a representative character (Bosch, 2012:132). Another notable ministry strategy is found in the way Paul made use of associates in ministry (:134). The mission of the church also brings with it implications for the church in terms of enculturation. Moving into the world brought Paul to Athens where he was confronted with a different culture, tradition and spirituality of the Athenians. In Acts 17:22-23 (NIV) Paul responded and addressed the situation in the following way: “[p]eople of Athens! I see that in every way you are religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.” The TPR put it this way “To an unknown God: whom therefore you worship without knowing Him, Him I proclaim to you.” This missionary strategy in Acts was entrusted to the whole

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church both as a challenge and as an instruction to carry out Christ's ministry in the world (Erickson, 2013: 971).

In the light of the four characteristics discussed in the previous sections the study will now consider how such a unified, communal, and welcoming and mission has orientated church accommodated children in the early church. The following section will consider children's experiences of some of the above characteristics of the church.

3.4.3 The presence of children in the early church

Although only a few direct references regards to children are found in the book of Acts, several obvious reasons can be given why children is expected to be present in the narratives of Acts. Strange (1996:66) cautions that if we want to reconstruct a picture of the position of children in the early church there will be many areas where we may end up with more questions than answers. Although words for "child" or "infant" occur quite frequently in the New Testament outside the gospels, it denotes mostly a meaning of adults like referring to the relationship between "father" and children by Paul writing to the Corinthian church, Onesimus the runaway slave as a "child" and John's reference to "little children" when he addresses the recipients of his letter. The writers of the New Testament letters used the image of the child in their description of discipleship (Strange, 1996:69). Contrary to the teaching of Jesus in the gospels (cf. Matt. 18:1-14; Matt. 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16), the writers of the New Testament letters viewed children as under authority of parents, examples of immaturity and of potential for growth (Strange, 1996:69). Given the fact that children entered adult life at an age when we would today regard them as still children, many would have witnessed the works of the Holy Spirit as either observers or participants. They would have heard the teaching of the Apostles, witnessed the death of martyrs or participated in the activities of the church like prayer and breaking of the bread. It can thus be assumed that

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children were included in any understanding of the gathering of the church as a people of God. Some of the episodes in the book of Acts where children could be more explicitly implicated happened when families, or households as they were called, were brought in direct contact with the Gospel. One such case is in Acts 16. Acts 16:15 (NIV) says “When she and the members of her household were baptised....” The literal translation may also read “and her household” (Berry, 1991:362). Pelican (2005:188) refers to the TPR Greek (πάς ὁ οἶκος αὐτῆς) and feels that it applies to “all/entire of her household” [including children] rather than simply ὁ οἶκος αὐτῆς referring just to “her house” as other manuscript traditions have it. Although the interpretation of Acts 16:15 is used in arguments concerning child-baptism, the argument here seems not directed at baptism, but rather at the presence of children where conversion had a collective impact on all members of the household.

Another episode where children were implied is in Acts 18:8 (NIV): “Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptised.” Here a similar pattern as in Acts 16:15 are presented and Crispus’ entire household, logically including children and slaves, became a people of God. It is argued that there is no compelling evidence to believe that only adults were considered as those who came to faith in Christ Jesus and received the baptism and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, Luke describes a Christian meeting where the young Eutychus as a ‘young man’ in Acts 20:9 and referred to as ‘a boy’ in Acts 20:12, attended (Strange, 1996:70). Paul furthermore states in 1 Cor. 7:14 “but now they [children] are set apart for him.” It could mean that children of the entire Christian community would belong to God even if they came from a household where only one parent was a believer (:71). Paul therefore counts children as in the community of faith (:71). The mention of children in Colossians 3:20 and

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Ephesians 6:1-4 could serve as an acknowledgement that children were attending worship and that there was specific instruction for them (Strange, 1996:72).

The episode in Acts 21 (Paul's farewell) is a significant reference to the inclusion of children: "all of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray" (Acts 21:5 – NIV). The reference to καί τέκνοις [and children] identifies the children with the faith community as they went to bid farewell to Paul, send him on his mission and knelt down in prayer as part of the faith community's send off. The children became herein part of God's mission through Paul's mission. The children also participated in the sadness of Paul's departure but they were also part of the way that the church expressed its dependence on God and God's provision for the people of God whilst sending Paul on his mission. The unified presence of God's people in the presence of God created a sacred liturgical moment of worship directed to God for Paul's sake and it was not something only directed at them. Peter's address to the crowd in Acts 2 reminded the audience about God's promise about the role of children in Joel 2:28 that God said " [i] will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy...." (Acts 2:17). The above reflections could be interpreted that children were all along part of God's mission for the church. In another sense it call for deep reflection and new insight into the nature of the church. The normative interpretation of the church will conclude with the summary in the next section.

3.5 SUMMARY

Significant themes regarding children that emerged from the Old Testament way of being a people of God and which could be expected to become part of the church in the New Testament can be thus summarised:

- The **qualifying criteria** to become a people of God are based on God's grace and the choice to serve only One True God. The implication for the people of

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God (including children) is a life of love and obedience to God and as such become a group or clan with a God given identity;

- The people of God in the Old Testament being a **hospitable community** welcoming others, even strangers;
- The **inclusiveness of the family** and extended family as a welcoming community where people finds their identity in the community that they are part of;
- The **inclusion of children** in the narratives of the Bible where they were sometimes just present and sometimes played specific roles;
- The **inclusion of children** as young as seven years and 13 years as God's people participating **in worshipping God** through covenants, feasts and rituals;
- The **supportive structures** of the community through the close and **constant presence of family members** to support each other during the journey on earth;
- **Role of the head of the household** to constantly remind the family members about God and teach them life skills through the use of symbolic experiences in stories, dramatized participation in feasts and other rituals.

The New Testament points to an eschatological fulfilment of Old Testament promises of the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of new people of God as a spiritual household endowed with the gifts by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit furthermore brought the presence of the Trinity into the life of the people of God resulting in a high calling for edification, service and a life of love. The curse of the Tower of Babel was broken and a unified body and new way of communicating was created, and people from different languages, ethnic groups, religious orientation, social standing, all became one in Christ (Pelican, 2005:52). The list of people in Colossians 3:11 is not a haphazard compilation as it came in the apostle's mind, but is the clear and definite statement of all possible barriers between people that were eradicated in Christ (cf. Barclay, 1975b:155). The

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correlation found between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God might point to important ecclesiological markers for the church to consider.

The following key themes about an understanding of *church* emerged from the exploration of the New Testament church in the Book of Acts. These themes suggest a number of underpinnings for the church, which will be considered in chapter 6. It includes aspects that could be considered a continuation of the life of the people of God in the Old Testament and the life of church in the New Testament:

- In 3.4 and 3.5, the people of God from the Old Testament became a gathering as a **called-out people**, which could be interpreted as having similarities to the concept of “**church**” as also a called-out people of God. In the Old Testament the gathering of God’s people in 3.3.2 suggests a particular people as a community that lived within a relationship with God and each other. In that sense they could also be considered as a called-out people.
- In 3.4.2.3; 3.5.1; 3.5.2 the church is shown as becoming **an all-inclusive community** that succeeds the apostolic tradition. The church became a **symbolic temple of the Holy Spirit** whereby the people of God as a gathering shared in breaking of bread, prayer and acts of service. The aspect of inclusiveness of the family and community emerged also in the Old Testament in 3.3.2 and 3.3.4. The aspect of relationships seem to be a foundational to all aspects of family and community life in 3.3.2.
- In 3.4.3 **the mission of the church** according to Acts 1:8 became clear as to become “**outward orientated**” and **to become a hospitable and welcome environment** that consider others seriously. The mission also included a command **to become a witness**, to evangelise, to go to the world with its brokenness, and allow others with their otherness to enter into the presence of God and serve others in the same way that Jesus modelled. The inclusiveness

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of the family and community in the Old Testament created an environment of welcome and hospitality in 3.3.4.

- In 3.4.2.1 and 3.5 **the dynamic nature** of the New Testament church through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit was identified which expressed church life in society. The identification of characteristics like unification (3.4.2.1), communal (3.4.2.2), welcome (3.4.2.3) and missional (3.4.2.4) describes aspects of church, which do not render any particular structure, form or function. It implies that no particular model or structure could serve as benchmark for the church.
- In 3.4.3 **the presence of children in the church** was noted. It was concluded that although few direct references to children were made in the narrative of the book of Acts, there is some clear evidence of children being present and participated in church life in episodes in Acts. Families seem to play a critical role in children's total lives and their experience of church as posited in 3.3.3.

It is concluded that the absence to direct references about children in the narratives of the New Testament church could not be interpreted as pointing to their insignificance in the history of the church, but rather should be seen as something to do with the writer's cultural background and understanding of the presupposed inclusiveness of children according to the Hebrew culture. In the light of Jesus' words (like Matthew 18), it can be contended that children are important for God and are reckoned with in terms of the Kingdom of God and that children are placed in the midst of the church. The significant themes raised in this part of the study that might influence the way churches approach their children's ministry strategies are summarised as:

- Church should be an unified, communal, welcoming and missions orientated environment where children are welcomed and given a rightful place in church life;

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- Church is a dynamic entity without a fixed form and way of functioning and therefore not bound to any particular form or function;
- The way that the church responds to the presence of children depends much on the culture and context where the church functions;
- Church is a family experience where family life provides the values and environment where children grow up;
- Children have intrinsic worth and can be valuable to the church as part of God's people now; and
- Children should be integrated into the total life of the church.

The reflections in chapter 3 have opened up and invited further debate on the interpretation of a welcoming faith community [intergenerational] and the understanding of children's ministry. These reflections on the church and children will constitute the normative basis of this study. It assists in constructing a framework of what the church ought to be and will be interpreted in line with the empirical findings for the Church of Pentecost in chapter 5. As such it will also contribute to develop an alternative children's ministry practice theory for the Church of Pentecost in chapter 6.

The study now endeavours to discover how adults remember their experiences of the Church of Pentecost as children and listen to their perceptions about the children's ministry. The following chapter will therefore develop the research methodology for the empirical part of the study.

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective with this chapter is to describe the development and implementation of the empirical research process utilising empirical research techniques. The research question and accompanied objectives will guide the process in choosing the research paradigm and research design. In the research, design specific choices were made for the sampling frame, unit of analysis and sampling process and data gathering process. The chapter also includes ethical considerations that aim to adhere to the expectations from the scientific community and comply with the requirements from the University of Stellenbosch.

The pilot study, which was implemented at an earlier stage in the research, contributes to the final design and implementation of the research process. The information coming from the research process eventually assist in making meaningful conclusions concerning the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost which focused on children.

4.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

The research question is: What was the ministry strategy of the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost focusing on children between 1970 and 2010.

The period of forty years between 1970 and 2010 were chosen for two reasons: *firstly*, it allows for looking back into the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost reflecting on significant religious- and ministry developments in Ghana, which shaped the ministry of the Church. *Secondly*, it allows the Church's members to

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share their experiences of the ministry covering a substantial number of years. In this part, the research design aims to find ways to explore the research question and achieve the following objectives:

1.4.1.2 To **identify** possible contributing factors that influenced the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost with the focus on children in chapter 2 and what the empirical process reveals.

1.4.1.4 To **explore** if/how adults of today remember their experiences as children within the Church of Pentecost's ministry.

4.3 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The research question will be explored within the qualitative paradigm. This approach aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life and in this study specifically to where the church is concerned (Fouché & Delpont, 2002:79). The focus will be on people's accounts of meaning, experiences and perceptions of the ministry of the Church of Pentecost and their children's ministry practices. Qualitative research can theoretically be described as an approach rather than a design or set of techniques (Welman *et al.* 2005:188). The qualitative paradigm therefore assists in focusing the information gathering process on discovering understanding and meaning creatively which then can be captured as data and then interpreted during the data analysis and report writing process. It also allows for a more focused listening approach to research. By answering the question "what" as in "what happened with children within the Church of Pentecost as part of the church's ministry strategy?" the study would qualify as an exploratory research (Fouché & Delpont, 2002:109).

This part of the research process is therefore concerned with exploring specific members' experiences of the ministry of the Church of Pentecost concerning children through effective means of listening. The intent is not to make any

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quantitative findings but rather to focus on capturing church member's perceptions, experiences and feelings about the Church of Pentecost concerning the focus on children. The knowledge sourced from the process will be translated into qualitative data so as to support this study through reflection and interpretations of selected members experiences and perceptions about the Church's focus on children (Welman *et al.* 2005:ix).

4.4 CASE STUDY

The different interpretations and perspectives raised by various researchers on the terminology used for the concept of research design are herein acknowledged (Fouché & Delport, 2002:271). The preferred choice is to understand this research design in line with Fouché & Delport, (2002:271) as a strategy or approach to develop answers for the question under discussion. The strategy of enquiry for this research is based on a case study design where it focuses on a children's ministry strategy, which developed over a period. The term *case study* does not refer to a specific technique that is applied but rather directs the research towards understanding the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasy of this particular case in all its complexity (Welman *et al.* 2005:193). The Church of Pentecost as case study provides the opportunity to learn from what really happened over the period 1970 to 2010 in the Church's ministry concerning children. It also provides the opportunity to collect data using different data gathering techniques referred to in 4.7 and 4.9.2 (Fouché & Delport, 2002:275). In the context of the study, data was gathered from works authored by mainly African academics discussed in chapter 2, archive information sourced from the Church of Pentecost and focus group discussions dealt with in this chapter.

In the following section the pilot study is described.

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4.5 PILOT STUDY

With the design of research in mind, a pilot study was launched in Accra to test and refine my intended research process and to be proactively prepared for possible challenges during the implementation phase.

4.5.1 Pilot study design and process

A pilot study is considered a way for the prospective researcher to orientate himself to the project he has in mind (Strydom, 2002a:210). In this research, the pilot study formed an integral part for orientation and planning for the intended qualitative research strategy. The pilot study was done with exactly the same methodology and process as when the actual process happened as described in 4.8 (Strydom, 2002b:215). The purpose for the pilot study was to test as many practical issues as possible in preparation for the main research process.

The pilot study explored the research question and objectives as formulated in 4.2. The process relied on focus group discussions where participants were selected through a purposive process described in 4.6.1.

4.5.2 Implementation of pilot study

The Church of Pentecost in GAR was chosen as the pilot study's sampling frame because it represents the targeted area for the formal process that followed later. The unit of analysis consisted of four district congregations selected from the available 40 district congregations in GAR. A sample was made from the sampling frame in line with the planned empirical research design discussed in 4.3. The sample selection of 24 participants was made in April 2011 out of 225 696 members and 1022 local assemblies from 6 areas in the GAR. The 24 selected participants in the focus groups attended one joint meeting. They were chosen according to the pre-determined criteria mentioned in 4.8.1. They were Church members older than fifty years of age and part of the Church of Pentecost for more

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than forty years – they were either born into the Church or exposed to the ministry of the Church over that period. The selected Church members' life stories based on their answers to the questions and drawings formed an important setting and context from which information was collected.

The process included a structured planning schedule focusing on the preparation, implementation and evaluation processes (Addendum 7). The ten open-ended questions used for semi-structured interviews were used and tested which were given firstly as homework and then the participants reflected on them during the focus group meeting. This was done to determine if the questions encouraged meaningful discussions and if the written answers could serve in guiding focused reflections during the focus group meeting and provide critical and useful data for analysis process. The question on the drawing of a metaphor was particularly interesting as it provided an opportunity to explore participants' understanding in a creative way and it assisted the participants to express themselves in a way not confined to words alone. It also provided an opportunity to see if any new significant issues would emerge from such a process.

Another important focus with the pilot study was on the facilitators. Part of the preparation process was a short training exercise. The focus group meeting provided a further opportunity to continue the facilitator's preparation through the modelling of the process. The focus group meeting was followed with a debriefing session where all facilitators could reflect on the process and address shortages discovered during the process. The process worked well in terms of expectations but also raised a few issues that helped to finalise the formal process that followed.

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4.5.3 Findings and emerging issues from the pilot study

The first impression of the pilot study was very positive. The quality answers and intensity of the discussions by the 24 participants were encouraging. The process also reflected on the implementation of the administrative process concerning letters of consent, collection of written answers and practicality of capturing and using voice recording. The letters of consent did not raise any problems and all letters were signed and collected.

The written answers were especially valuable as no new information could be explored during focus group meetings, and it became apparent that participant's views on a number of important issues like their positive memories and attitudes about the Church of Pentecost supported each other in general. The documents also provided substantial evidence for the data that came from discussions during focus group discussions which is stored and can be accessed at any time.

The participants had no objections to the tape recordings but the sound quality and language interpretation process did not contribute much to the quality of the written and verbal answers. The data from the process was also not formally analysed because the main purpose was to evaluate the research strategy, test the questions and to see if the data collection process was practical.

In reflecting on the total process, some key issues were identified with the potential to contribute in preparing more effectively for the formal process that followed. The pilot study raised the following issues:

- **Travelling.** Facilitators and participants are dependent on logistical support like travelling, which are at most times very complex. They cannot travel easily to meeting points and it takes effort and time to fit in extra meetings in their daily schedules. This is due to long distances and accessibility of public transport to set venues. Most participants had to rely on expensive taxi transport. For this reason

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venues were synchronised and participants arranged to accommodate each other concerning transport arrangements with the help of Church leaders.

- **Availability.** The gathering of a group within a specific time and place will often present some challenge. One specific reason for this is the intense program followed by the Church of Pentecost, where members are involved with Church activities after hours most of the evenings during the week at a wide range of localities. Participants cancelled other appointments and was assisted with scheduling meetings when most convenient for most.
- **Process.** During the focus group meeting it was realised that the time available for focus group discussion would not allow questionnaires to be completed as part of the process. Because this situation was anticipated and participants first completed it at home, served as proof of the value of this method as it confirmed the assumption and eventually influenced the planning of the main process.
- **Limited time.** During focus group meetings there was not sufficient time for allowing participants to complete their questionnaires. This challenge was addressed by allowing participants for first work through the questions individually at home which allowed participants more time to think through questions and prepare better for focus group meetings.
- **Language.** The inability of participants to speak English fluently was an issue that came to the fore during the pilot study. Most of the participants could only participate freely in their indigenous language “Twi” (the general spoken language throughout Ghana). The questionnaire was filled out in English but participants had the opportunity to speak and discuss focus questions in own languages.
- **Facilitators.** A concern at the beginning was the possible influence from the facilitators who were also leaders in the Children’s Movement. This issue was dealt with in the selection process by ensuring that with the help of Church leaders the right people could be sourced as facilitators and the matter was also explained and dealt with during the training session.

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- **Ten semi-structured questions.** The questions were generally well understood and reflected on. It appeared however that some had to be rephrased for clarity. Facilitators were prepared to ensure that participants had the opportunity to express themselves in their own language and that the questions were rephrased to ensure that all had the same understanding of what is asked.

The experience with the pilot study allowed for more informed choices in the final design and implementation of the research process.

4.6 THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Welman *et al.* (2005:53) consider the population to be the full set of cases from which a sample will be taken. The population of the study consisted of members of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana, which in 2010 totalled 1 701 585 members (Church of Pentecost, 2011). The Church of Pentecost is divided into 10 regions in Ghana and sub divided into 48 areas. The Greater Accra Region (GAR) is one of the 10 regions and is divided into 9 areas from which 6 areas were chosen for the research process based on representativeness and practical and logistic factors. The sample made from the GAR is considered as a subset of the whole population (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:98). The units of analysis are also referred to as the “furniture in the social world,” which could consist of various kinds of units of analysis (Fouche, 2002:106-107). The sampling frame is also considered as a complete list in which each unit of analysis is mentioned only once (Welman *et al.* 2005:57).

4.6.1 Composition of and motivation for the unit of analysis

Due to the proportions of the population of the Church of Pentecost the sample was limited to the geographical area of GAR. The research question in 1.4 by implication suggests that the population of the study could include all members of the Church of Pentecost in the GAR, which by the end of 2009 totalled 306,599

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members, and in 1019 local assemblies³⁷ (Essel, 2011:138). The sample selection was done in November 2011 and 18 district congregations out of a possible 50 in GAR were selected and 225 696 members out of the possible 306,599 members. Considering the outcomes of the pilot study in 4.5.3 and the intended outcomes of the empirical research process, it became clear that a more comprehensive sample would not necessarily influence the desired quality of the data to be collected.

The sampling was consequently utilised to select 140 participants as unit of analysis for the empirical research process that followed. The members were purposively selected by the local pastors from among church members and children's ministry workers. The motivation for the choice was the initial assumption that these members could represent the population of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana in what they could share about the Church. They have experienced church life over a period of forty years either as children from early childhood or as young Church members who joined the Church at a later stage. They could provide important information on the Church's ministry approach and give their perspectives on the way the church is functioning and the place and value of children in the Church.

These members provided the opportunity for the research process to gain some insight on "what" from the Church contributed to the formation of their attitudes and biblical- and worldviews and how much the Church influenced them when they were children. Those who joined the Church of Pentecost after their childhood

³⁷ The Church of Pentecost distinguishes between congregations run by a full time pastor – called district congregations, and those run by lay leaders under the supervision of a full time district pastor – called assemblies.

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years would be able to share their perspectives on what they experienced about the way that the Church responds to children. Logistical considerations like transport, venue selection, time constraints, and resources learned from the pilot study in 4.5.3 also served as motivation for the choices made concerning the sample selection.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION

10 Open-ended questions (Addendum 5) were derived directly from the research sub-questions and compiled to be discussed in focus groups consisting of selected members of the Church of Pentecost in the GAR. The process enabled participants to first answer the questions at home, thus creating the opportunity for participants to carefully consider the questions and then write down the answers. Participants then had the opportunity to reflect on each question during focus group discussions giving me, my co-facilitators and the bigger group the opportunity to clarify understandings through a reflective rephrasing and questioning process. The data collecting process also included a vital question on how participants remember Church life as children and they were invited to draw a picture³⁸, which described how and where they fit into church life when they were children. The pictures were then used to explore understanding to a deeper level as participants were free to creatively attach their own meanings to the drawings.

In the social-science field the usage of drawings has been applied for many years in counselling as a tool to assist people to explore their own emotional experiences in a non-threatening way. The use of drawings is for instance used in

³⁸ Free style drawings expressing each participant's image of church were used as it provided a creative way of allowing participants to express themselves in a non-confronting way on their perceptions of church and children and so open up points for discussion in focus group meetings.

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helping young people [children] to express their feelings, perceptions and beliefs without reliance on verbal expressions (Miles, 2003:11). Witvliet (2008:128) points to the value of using drawings to explore students understanding and perceptions about worship that renders “dramatic and illuminating” results. Müller (2013a:11) proposes a narrative approach to interpretation as a creative and artistic enterprise. In line with this more creative approach to the field of Practical Theology I explored the value of using a social science tool that is normally applied in counselling. Following the postfoundationalist approach (cf. 1.5.1) the focus groups assisted in the exploration of real life stories of people using also drawings which assisted me to listen to the participants. My experience with drawings in both counselling and leadership trainings gave confidence to apply this approach to this case study. The act of drawing is also considered as an integral part of play, which brings an aspect of building trust and relationships into the process (Miles, 2003:10). This prompted me to appropriate the method in this research. The objection that adults could be subjective when they interpret children’s drawings seems valid but it is suggested that adults would have the ability to explain their own drawings and therefore render a more accurate interpretation. Drawings are then an alternative way to encourage effective communication. What psychologists considered as a danger with the use of drawings with children could in this case be considered as a possible strength. As with any research tool and methodology the weaknesses and possible dangers for accurate interpretations is acknowledged and it is accepted that using drawings in this research process could render results, which could be questioned. In this study the participants first gave their interpretation of their pictures in writing and then clarified their interpretations during focus group meetings. The pictures consequently became a rich source of information from which interpretations were made about their perceptions, feelings, and attitudes towards the Church. These interpretations were underpinned by participants’ written explanations. The use of the drawing in the research is explained more in 4.9.2.

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The research strategy also maintained an intentional focus on an African perspective, which could prove to be a valuable part of the research strategy as it acknowledged the African context, and contributed to a contextual understanding and interpretation of the collected information. This approach drew into the conversation aspects like Ghanaian primal religiousness, African children, and the influence of context as explored in the literature review process in chapter 2. Another important aspect in the discussion is the inclusion of an ecclesiological reflection on the church, children's ministry and reference to a theological anthropological consideration of children. The latter would however not be explored further due to the implications for the scope of this study but serve as an encouragement for further research. The final planning phase in the research design was the selection of units of analysis and sampling selection. In support of the total research process, the sampling frame would include literature from mainly indigenous African writers, archive material from the Church of Pentecost and members of the Church of Pentecost in the GAR. In this part of the study however, the sampling frame is narrowed down to accommodate the research process and only considers members of the Church of Pentecost as the possible population of the research. The next step in the process is to establish the population of the study, choosing the unit of analysis and making the actual sample.

4.8 SAMPLE FRAME

The heterogeneity of the population and the degree of accuracy necessary for this research was considered in order to select the sampling approach for the empirical research process. The representativeness of the sample was established as described in 4.6.1 and the 140 members were selected as unit of analysis through a purposive process. This sampling process can also be classified as a non-probability or non-random sampling approach (Welman *et al.* 2005:204). The non-probability approach confirms the possibility that the set criteria for selecting

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members described in 4.8.1 would result that certain members of the Church of Pentecost would not be included because they do not have the exposure and experiences of the Church life needed for the research.

The type of information required and the methodology in gathering information influenced the choice of the sample size. The main factors that are considered were the representativeness of the sample to the population under investigation and the probability of the application of the results to the Church of Pentecost (Welman *et al.* 2005:55).

4.8.1 Sample compilation and participants

Fouché & Delport, (2002:312) refers to Kingry *et al.* who suggests four focus group meetings as a sufficient sample whilst Greeff (in Fouché & Delport, 2002:311) suggests 6 to 10 participants per focus group. Considering the information required for the study, it was decided to use a minimum of 6 ordinary Church members ('ordinary' in the sense of not being part of any leadership group) per focus group that qualify according to the set criteria and which ideally would include some members who fulfil some leadership role within the Church of Pentecost. The inclusion of leadership was carefully considered to ensure that the possibility of negative influences like intimidation or biasness would be eliminated as far as possible.

Some of the reasons that motivated the inclusion of leaders were:

- my observation over a number of years of healthy relationships between leaders and ordinary church members; the openness and honest reflection from leadership which also includes the executive leadership of the Church, about the Church and its challenges in ministry;
- the Church's concerns about children issues seems serious; the approach of the research process where questions could be answered at home at

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first, and the experiences from the facilitation process during the pilot study exercise. The unit of analysis eventually included 140 participants in the 18 focus groups.

Considering the various opinions and arguments of researchers like De Vos, Krueger, Welman and Kingry (in De Vos *et al.* 2002:311-312), it appears that allowance can be made for a bigger sample which ensures that this choice will assist in discovering information which can confidently be considered to be representative of the population. The compilation of focus group members was initially stratified to include at least 2 members representing people in some leadership position in the Church of Pentecost for each of the focus groups. It resulted in targeting 4 ordinary members plus 2 members in some leadership position in the Church of Pentecost for each of the focus groups. The reasoning behind the choice was that I wanted to find out if those in leadership positions would give any additional or different information during focus group discussions. During the pilot study referred to in 4.5.3 it however became clear that it did not seem to provide additional information and that the term “leadership position” was somewhat misleading as the majority of participants did function in roles of some responsibility like choir leaders, children’s club leaders, women’s ministry leaders and coordinators of various projects in the Church, which would qualify them as to be in some leadership positions.

In the final planning and recruiting phase the request for 2 members in leadership position was maintained as an ideal but it was decided not to use this stratification during the analysis and interpretation process in this research.

The samples with related selection criteria were stratified in the following manner:

- The research targeted individual members of the Church of Pentecost who were part of the Church of Pentecost for more than 40 years and who experienced the Church as children. They were selected purposively on

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grounds of the set criteria. This group had the potential to reflect on issues that contributed to their experiences as children and later as ordinary church members through the ministry of the Church of Pentecost.

- Include members of the Church of Pentecost who are in any sort of leadership position in the Church. They were also members for more than 40 years in the Church of Pentecost. Their selection can be considered as a natural part that happened during the recruitment of the first group, the reason being that no qualifying criteria were given of what type and level of leadership needs to be included. Furthermore, most members recruited and who qualified according to the forty years in the Church, were already in some sort of leadership role in the Church of Pentecost. This group could contribute in reflections on their personal experiences and possible influences through the ministry of the Church on their motivation to remain in the Church and assume leadership positions.
- The recruitment process carefully considered gender representation but since most of the leaders in the children's ministry are women there were not any possibility for under representation of women in particular. There was therefore not an intentional recruitment strategy on this issue for the focus group compilation.

In the following section, the actual sampling process is taken a step further to focus on the process of implementation of the empirical process utilising the unit of analysis developed in 4.6.1.

4.9 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMPIRICAL PROCESS

The initial plan was to involve 108 members in focus groups as explained in 4.6. During the focus group meetings, it was realised that more participants were recruited than intended. The process allowed a minimum of six members and a maximum of 10 members per focus group. This decision resulted in unequal

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numbers for the different focus groups where some focus groups ended up with six and others 10 members per focus group. Given the nature of information sourced, it did not appear to have any bearing on the intended outcomes.

The number of participants eventually totalled 140 selected participants in 18 focus groups who met on different times and venues during the period 4-16 November 2011. Three specific days according to the Church calendar and the practical circumstances of members were taken into account in the selection. In the following section the focus group compilation and process is described with the use of tables.

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4.9.1 Focus group meetings

Eighteen focus groups met on different dates and times at different venues over a period of 12 days during 4-16 November 2011.

4.9.1.1 Focus group compilation

Area representation	Number of participants³⁹ in focus groups
Dansomman	Focus group 1 (6) Focus group 2 (6) Focus group 3 (6)
Odorkor	Focus group 4 (10) Focus group 5 (8) Focus group 6 (8)
La	Focus group 7 (6) Focus group 8 (6) Focus group 9 (6)
Kaneshie	Focus group 10 (10) Focus group 11 (10) Focus group 12 (10)
Madina	Focus group 13 (10) Focus group 14 (10) Focus group 15 (10)
Achimota	Focus group 16 (6) Focus group 17 (6) Focus group 18 (6)

³⁹ The number of participants varied per focus group meeting due to over recruiting. The aim was to have at least 6 participants per group and not more than 10.

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4.9.1.2 Focus group meeting details

The different focus groups met as small groups at different times and places and then attended the combined meetings on the following dates:

Location of combined focus group meeting	Date, area represented and number of participants involved	Facilitators used in focus group meetings
Pentecostal International Worship Centre (P.I.W.C)	Sunday 6 November (2 venues at different times) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dansoman – 3 focus groups combined, 18 participants • Odorkor - 3 focus groups combined, 26 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophet Adobah • Pastor Fred Tiakor • Elder Stephen Lomotey • Pastor Nii Anang • Deaconess Rita Yedu
COP Headquarters	Monday 7 November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La – 3 focus groups combined 18 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophet Adobah • Pastor Fred Tiakor • Elder Stephen Lomotey • Pastor Nii Anang • Deaconess Rita Yedu

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<p>Accra New Town</p>	<p>Wednesday 9 November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achimota – 3 focus groups combined 18 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophet Adobah • Pastor Fred Tiakor • Elder Stephen Lomotey • Pastor Nii Anang • Deaconess Rita Yedu
<p>Pentecostal International Worship Center (P.I.W.C)</p>	<p>Sunday 13 November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madina – 3 focus groups combined with 30 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophet Adobah • Pastor Fred Tiakor • Elder Stephen Lomotey • Pastor Nii Anang • Deaconess Rita Yedu
<p>COP Headquarters</p>	<p>Monday 14 November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaneshie – 3 focus groups combined with 30 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophet Adobah • Pastor Fred Tiakor • Elder Stephen Lomotey • Pastor Nii Anang • Deaconess Rita

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		Yedu
COP Headquarters	Wednesday 16 November 9 Facilitators meet for debriefing	

4.9.2 Qualitative data collection process

Data gathering for this research is directed to answer precisely the questions raised in the study (Bless *et al.* 2006:113). To answer the research question with its related sub-questions postulated in 1.4.1 would rely on a number of sources of information, which contributes in different ways to the discussions, and findings of the research. All the data sourced in this study is considered primary data (Bless *et al.* 2006:111). Data is also classified as facts expressed in language of measurement (:111). This statement will be considered in the final design of the data analysis process as to ensure that the data gathered will contribute to the validity of the research. The question of reliability of focus groups combined with written responses as measuring instruments were considered during the planning phase. Given the actuality and relevance of the ten open-ended questions for participants, their passion for both the children and the Church and the positive responses from the pilot study created the impression that the research process could reach reliable and valuable research outcomes. In the process to source data for answering the questions postulated in 1.3 and achieving the relevant objectives of the research, set in 1.4.1 the choice was made to utilise both the focus groups and written responses as the data collecting technique.

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The focus group technique was considered as suitable to African cultures in particular as small groups are commonly used to address concerns within the community (Bless *et al.* 2006:123). The design of ten open-ended questions was based on the data necessary for exploring the issues raised by the questions in 1.3. The focus group meetings were conducted in a semi-structured way (:122). The focus groups were initially planned as the main source of data for analysis and after the pilot study experience, it confirmed the practicality and it was decided to include the ten open-ended questions as a data collection technique for the main research process. Some of the reasons for this choice of strategy are that the available time to facilitate focus group meetings was too short to allow sufficient time during the meetings for answering and reflecting on the questions adequately. Participants could also prepare better before focus group meetings to participate in discussions and the quality and depth of the answers proved valuable during the pilot study. In the data collecting process, the same questions used for focus group discussions were used for the written response for participants. The written answers were used as basis for focus group discussions and were controlled during focus group meetings. One particular reason for combining the two techniques of questionnaires and focus group discussions was that the focus group meetings was mainly done in the Twi language as participants felt more free to express their opinions in their familiar vernacular. The 140 written responses however were done in English, which later proved very valuable. The written responses provided easy accessible reflections. These records are available from the researcher.

The written responses on the ten open-ended questions were firstly used to develop discussion between the participants on their perceptions of issues raised by the questions like the Church of Pentecost's ministry approach that focussed on children and their experiences as children in the Church. The written responses were furthermore collected and treated as an information source for data gathering

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purposes. As indicated, the data gathering process allowed participants to answer firstly the questions at home, which provided each participant the opportunity to express their understanding of the questions in a non-confronting environment. The written answers were delved into during the focus group meetings by encouraging participants to explain their written responses in terms of their perceptions, experiences and feelings concerning the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost within the individual focus groups. The discussions were conducted in Twi and which was later again reflected on by facilitators in big groups during debriefing sessions. Respondents' childhood memories and perceptions on the Church of Pentecost were explored further using a metaphor in the form of a drawing. The reason for using a drawing as part of the data gathering technique is explained in 4.7. The focus of the drawing was intentionally formulated in the question as to elicit response from participants on their early childhood experiences of the ministry of the Church of Pentecost. The use of drawings was also an attempt to encourage and stimulate participants to use creative thinking during the data collection process and to raise their own and perhaps unique contextual issues on the discussion about children's experiences in the Church as well as their adult perceptions of how the Church welcomed children.

By allowing participants to draw, their mental picture of the Church and children from their perspectives created an opportunity to express their opinions about the Church of Pentecost in a creative and simplistic way (cf. see motivation in 4.7). Using words such as "how did you feel" or "write two words that can express your feelings on" were an attempt to listen to respondent's deeper reflection on perceptions and attitudes about the Church of Pentecost and showed acknowledgement of the value of their opinion. The participants were herein encouraged to use their current mental pictures of how and where they see children in Church life and reflect back on when they were children. It implied that

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they reflected on their current experience and understanding, as adults, to describe what they observe and experience about children in the church. Then they will put themselves in the shoes of children and try to think back on what they could remember about their experiences when they were children in the Church. Due to the research question not being formulated in a negative sense and not with the focus on exploring a specific problem, the drawing was considered as a non-confrontational way of expression, freeing up participants to contribute to the discussion. This approach (in a way) was necessary to proactively address a concern that participants may create their own meaning to the questions and may therefore not grasp the question as the facilitator intends or it could disguise the meaning of some of their feelings (Bless *et al.* 2006:124). They were encouraged to express their perceptions on how they see where children, and in particular themselves, fit into the Church of Pentecost. One particular challenge concerning the focus group meetings was the fact that in the end the three focus groups in each area joined for the focus group discussion due to logistic challenges as pointed out in 4.5.1.

The process followed at the focus group meetings was as follows:

- Participants of the various focus groups met at different venues arranged by facilitators as referred to in 4.9.1. In some cases it afterwards appeared that, some of the meetings joined at the same venue due to logistical challenges. Some groups participated in two meetings by first working through the process in their group and then joined a combined group. Although all groups were planned to meet separately it appeared that members of different focus groups arrived at the same time and decided that they will have their discussions together. It resulted in more participants together with much longer meeting time and less time for verbal participation. Although not of crucial concern, it could place a question mark on the choice of a larger sample for focus groups and eventually the depth of the discussions. The

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positive side was that there was more than one opportunity to participate in discussions.

- Facilitators allowed participants to show their drawings, read the answers and explain their answers to the group. This approach allowed the participants to creatively do their own interpretations on the questions and have the opportunity to explain to the larger group what they meant. In the bigger groups participating facilitators summarised critical issues identified during the pilot study and used that focus during discussions.
- Facilitators used reflective speech by rephrasing the explanations back to the participant and confirmed meanings.
- The rest of the focus group was allowed to respond to the speaker and to ask questions and clarify meanings. This part encouraged dialogue between participants.
- Facilitators summarised important issues that came from the discussions and collected the written answers.
- The written answers were collected by the researcher at the debriefing meeting where critical issues were clarified again. The attendance of the debriefing meeting by a number of the participants from the various focus groups was in a way helpful and encouraging as it pointed to the seriousness from the participants to contribute to important issues concerning children and gave the researcher the opportunity to confirm impressions received during feedback.

Focus group discussions on the answers to the 10 open-ended questions together with the debriefing of facilitators provided a clearer understanding of the written answers. This data became an important source to contribute to the analysis and interpretation process in chapter 5. The following section will attend to some ethical considerations pertaining to this research process.

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4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Collins (2000:110) refers to ethical considerations as that which is morally justifiable. My experience in Africa with churches and in particular church leadership contributed to my understanding of the importance of ethical principles when interacting with people in Africa. During the research process, good relationships were established with the executive leadership of the Church of Pentecost as well as a number of their ministry leaders. It contributed towards developing a high level of trust, and kept the research process over the years as transparent as possible. My motives for doing this study involving the particular Church was not to carry any favour, but it was graciously received by the Church authorities. They put a great value on having their Church's ministry strategy researched and their appreciation was demonstrated in the fact that I visited Ghana five times with official invitation from the Church of Pentecost. The Church was constantly supportive and rendered help without which the study would have been very difficult or well-nigh impossible. This is highly appreciated. Some of the requirements included confidentiality when official documents were made available and adhering to Church protocol during informal meetings⁴⁰ with Church leadership. I dutifully complied with the Church's protocols, internal requirements and all activities were executed with the consent and blessing of the Church.

Consideration was given to important aspects like human rights, absence of personal interest and respect in doing research that involve people and institutions. Critical ethical aspects identified by Strydom (2002a:64-75) such as possible harm to participants, informed consent, violation of privacy, researcher's

⁴⁰ Visitors are expected to visit the leadership of The Church of Pentecost when in Ghana – normally the General Secretary.

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competence, publication of findings and debriefing of participants were of necessity taken into account. The research process was defined by the requirements of the University of Stellenbosch, both the ethical committee as well as the contributions from my study leaders, in adhering to the ethical aspects.

In the process, the following correspondence contributed to the ethical considerations of the process:

- Ethical clearance were obtained from the ethical committee at the Stellenbosch University (Addendum 1);
- Project proposal for the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Non-Health), in which procedures, risks, and explanations were outlined for their consideration for approval (Addendum 2);
- Personal letter to the executive leadership of the Church of Pentecost, explaining research goals and requirements, and requesting permission for the research (Addendum 3);
- Letter from the General Secretary, stating the leadership's permission given at their board meeting, to engage 6 areas in GAR for research purposes; Church leadership arranged the specific targeted areas with local pastors (Addendum 4);
- Questionnaire used for both the focus group discussions (pilot study and actual focus groups). (Addendum 5);
- Letters of consent whereby the Church and participants were informed about the purpose, implications and expectations of the research process and which was signed by all participants (Example in Addendum 6); and
- Planning schedule of empirical process (Addendum 7).

My personal experience and understanding of people and processes assisted in considering all relevant aspects carefully. Relationships with people and the methodology that was followed during the research process allowed the research

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process to be transparent and open for proactive and constant identification of possible problem areas. Following is an overview of the pilot study which was done in the same way as the main empirical process and which assisted in the final design of the actual research process. Following are some operational considerations that came from the experience with the pilot study.

4.11 OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The pilot study allowed for better preparation for the actual focus group meetings later in November 2011, and gave the opportunity to recruit five leaders and four assistants who were involved with the pilot study exercise. Each leader also had an assistant present at the focus group meetings whom served as help with logistics. The reasons for this choice can be summarised as follows:

- Quality facilitators were appointed to facilitate the processes. Due to logistic challenges it would be impossible for me to attend all meetings personally;
- The leadership of the Church of Pentecost also expected their ministry leadership to be included in the process. Most of the leaders were pastors in the various districts that were identified for the focus group meetings. Due to the open relationship with these pastors over an extended period of time there was enough mutual trust built up to not only accept that they will remain objective during the focus group meetings but also to contribute to the veracity of the research. The apparent good relationships between the leaders present at the meetings and congregation members convinced me that the participants participated freely without fear of intimidation by pastors. Given the nature of the research, this was not a major concern;
- The language barrier could be overcome with people able to articulate their thoughts in their native tongue;

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- The profile of the facilitators seemed important for Church members. The initial group indicated that they felt more at ease with people from their own faith tradition and who they considered to be in a leadership position;
- The chosen leaders also had the potential to do summaries and reflect adequately in the debriefing sessions that followed; and
- The leaders also used their assistants to aid in logistic arrangements and during the focus group discussions. The assistant's role was to help listen what is said and participated later in debriefing sessions. They were not to participate in discussions or contribute to the flow of the focus group discussions.

In order to prepare the facilitators the Children's Movement leadership arranged a training event for leaders with the encouragement and support of the Executive leadership. The leaders selected for the focus group facilitation also attended a previous training in Ghana in 2009 with children's ministry leaders from the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches where they were exposed to facilitation skills. Three of the facilitators also attended leadership-training processes at Petra Institute where their facilitation skills were developed. At the facilitator's training meeting in Ghana the following process was followed:

- The reason for meeting and expectations from them was explained;
- The meeting reflected on the pilot focus group meeting process and dealt with questions from the facilitators. They were also allowed to explain to others in the group their understanding of the process;
- Demonstrated the process on how to use the ten open-ended questions with good reflection questions;
- Put clarification questions to the five facilitators, and included aspects like logistic challenges, exploration of deeper understandings and record keeping systems;

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- Explained as clearly as possible expected outcomes from the focus group meetings;
- Explained the process with documentation, including the letters of consent to be explained, and signed, and all papers to be collected and handed in at the head office;
- The group decided on the strategic approach to the exercise. The leaders suggested that they would hand out the questionnaire before the time for the selected participants and then use the focus group discussion for deeper clarification and explanation within the groups;
- Ensured that the facilitators understood the importance of being objective in discussions; and
- Asked for their commitments and clarified my role in supporting them.

4.12 CONCLUSION

The development of this part of the research process can (retrospectively) be considered a process that conformed to standard logic (De Vos, 2002:78). On grounds of the research question and planned objectives, this process could be considered as basic research. The choice for a qualitative design assisted in developing the study as a case study where the data was explored through creative means using focus group meetings.

The research design allowed for the data gathering process to be approached creatively but also in a semi-structured and logical way. The design of the research process allowed for specific choices for critical aspects like the sample selection, sampling frame and the units of analysis, which proved during the implementation process to be effective. The focus group meetings became a critical source of collecting raw data needed for the report writing and findings. Debriefing sessions gave another opportunity to confirm and test some of the understandings.

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The planning and implementation of the pilot study focus group meeting brought good insights used during the planning and preparation phases. The ability to explore meaningful conversations with the use of the ten open-ended questions developed confidence in the use of the questions. The drawings in particular provided valuable insight into participant's experiences as children in the Church of Pentecost. Practical challenges like logistic arrangements for traveling purposes, language considerations, and time factors were considered and prepared for proactively and finally contributed to a successful process.

The research also challenged the researcher on issues like bias interpretation of what is seen and heard and manipulation of the process. The research process was experienced by the author as outsider but was also allowed to come close to the insiders during the process. Perceptions were tested during the process and were guided by ethical and scientific considerations. Finally, the collected data was submitted to a research analyst for analysis and report writing and interpreted in chapter 5.

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CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the interpretation of the empirical research results from the collected data, which was gathered through the scientific enquiry process, described in chapter 4. The aim was to discover significant ministry-related elements that could explain and describe the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. Given the nature of qualitative research, the analysis and identification of emergent themes actually happened during the study. It was then formally dealt with later in the interpretation process in 5.4. (cf. Swadener, 2000:298). The research results in this report are based on the written and verbal answers for the 10 open-ended questions used for focus group discussions. It was then interpreted through a qualitative process described in 5.2. The data collected from the 140 participants are herein analysed and emerging themes noted and interpreted as explained in 5.2. The findings are based on interpretations done on two levels, namely the ten written open-ended questions by an analyst and further interpretation based on my memory and notes made during focus group meetings and feedback in debriefing sessions with facilitators.

The analysis and interpretation process was brought in line with the objectives set for the study in 1.4.1. A further set of sub-questions were developed during the analysis process for each of the objectives with the purpose of guiding the analyst in exploring the answers as well as assisting in achieving the research objectives. The research objectives also provided the criteria for the ten open-ended questions as research instrument in the process of developing the validity of the

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instrument related to the face validity for respondents and content validity (Bless *et al.* 2006:156-161). The next section will explain the analysis process followed to capture the data from the 10 open-ended questions and focus group discussions.

5.2 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The data analysis process was done by means of a theme identification method (Welman, 2005:211). The exploration of themes were found appropriate to the objectives of the research as to listen and understand what respondents want to communicate concerning their experiences with the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost. The chosen themes provided an umbrella construct that were identified, and focus on before, during and after the focus group interviews (:211).

The data were then further analysed and interpreted by a team lead by an analyst-specialist⁴¹. The process focused on capturing specific words, emotions, activities and emerging themes needed to answer the research question. Codes were created by using the conceptual framework of the research question (Welman *et al.* 2005:215). In the first round, descriptive codes were used in the analysis process (:214). Fouché & Delport (2002:346) refers to it as open coding. Interpretative codes were then used to find reasons, explanations and motives behind respondent's words and expressions (Welman *et al.* 2005:14). The following three research objectives with related questions guided the choice for written data analysis process:

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1. To explore where, when and how did the Church of Pentecost include children as part of the faith community.

- What feelings or other experiences were mentioned by participants that expressed children's relationship in general with the Church of Pentecost.
- How did participants remember individual Church member's roles and impact on them?
- What were the ministry activities that participants felt included them in ministry?
- What did participants say are reasons for them to remain involved in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost?

2. To explore if/how adults of today remember their experiences as children within the Church of Pentecost's ministry.

- What specific experiences did participants remember about the Church of Pentecost when they were between 7-14⁴² years of age?
- What particular incidents or episodes were mentioned that could have contributed to how participants feel about the Church of Pentecost?
- What emotions [feelings] about the Church did participants reflect on in written answers and discussions?

⁴² The choice of this particular age group was based on an understanding that the first years of a child's life is very critical for the formation of perceptions. It also seems valuable to ask people who experienced the church in their early formative years how they remember their experiences. The respondents [adults] could also in a way identify and interpret what children today could experience about the church based on their childhood experiences.

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Data collected through both the written answers to the ten open-ended questions and focus group discussions were captured and analysed through the following process:

- Written answers from each of the 140 respondents were collected and sent to an analyst. The study did not require comparative results for the six chosen areas and the data sorted and coded under an area response was treated collectively;
- The responses to each question included notes made during focus group meetings that were recorded in the form of written notes, tape recording and reflections from memory; and
- Each individual response was systematically read through area-by-area and obvious trends, key words and comments were categorised using coding under themes labelled *perceptions*, *feelings* and *attitudes* towards children, children's ministry and the Church. The categories are:

Category 1. Perceptions. Opinions, views, experiences and statements expressing a respondent's perceptions of where children fit into the ministry of the Church of Pentecost.

Category 2. Feelings. Explanations, gestures in drawings and words reflecting a respondent's emotional experiences or perceived experiences and responses when they were children about the Church of Pentecost's ministry to children.

Category 3. Attitudes. Key words and examples of ministry practices and sentences expressing a respondent's attitudes and mental picture [perceptions], mind-set and opinions of the functioning of the Church of Pentecost's ministry.

- The 140 written answers were initially read individually and significant trends, words, opinions, perceptions and emotions that featured naturally were captured,

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coded and noted under the three developed categories. The categories were then enriched by exploring explanations and reasons behind the responses.

- From the drawings, the analyst also noted respondent's perceptions on aspects like how they see a typical Sunday venue where church leaders, members and children gather at the Church. Aspects like the position and prominence of the Church building was noted. These impressions were then interpreted with the help of written notes during focus group interviews and respondents written explanations and remarks.
- The collected data was then interpreted and summarised as a report in 5.3 in terms of the ten open-ended questions and significant remarks were included.
- The collected data was then interpreted further and displayed within a descriptive explanatory framework used in 5.4 under emerging themes related to the research question and objectives (Welman *et al.* 2005:219).

In the next section, each question is stated and a summary of significant responses is given below each question. The subsequent interpretations in section 5.4 were enhanced by explanations and clarifications tabled during focus group- and debriefing sessions.

5.3 FOCUS GROUP RESPONSE ANALYSIS REPORT

The capturing of understandings and meanings in participants' opinions, perceptions and emotions, as expressed in the written and verbal responses, was done from a qualitative perspective. This approach suggested a careful listening process to what is reflected in the written words. It includes aspects such as respondent's attitudes during focus group meetings, body gestures, and facial expressions when talking.

A shortcoming identified during the data interpretation process was that expressions in the data analysis report such as majority, many and some was initially not quantified. It needed some measure of quantification. The 140 written

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responses was then revisited and a percentage scale was developed as to give an indication of what is meant by it in the report. The 140 responses were sorted and counted under the relevant themes to determine what a word like “some” would mean in the report. This approach assisted in reading the report and helps the interpretation process to be able to discern the representativeness of general feelings and opinions on the relevant issues.

Expression used in report	Quantitative interpretation of representativeness of responses by the 140 participants
Some	Less than 50%
Many	More than 50%
Common	More than 60%
Most	More than 60%
Majority	More than 90%
All	100%

The above quantified grading will also help the reader to interpret the findings in the report. The written answers were explored during focus group meetings and the responses is herein summarised and interpreted in terms of participant’s feelings and perceptions on their experiences of the ministry of the Church of Pentecost:

5.3.1 *You are asked to describe, by drawing pictures, how you see where the children fit into the Church of Pentecost today and what the church’s relationship with children is, or how you would express children’s relationship with the church. Include any other pictures or symbols that you feel could express what you could remember as a child in the Church of Pentecost.*

Consider also the following sub questions as part of the drawing.

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- Focus in your mind on a picture of how you remember the church when you were a child. Where will you draw yourself in this picture?

There were many different types of pictures; however, certain trends were maintained throughout the research. All participants drew pictures representing a church building with various groups labelled on the inside (for example men, women, deacons, pastors). Many participants illustrated happy scenes and their explanations indicated that they felt loved and accepted as children. Interestingly, though, most did not include children in the church; instead, the children's worship and ministry were outside, usually under a tree.

Participants' feelings about this separation, while not certain, seemed negative. Remarks like "the church has neglected we [us] the children outside the main building." Some seemed to equate this separation to an indication of misplaced priorities or a failure on the part of the church leadership to include them. One quote expressed this feeling, saying: "It looked like the children's ministry was a burden to some of the church leaders." Another wrote, "Children are rejected from the church." Participant A (Note 1, 7 Nov. 2011) responded on a clarification question: "because the church did not include us as children we felt rejected." Participant B (Note 2, 7 Nov. 2011) said: "[y]es I felt sad when we were not part of the main church service."

- Write at least two words that express your feelings of your relationship as a child with this church in your picture.

Participants' answers again related many different experiences. While some told of feeling included and welcomed as young and important members of the body, others wrote of feeling neglected and excluded. Some conflicting terms used in responses included: positive expressions – like educative, entertaining, treasured, harmonious, love, unity, sacrifice, passion, caring, and pride and negative expressions – like intimidation, neglect, careless, insignificant, pride, and rejected. Although the feelings of separation and neglect were very common in these responses, it must be noted that most participants spoke positively of their

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relationships with Sunday school teachers. Participant C (Note 3, 6 Nov. 2011) explained that their teachers were loving and “they were very good people looking at the way they handled (sic) us.”

5.3.2 Look at the picture you have drawn and put you in the picture to answer the following questions. When (how old were you?) Why (what encouraged you?) and how (what activities did you participate in?) did you become part of the Church of Pentecost?

- When? Why?

The majority of the participants joined the church at a very young age. A few, however, began attending as young adults. While the specific ages ranged from birth to teenage years, the majority of the participants joined at a primary grade level. Since they began at a relatively early age, their individual motivation for attendance varied greatly.

Much of the motivation stemmed from the participants’ families. Some were kindly encouraged, while others were pressured. Some children were not allowed to eat if they missed church (Addendum 8, picture 5). Still, some of the participants’ motivation came from the church itself. They looked forward to fellowship with their friends while experiencing the benefits and traditions of Sunday school.

- How?

Even though the ages and reasons for attending the Church of Pentecost fluctuated, the participants almost all stated a similar answer for their types of participation. Responses included Bible quizzes, drama, memorising verses, singing, dancing, and sword drills. Although not blatantly stated, all the participants seemed to enjoy the sense of belonging they achieved through activities.

During focus group meetings, participants confirmed their positive experiences when they were included in any form of activity in the church. Participant D (Note 4, 6 Nov 2011) said for instance, “My teacher praised me when I recite [sic] memory verse or sing and I lead prayers when our teacher did not come early.”

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5.3.3 *Write in a sentence or two about your personal experience of church as a child in the Church of Pentecost. Consider your picture that you drew.*

- Think how you felt about church when you were a child of about 7-14 years.

Responses to this question were mostly positive. Participants spoke very positively of the relationships they experienced with their Sunday school teachers who organized lessons, led worship, and seemed to be intimately involved in the lives of their students, even visiting them during the week or when they did not go to church. Responses were not limited to spiritual activities, with many participants telling of how the church provided an opportunity for them to socialise with other children and mature. Participant D (Note 5, 6 Nov. 2011) responded: “I felt great because of the love, care, and joy that my teacher have [sic] for us.”

However, feelings of separation, distrust, and neglect resurfaced again. Some participants said they did not feel welcomed by church leadership, although they felt loved by their teachers. One respondent summed up this feeling by saying “[t]he teachers are caring and they are loving towards the children. The elders in the church don’t normally care for us...”

- What specific activities of the children’s ministry and other church activities had an effect on you? Why?

Participants gave various examples of their involvement in church activities. Interestingly, the majority of participants were involved in some activity with only one respondent saying he was not involved at all. Activities included drama, prayer, fasting, and participation in Children’s Day/Founder’s Day festivities, preaching, child evangelism, church maintenance, and singing. Some participants indicated that they had important roles as children such as offering prayers and preaching to the entire (adult) church.

5.3.4 *Who in the Church of Pentecost or Christian community made, spiritually, a big impression on your life since childhood? Why do you say so?*

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A review of the many names and titles given by participants revealed that the Sunday school teachers in various ways affected the lives of participants. This relationship seems to stem from the dedicated and caring natures exhibited by the teachers. As one respondent stated, “A Sunday school teacher really helped me by visiting me at home and ... if [I was] in need, she helped me.” These sentiments are echoed throughout the different responses.

In addition to the teachers, many were touched by their pastors and elders who were considered to be “child friendly”. One such pastor in particular was mentioned several times for his encouragement and willingness to spend time with the young ones. The majority of the participants had fond memories of the adults who cared for and dedicated time to them. While parents and family members were mentioned, most participants seemed to have special relationships with specific individuals in the Church.

5.3.5 What do you think the Church of Pentecost did right or wrong, especially in the beginning years (from your perspective), in accommodating/not accommodating you as a child and helping you to grow spiritually?

Responses to this question were mixed. Positive responses focused on the spiritual and physical development of children through children’s ministries, specifically Sunday school. Participants also wrote about the discipline they received and the accountability provided by the church. Others wrote about competitions, trips, and special days that allowed them to display their talents and gave them a sense of belonging in the greater church community.

Negative responses returned, to the distance that children felt from the church leadership. Participants told similar stories of being pushed out of the adult service by elders. Others said that the leadership did not recognise the children’s movement and that the children had no voice, were looked down upon, and were not factored [not included or acknowledged] into decision-making.

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5.3.6 *In which way did the Church of Pentecost involve you as a child in the church's ministry? What happens with children and ministry today?*

Although most of the pictures seemed to show a schism between the adults and children, the answers to this question seemed to lessen that. In fact, the majority of participants stated that they felt welcomed and involved in the church [meaning Sunday school] through many different outlets such as Bible quizzes, singing, drama, and prayer. One of the common answers used Children's Week/Founder's Week as an example of their involvement in the church. The participants loved this time because they were able to show their talents while being pushed into leadership roles [given responsibilities in program] in a healthy environment. As children, the participants seemed to enjoy leading the congregation and showing their capabilities.

Despite the positive answers, some participants were more pessimistic. They believed that children, today, are not being prepared and taught as well as they should be. One respondent saw a mixture of fault for the perceived lack of focus: "Today children enjoy pleasure and spend most [of their] time on the computer; leaders of the ministry seem to be relaxed in preparation and prayer." Participant F (Note 6, 13 Nov. 2011) responded by saying: "[t]he church involved me in outreach programs as a young girl and which encouraged me to come to church, today teachers have to force our children to share their talents in a main service." Overall, however, the positive responses outweighed the negative ones.

5.3.7 *What inputs did the Church of Pentecost contribute to your personal life as child to be successful or not successful in society today?*

Most participants recalled the positive impact the Church of Pentecost made on their lives. A large portion of the answers focused on spiritual disciplines and topics such as prayer, fasting, wisdom, and the "Fear of God." However, answers were not limited to such spiritual topics. Many participants talked about the role the

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church played in helping them develop socially and academically. Participant G (note 7, 13 Nov. 2011) talked about the importance of the church's educational work, saying, "The church has established educational institutions from ... [nursery to university levels] and I think this is bringing up transformational leaders." Another, Participant H (note 8, 13 Nov. 2011) talked about the non-spiritual impact of Sunday school teachers, saying: "My Sunday School teachers not only taught me things from the Bible but also everyday life morals lessons, the need to take my academics seriously...." Another mentioned that the church taught him to be a "responsible citizen."

Participants also wrote about how church activities developed their specific talents and gifts, such as public speaking, singing, and drama.

5.3.8 What would be the main reason why you are still involved with the Church of Pentecost today? Think back on your personal journey with the Church of Pentecost over many years. (Consider the different activities and roles you are involved with, e.g. member, choir, leadership positions etc.)

The reasons for current involvement in Church of Pentecost appear to be twofold. First, many of the participants hold positions of authority and responsibility in the church. Secretaries, deaconesses, elders and teachers all stated that one of the reasons they were still involved in the church is because of their positions. However, the main reason stated was a love for the church and Christ. Most of the participants stated that the reason for their current involvement is the solid doctrine and sound biblical teaching. Many feel it is their duty to stay in the church. One respondent wrote, "If we escape from [the] Church of Pentecost, who is to build the church? It is our responsibility." Still others appear to be "returning a favour." Another respondent described his journey with the church in this way: "By the grace of God, I rose through the rank and file [sic] of the church to become a

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leader in the children's and youth ministries. And I'm giving to others what I once received from my fathers that mentored me in the faith." Participant D (note 14, 6 Nov. 2011) also mentioning of the strict discipline that the Church enforce as well as the importance to be recognized as a Christian in public. While their specific answers vary, the main reasons for current involvement seem to express similar sentiments. They believe that the Church of Pentecost helps them fulfil their goals of loving God, teaching God's word, helping others, and doing right in God's eyes.

5.3.9 What do you think the Church of Pentecost contributes to the Ghanaian society up to now where children benefited from?

According to participants, the Church of Pentecost has contributed much to the Ghanaian society. Many responses mentioned the churches' benevolent support of hospitals, orphanages and schools. Other responses, though, focused on the role of the church in society: training children to become future leaders. One respondent, Participant J (Note 9, 13 Nov. 2011) said it well: "It [the COP] has produced ... well-trained generations of God-fearing children who have grown up and occupied positions of trust in every sector of the Ghanaian economy" Responses from others supported this claim. Participants gave a wide range of jobs that are occupied by former children who have come from the Church of Pentecost, including state ministers, police officers, teachers, lawyers, judges, and businesspersons and women. The church, many responses indicated, serves a vital role in Ghanaian society through prayer, evangelism, and, perhaps most importantly, the education of future leaders, it helps build a better society.

5.3.10 If you could change anything in the Church of Pentecost today regarding children what would it be and why?

A wide assortment of answers came in response to this question. Some participants believe there needs to be more discipline, church-parent cooperation, curriculum change, fee reduction [The Children's Movement to pay less

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administration fees to Head Office], and teacher training. However, the research showed that the vast majority of the participants believe more focus needs to be put on the children. They believe that children are future leaders and deserve better training. Many are frustrated that the new buildings have no space for the children and, as a result, the children are forced to leave the church building and spend Sunday school outdoors. One respondent believes “[there] should be a provision where the children and the adults can worship together.” In general, participants seemed to believe children deserve more attention and respect from church leaders.

The above findings on the ten open-ended questions are further interpreted in 5.4 and include clarifications and explanations given by participants during focus group- and debriefing sessions in support of initial findings.

5.4 INTERPRETATION OF RESPONSES

Although no intentional formulated and documented ministry strategy focusing on children could be found throughout the study as a whole, the reflections by participants did point to some aspects, which could suggest that children’s ministry is part of a ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. The implementation of the Children’s Movement however could be considered an intentional choice to focus specifically on children. There were however also elements of a non-intentional⁴³

⁴³ Non-intentional strategy in this sense would refer to an approach to ministry where there is no deliberate ministry choices made in the broader framework of church planning processes which specifically include and integrate children in the main stream activities of the Church. A number of elements in the ministry approach of the Church could be interpreted as a non-intentional ministry strategy. Children are for example in this case not considered as a key priority and not intentionally included in evangelism and church growth activities. Initiatives where children became part of ministry aspects like prayer events comes generally from Sunday School teachers and children and may be considered as incidental inclusions in ministry.

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children's ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. Section 5.3 pointed to a number of significant ministry related themes and perspectives that can be considered as clues for the way the Church of Pentecost approach ministry and specifically children in the ministry of the church. The responses are now interpreted in terms of emerging themes and applied to the three objectives referred to in 5.2, taking into account:

- The report of the findings in 5.3; and
- Insights gained at focus group discussions and debriefing sessions.

Under each objective, (cf. 5.4.1; 5.4.2; 5.4.3) a number of emerging themes are stated and reflected on under the three categories where relevant. It is also noted that some of the analysed data could be relevant to more than one particular objective.

5.4.1 Identifiable elements of a possible children's ministry strategy

The following themes points to elements that can contribute to a proposed ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost:

5.4.1.1 Church.

- **Perceptions.** Church is seen as the place where people meet (cf. 5.3.1; 5.3.2). In doing church, people seem to play different roles in the Church life referred to in 5.3.3 and 5.3.4, which could be interpreted as ordinary people with specific calling becoming part. Comments like "*By the grace of God, I rose through rank and file of the Church to become a leader in the children's and youth ministry*", could be indicative of the importance of leadership positions for Church members (cf. 5.3.8). Chapter 2 pointed to a well-developed governance structure and organisational way of doing church (cf. 2.3.4; 2.3.5). The ministry is supported

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by a clear vision, mission and value system. (2.3.5). It suggests that the Church of Pentecost is viewed as an institution that needs to run effectively and efficiently.

- **Feelings.** Participants expressed positive emotions like feeling treasured, loved, caring and a sense of pride concerning the Church (cf. 5.3.1). Participant's negative feelings like neglect, rejection, insignificance and intimidation could suggest that their expectations for the Church to welcome, acknowledge, accommodate and embrace them as children, was not met (cf. 5.3.1; 5.3.3). The positive feelings expressed towards the Church were based on their experiences with other children at the Church meetings and in particular, the role players who showed interest in them as children (cf. 5.3.1). It is in particular the influence of certain pastors, elders and children's workers, which seem to suggest that the Church trust and rely on certain individuals to attend to children in ministry (cf. 5.3.4).

- **Attitudes.** The placement of children outside the Church building and outside the main service, referred to in 5.3.1, suggests a particular mind-set that *church* is a place for adults to worship. Children are not considered integral part of Church life.

5.4.1.2 Church building.

- **Perceptions.** Participant's focus on the Church buildings, which featured very prominent in drawings and references made during focus group discussions, is noted in 5.3.1 and 5.3.2. It creates a perception that the ministry of the Church and its related activities begins with and centres on the "building". Although there were no direct, questions or discussions initiated on the Church as a building or venue, the significance of the building emerged during the drawing process. The focus that the building enjoys seems to support arguments in the Church of Pentecost for the development of separate places for children (cf. 5.3.10). The call for own facilities for children could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it could indicate that participants does not have clarity on where and how children should be

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accommodated in the Church and that they still are comfortable with the idea that children and adults are served through separate ministries and locations. The second possibility is that participants feel that good facilities is an indication of the seriousness of the Church concerning children and that children will feel welcome and appreciated. The vision of the Church set in 2.5.1 “*planting and nurturing healthy churches globally*” is interpreted as a reference to the quality of its members and not as a referring to the buildings as such. However, listening to participant’s perceptions of church left an impression that the building has a telling value for them as a form of church.

- **Feelings.** Participants expressed frustration because recently built buildings have not enough space for children, which force children to leave the Church building and sit outside (cf. 5.3.10).
- **Attitudes.** Participants seemed to believe that church leaders attitude concerning children need to change as children deserve more attention and respect (cf. 5.3.10).

5.4.1.3 Church’ mission.

- **Perceptions.** Participants consider the way the Church functions in society as an inspiring factor that affected them as children (cf. 5.3.7 and 5.3.8). Participants consider the engagement of the Church in educational institutes (nursery to university) as a significant contribution to society (cf. 5.3.9). They consider the involvement of the Church in the Ghanaian society in hospitals, schools, orphanages, government structures and business as part of the Church’s mission. This missional view could probably be interpreted as both a missional activity and an intentional ministry strategy (cf. Participant J, 13 Nov. 2011). Reference to the Church as a mission-minded and evangelistic church that evangelise people and plant churches seems, to have contributed to the formation of their perceptions of the mission calling of the Church (cf. Participant K, 13 Nov. 2011). In line with the vision statement, the Church of Pentecost plant and nurture healthy churches in

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Ghana and globally which can be interpreted as a mission minded church (cf. 2.3.5). The inclusion of Church members as laypersons in the activities of the church became an inspiring factor for children (cf. 2.3.5).

- **Feelings.** Participants expressed an optimism concerning the impact that the Church make on Ghanaian society (cf. 5.3.7). Participation in outreached programs of the church served as motivation and encouragement for individuals and created a sense of worth (cf. 5.3.6).
- **Attitudes.** The optimism expressed through feelings in above paragraph is interpreted as a positive attitude concerning the role of the Church evangelism and is expressed as a sense of pride (cf. 5.3.6).

5.4.1.4 Church as witness.

- **Perceptions.** The emphasis on the Church as an environment of influence seems to suggest something of the ecclesiological understanding of the participants (5.3.8). Participants in this regard, consider the presence of Church members in society such as state ministers, police officers, teachers, lawyers, judges, and business people, men and women, as part of the Church's visible presence in society (5.3.9). It places the Church in the market place. It creates expectancy that the ministry of the Church would result in creating successful people in society. In this regard, the Church managed to produce well-trained, God-fearing children that rose to positions of trust in every sector of the Ghanaian economy (5.3.9). The vital role that the Church plays in the society is perceived to be based on prayer, evangelism and the education of the future leaders (5.3.9). This perceived influence of the Church of Pentecost in society is interpreted as representative of the high premium that the Church places on ethics, morality and intentional ministry strategies to affect the life world of Ghanaians (cf. 5.3.7). Concerning the ministry of the Witness Movement and Missions Department there were no formal references to any involvement or expectations for children's participation found (cf. 2.3.5).

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- **Feelings.** Feelings of being proud of the Church were expressed (cf. 5.3.6).
- **Attitudes.** Participants expressed a sense having something to offer to the Church (cf. 5.3.6).

5.4.1.5 **Doctrines.**

• **Perceptions.** Participants felt that Church discipline, sound doctrines and biblical teachings are the things that had the greater positive influence on them as children (cf. 5.3.8). The doctrines and teachings are sighted as the reason for their faithfulness to the Church and commitment to carry over their faith to the next generation. In 2.3.5 the tenets of the Church of Pentecost is clearly stated and it is expected that children should follow it.

• **Feelings.** No particular feeling was expressed concerning the doctrines of the Church.

• **Attitudes.** The positive references to the teachings of the Church seem to express an attitude of submissiveness and acceptance of the value of the doctrines in Church life.

5.4.1.6 Church leadership.

• **Perceptions.** The drawings point to participants perceptions of how the Church functions and they included people groups like the pastor, elders, ordinary members, parents, teachers and children as separate entities in and around the “building” (cf. 5.3.1). Leadership is herein viewed as a separate group of people who is supposed to carry responsibility for things that make members feel unhappy. Participants seem to value leadership roles highly. Participants’ current involvement in leadership roles in the Church is sighted as a reason for still being involved in the Church (cf. 5.3.8). Some participants felt that the Church depends on them as leaders and that it is naturally their [participants] duty to support and advance the cause of the Church (cf. 5.3.8). Some leaders became positive role models for children and their involvement is referred to by participants as “child

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friendly” leaders (cf. 5.3.4). Participants expressed the need for more focus on children by the Church in general (cf. 5.3.10). The organisational structures explained in 2.3.5 points to well-developed systems of management and control where leaders are appointed in various different capacities and roles of responsibilities.

- **Feelings.** Participants felt a sense of disappointment in Church leadership who did not demonstrate enough acknowledgement and understanding for the Children’s Movement (children’s ministry) of the Church (cf. 5.3.5). The perceived negative experiences with some of the Church leadership, more specifically aimed at congregational leadership figures, does question the way children are perceived and treated by congregational leadership and creates the impression of undervaluing children and an adult church preference (cf. 5.3.1; 5.3.3).
- **Attitudes.** There is a view that children are not cared for and appreciated and leadership is expected to respond. There is a call on leaders for more attention and respect for children (cf. 5.3.10).

5.4.1.7 Church and Holy Spirit.

- **Perceptions.** Participants referred to the deep level of the spiritual [presence of the Holy Spirit] character [ethical and moral] of the Church, which motivated, welcomed and accommodated them (cf. Participant M note 11, 6 Nov. 2011). The Church of Pentecost is functioning within the Pentecostal tradition where the Holy Spirit is very central to the life of the Church. As there were no specific focus in the questions on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, this aspect was not explored but it is anticipated that participants could have contributed much to the findings in this regard. The focus is placed on the gifts of members, bearing fruit and divine healing (2.3.5).
- **Feelings.** There were no emotional responses expressed in responses concerning the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. This could be because no explicit question opened up the subject.

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- **Attitudes.** Whilst there were no formal references to the Holy Spirit in the responses, there is indications from the Church of Pentecost tenets that the Holy Spirit is a very central aspect of Church life. This is also interpreted from the way participants referred to the Holy Spirit in prayers and talks before, during and after focus group meetings.

5.4.1.8 Church members.

- **Perceptions.** Explanations given at focus group meetings were that the separate places and groups in the drawings pointed to the way the Church of Pentecost differentiates between people's responsibility, roles and place in the activities of the Church on a Sunday and in the general functioning of the Church (cf. 5.3.8). A general perception with participants is that Church members are expected to fulfil various roles in the Church. The presence and influence of Church members in the society is also mentioned as something that asserts the presence of the Church in society (cf. 5.3.9). The presence and involvement of ordinary Church members in different activities of the church can be interpreted as how the Church understands of how the church should function. It can as such also be interpreted as an intentional way that ordinary members are included in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost. The emphasis placed on lay leadership trainings (where no children focus is included), points to the involvement of ordinary members in the life of the Church (2.3.5). There were also suggestions that children are not considered as part of adult Church members but rather people needing input from the Church.
- **Feelings.** Participants expressed a longing that children need to worship with adults in the main service (cf. 5.3.1). The futuristic view on children contributes to this emotional response.
- **Attitude.** Participants are of opinion that children belong to the Church and that they should have the opportunity to be included in adult worship services.

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5.4.1.9 Families.

- **Perceptions.** Participants appear to be uncertain on how to think about families in the Church and voiced a need for better church-parent cooperation without disclosing what they envisage to see happen with families (cf. 5.3.10). There are also references to the pressure applied by parents on children to attend Church, which sometimes involved a form of punishment (cf. 5.3.2). There is also the expectation that the Church should provide opportunity for children to worship with adults which could include an expectation of a family experience (cf. 5.3.10). Participants referred to the role of parents, which encouraged them to attend church but did not give any clues on which way the ministry of the Church include or focus on families (cf. 5.3.2). No other specific references to family related issues were found in documents sourced.
- **Feelings.** No direct references were found to family life as such and no feelings expressed concerning families.
- **Attitudes.** No specific attitude could be discovered due to the little that was said about families. There were also no intentional questions exploring aspects of the family in the Church.

5.4.1.10 Relationships.

- **Perceptions.** Participants' special relationships with specific adults in the Church of Pentecost is emphasised and considered to have influenced their lives even beyond church boundaries (cf. 5.3.4; 5.3.7). This experience could be interpreted as rendering a valid assumption that relationship building happens in Church life and are valuable and influential for Church members. Relationships with peer groups also played a role in participant's positive experiences of Church life (5.3.2). Concerning member's influence regards children; some individual Church members were specifically mentioned for building intimate relationships with children and as such became role models for them (cf. 5.3.4). Relationship building could hereby be interpreted as part of a non-intentional ministry strategy,

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which seems to hold potentially high value for the Church. The positive references to individuals and Sunday school teachers in 5.3.1 points to the high value those children places on relationships. The mentioning of teacher's commitment to stay involved with children, even outside formal Church activities, is also experienced positively by children (cf. 5.3.3). Sunday School teachers is also credited for teaching children moral lessons for everyday life and even prepare them to become responsible citizens (cf. 5.3.7).

- **Feelings.** One aspect that was singled out was participant's positive relationships with some pastors and in particular Sunday school teachers. It was described as motivational and contributed to a feeling of belonging (cf. 5.3.4; 5.3.7). The impact on children by some individual teachers is linked to their role to create a feeling of a welcoming and accommodating environment for children and their ability to show love, care and to create joy for children (cf. 5.3.3).
- **Attitudes.** The high value placed on the involvement of Sunday school teachers and pastors in their lives can be interpreted as a very positive attitude towards relationship building.

5.4.1.11 Discipline.

- **Perceptions.** The participant's experiences of the discipline in the Church needs to be mentioned as a particular aspect that influenced their experiences of the Church positively (cf. 5.3.8). Discipline and accountability in the Church is sighted as a positive virtue of the Church, which was both learning experiences and character development for children (cf. 5.3.5). Participants also calls for more discipline in the Church today, similar as was the case in the early history of the Church of Pentecost when they were children (cf. 5.3.10). In 2.3.5, members are required to adhere to the Church's core tenets, values and submission to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The important place became also evident in Counsel Minutes of early years where drastic steps were taken against members, and

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particular church officials, for any ethical and moral transgression. References by participants highlighted this aspect (cf. 5.3.10).

- **Feelings.** Participants expressed a sense of disappointment with the Church when they compare the discipline in the Church in early years, with the current level of discipline in the Church (cf. 5.3.5).
- **Attitudes.** Participants expect high levels of discipline and accountability from the Church, which need to translate in society where the Church is visible (cf. 5.3.5).

5.4.1.12 Values.

- **Perceptions.** The ethical and spiritual values of the Church are cited as another reason for the participants to respect and love the Church and stay loyal to the Church over the years (cf. note 10, 13 Nov. 2011). Love for Christ and the Church is sighted by participants as the main reason for their involvement in the Church (cf. 5.3.8). There is also mention of ethical standards, which require of participants to be recognised as Christians in public (cf. 5.3.8). Others included the love for God, the role of the Church in fulfilling their purpose in life, teaching God's word and doing right in God's eyes. These are all sighted as reasons for their involvement in the Church (cf. 5.3.8; 5.3.9). The mission of the Church to establish responsible and self-sustaining churches filled with committed Spiritual filled Christians is an indication of the value placed on ethical and spiritual values in the Church. The place and value of prayer and fasting and an awareness of the presence of the "fear of the Lord" contributed to participant's positive perception of the Church of Pentecost (cf. 5.3.7).
- **Feelings.** Participants feel responsible to carry the Church's values over to children (cf. 5.3.8).
- **Attitudes.** Participants expressed a sense of obligation and commitment to children to demonstrate and carry over Christian values (cf. 5.3.8).

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5.4.1.13 Future expectations.

- **Perceptions.** Participants seem convinced that the Church influences children and young people positively preparing them to become future leaders (cf. 5.3.5; 5.3.9). The creation of opportunities by the Church leadership for children to participate in Church activities is perceived a positive investment in children (cf. 5.3.3; 5.3.6). The role of the Church in children's spiritual and educational development is seen as a way to develop transformational leadership (cf. 5.3.7). Some participants raised the issue of succession whereby they want to transmit their faith to others the way they were mentored in the faith (cf. 5.3.8). In 2.4.2 the study found that the Church and in particular leadership are optimistic for children. The Church is considered as "*the cradle for future leaders.*"
- **Feelings.** Participants expressed feelings of rejection and separation when there were expectations that they will only be allowed later in life to join Church, activities with adults (cf. 5.3.5).
- **Attitudes.** Participants questioned some adult leaders [generally elders] attitudes to children (cf. 5.3.1).

5.4.2 Inclusiveness of children

5.4.2.1 *Inclusiveness.*

- **Perceptions.** For most participants the church represents a place where they experience fellowship (inclusion) with other children and teachers, relationship with teachers and an opportunity to express their talents and gifts (cf. 5.3.3; 5.3.6). The opportunities, albeit casual, for children to fulfil any role during Church meetings created a further sense of belonging and value with children (cf. 5.3.2).
- **Feelings.** Words expressed by participants included feelings of educative, treasured, harmonious, loved, and caring and pride (cf. 5.3.1).
- **Attitudes.** Participants expressed positive relationships with Sunday school teachers and some pastors (cf. 5.3.1).

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5.4.2.2 *Exclusiveness.*

- **Perceptions.** Another notable reflection is on participant's perception that the Church of Pentecost see children more as future assets of the Church and they interpret it as a sense of rejection (cf. 5.3.5). The absence of any children related courses in the lay-person training programs creates a perception the perception that children matters is not viewed as significant enough to warrant such focus (cf. 2.3.5). A further absence to any references to possible value and place of children in the history of the Church of Pentecost seem to support a perception that children are not considered seriously enough (cf. 2.3.5).
- **Feelings.** In 5.3.1, some respondents made comments of feeling intentionally excluded from the main activities of the Church. There were also indications from most of the participants that they as children did feel a sense of belonging that suggests that when Sunday school teachers and others respond to children's needs it can change negative perceptions to positive experiences of church life (cf. 5.3.1; 5.3.2).
- **Attitudes.** Participants also expressed a positive attitude towards the influence of the Church on their lives (cf. 5.3.1). Overall, participants felt motivated to participate in the Church despite the fact that they, as children, did not always feel fully accepted in formal Church services and some of the adult's activities (cf. 5.3.1).

5.4.2.3 *Children's ministry.*

- **Perceptions.** The separation of children from the main service serves as an indication of the children's ministry paradigm whereby a separate ministry model is preferred and entrusted to responsible people (cf. 5.3.1). Involvement in activities organized by the Children's Movement like Bible quizzes, drama, singing, memorising Scripture verses, dancing and sword drills appear to have created with participants a feeling of inclusion in the Church (cf. 5.3.6). There are also references of participation in main services of the Church, although only on a few

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occasions per year, in drama, fasting, prayer activities and offerings, which seem to have fortified feelings of worth and belonging (cf. 5.3.3). Participants expressed a need, which they related to their own childhood years, that the ministry of the Church should provide for children to worship with adults (cf. 5.3.10). The opportunities in Church for participation in prayer, drama, preaching and special events like Founder's Week and Children's Week is considered to have contributed to children's physical and spiritual development to become responsible and well-functioning adults (cf. 5.3.3). Participants also referred to elements like internal competitions in Sunday school, field trips and special days arranged by the Church as opportunities to exhibit their talents (cf. 5.3.5). The children's ministry paradigm is herein interpreted as a conventional approach to children's ministry as a separate ministry supported by well-run activities and governance. There is also a suggestion of a changing church environment, which affects children's motivation to participate in Church life, negatively (cf. 5.3.6). Concerns were also raised about the apparent gap between the Church of Pentecost and children where the current technological advances and carefree living result that children are not taken seriously and the result is that children spend more and more time on computers and the pleasures of life (cf. 5.3.6). In 2.5.1, a futuristic expectation for children is postulated. It states that the Children's Movement is of great importance to the Church because it serves as nursery ground for the Church where children are prepared to both spiritually and physically to join the Women's Movement, Witness Movement and Pentecostal Students and Associates. The Children's Movement vision statement "Winning and nurturing children to grow in the Lord" directs the evangelism activities and focus on the Sunday school syllabus for the children's ministry. The focus of the 10-year strategic document place emphasis on the spiritual growth of children, the effectiveness of children's workers and the future development of a Resource Centre for children's ministry. Reflections on the inclusion of children in some of

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the activities of the Church like prayer and fasting creates more opportunities for children to become more involved.

- **Feelings.** Participants expressed positive feelings towards the Children's Movement.
- **Attitudes.** During focus group meetings, participants also emphasised that when the Church allowed them to participate in activities, it acknowledged and encouraged them and boosted their self-esteem, allowing their gifts and talents to be developed further (cf. 5.3.2).

5.4.3 Personal experiences

5.4.3.1 Church ministry

- **Perceptions.** Regards participants' experiences as children in the Church they are of opinion that, as children, they belonged to and were cared for by the Church (cf. note 16, 6 Nov. 2011). The opportunities provided by the Sunday school to go on trips, participate in competitions and display their talents gave children a sense of belonging, which motivates them to stay loyal to the Church (cf. 5.3.5; 5.3.6). Allowing children to participate in the program for the main service is viewed as acceptance and acknowledgement by adults of children's gifts (cf. 5.3.6). In 5.3.3, respondents levelled a charge against elders and other leaders stating that they seem not to show care and understanding towards children in the Church – even chasing them out of the main service.
- **Feelings.** Participant's opinions on their experiences with the Church as children were expressed by feelings (emotions) like love, pride, unity, harmonious and happiness which could suggest a particular welcoming environment created in and around the Church (cf. 5.3.1). Participants remembered the negative feelings like neglect, rejection, insignificance and intimidation. **This suggests that as children they expected another approach from the Church whereby they could have been acknowledged, accommodated and embraced by the Church (cf. 5.3.1).**

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- **Attitudes.** Participants seem to develop a mind-set that children should intentionally be separated from adults in the Church (cf. 5.3.5).

5.4.3.2 *Sunday school experiences*

- **Perceptions.** The caring and dedication of some Sunday school teachers left a positive impression of Church with participants as children (cf. 5.3.4). Participants considered Sunday school teachers' influence as motivating, educational and formative for their lives (cf. 5.3.7).
- **Feelings.** Participants expressed very positive experiences towards the Sunday school. Participation in activities like learning and reciting memory verses and participating in singing and performing drama is considered opportunities to express their talents and gifts (cf. 5.3.1). It was in particular the opportunity to fellowship and socialise with other children that made their experiences positive (cf. 5.3.1).
- **Attitudes.** Sunday school is considered as the place where children are accommodated and cared for (cf. 5.3.3). Sunday school is seen as an opportunity for relationship building (cf. 5.3.1).

5.4.3.3 *Motivational experiences*

- **Perceptions.** Focus group discussions pointed to the fact that participants valued the Church's historic achievements in evangelism and church growth as inspiring factors affecting their lives and creating a sense of pride (cf. 5.3.8). Participation in Church activities was initiated by positive influences by role models, who created opportunities and experiences for inclusion in Church activities (cf. 5.3.8). Positive encouragement and praise also contributed to participant's motivation to remain part of Church life (5.3.3 and 5.3.4).
- **Feelings.** Participants expressed discouragement and a sense of despair to influence and change undesirable situations concerning the Church and children (cf. 5.3.1).

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- **Attitudes.** Whilst participants value children highly they do not expect things to change concerning the attitude of adults towards children and children's participation in Church life. It appears that participants would rather stay with the status quo concerning children than fighting the system in the Church.

In the following part the study, summarise the significant findings of the research concerning the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. This summary combines and integrates relevant information that came from the different parts of the study.

5.5 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH CONCERNING THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST

This part lists aspects that came from the exploration of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. The various aspects is clustered under three significant issues namely, the Church, ministry of the Church and children's ministry, and will be expressed as children's perceptions and expectations by participants. These perspectives will also be interpreted with insights explored in chapter 3.

5.5.1 The Church.

- The governance and structures of the Church contributes to children's perceptions that the church is an institution that needs to have good structures and effective governance (cf. 5.3.1; 5.4.1.1; 5.4.1.2 and 5.4.2.3). Chapter 3 pictures the church as a gathering of God's people that gathers as an extended family or even as a clan (cf. 3.2.4; 3.3.1; 3.5.1), which is dynamic (3.5), and Holy Spirit driven (3.4.2.1; 3.5.3).
- The way that children is excluded from the main services of the Church and placed outside the main buildings created perceptions with children that church is a particular place for adults only (cf. 5.3.1; 5.4.1.1; 5.4.1.2 and 5.4.2.1). Church in Acts is described as a hospitable and welcoming

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environment (cf. 3.4.2.3; 3.5.2) and an inclusive community (cf. 3.2.3, 3.4.2.2 and 3.4.2.3).

- The way children experience Church venues seems to leave impressions that later unconsciously becomes their “church paradigm.” The fact that participants pictured the Church as a building (place) which is well structured is significant in the context of this study (cf. 5.3.1). In 3.4.2.2 and 3.5.1 it is suggested that *church* is rather a focus on **people** meeting and not a reference to the church as a building or specific place.
- The diverse roles of Church members in the functioning of the Church contributes to children’s perceptions that church provides opportunities and accommodates ordinary people in different roles in Church life (cf. 5.3.3 and 5.4.4). Ordinary people became part of church life in Acts as “living stones” in the spiritual household (cf. 3.4.2.2 and 3.5.3). Whilst leadership roles are valued highly in the Church of Pentecost, 3.4.2.3 suggests that church could be an environment where the community exists for the sake of each other in an attitude of servant hood. The focus should therefore not be on the leadership position but the desire to serve others.
- The ethical and moral value that is propagated and implemented by the Church contributes to children’s own value systems and creates respect for the Church (cf. 2.3.5). In chapter 3, it was pointed out that the Hebrew families as well as the New Testament church became entities with specific values and ethical systems that could influence the upbringing of their children (cf. 3.4.3.1). Such a family with peculiar traits, behaviour and ethical values could resonate with the type of community the Church of Pentecost aims to create.
- Participants experiences of respect and loyalty in the Church became own values. Children also value the church’s commitment to high biblical, spiritual, moral and ethical standards that continue to serve as motivation to remain part of the Church (Participant L, Note 10, 13 Nov. 2011). The Old

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Testament points to the fact that the family and wider community created a context for learning and emphasise the telling influence of the faith community to encourage children to be part and contribute to the community (cf. 3.3.5.1).

- The dynamic nature of the Church in being led by the Holy Spirit leaves a positive impression on children that also serve as motivation to remain loyal and supportive of the Church (cf. 5.3.7 and 5.3.8). In 3.4.2.1 the spiritual environment of the New Testament church points to the presence of the Holy Spirit that brought dynamism, fullness, guidance, empowerment and unification to the church.

5.5.2 Ministry

- The Church's doctrines and biblical teachings are sighted as aspects of the Church's ministry that had a greater influence in participant's lives as children (cf. 5.3.8). Herein the Church states that adherence to "biblical Pentecostal values" and submission to the leadership of the Holy Spirit is one of their values (cf. 2.3.5).
- The visible presence of Church members in society creates a feeling with children that the Church is part of society and gives children of the Church a sense of belonging (cf. 5.3.9). Herein the leadership of the Church takes leading roles. In 3.4.2.2, it was found that the New Testament church made provision for the selection of specific people for specific roles.
- The high expectations of Church members to be accountable and responsible in the society (public eye), serves as encouragement and example for children and is in line with the mission of the Church (cf. 5.3.8). It was also found in the New Testament church that the church placed a high value on member involvement in Church and society (cf. 3.4.2.2 and 3.4.3).

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- The value of role models for children in the Church is considered as the most valuable and best learning experience for children (cf. 5.3.4).
- The high value placed on discipline in the Church is according to participants the reason behind the development of good ethical and moral values within Church members (cf. 5.3.5).
- The engagement of the Church in educational institutes and other social services is according to participants aspects that they as children considered as valuable contributions to society (cf. 5.3.9). In 3.4.3 it was discovered the New Testament church became a “witness” that considers Jesus’s call: “Follow me” not as a function but an expression of church life. It encourages an “inward” and “outward” focus of the church.

5.5.3 Children’s ministry

- Children’s ministry should not be considered as a ministry strategy alone but rather an integral expression of whom and what the church is.
- Children believes that they can offer much to the Church in terms of their talents and gifts (cf. 5.3.5) which gives children a sense of self-worth and belonging in the Church (cf. 5.3.6). In 3.2.3 and 3.3.3 it came to the fore that the expectations of the Jewish community was to create an environment whereby socialising and learning [education] should raise responsible children for succession of Jewish life.
- Participants expressed their feeling of inclusiveness, pride and joy when they had opportunities to express their talents and gifts in the Church (cf. 5.3.3 and 5.3.6). In 3.6 and 3.4.4, the inclusiveness of children in family and community life provided an opportunity for children to participate and experience things like feasts and learning traits.
- Experiences with field trips and involvement in activities organized by the Children’s Movement like Bible quizzes, drama, singing, memorising

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Scripture verses, dancing and sword drills created with participants a feeling of inclusion in the Church (cf. 5.3.6).

- Children's experiences of healthy relationships with members of the Church are sighted as most positive, memorable and life-enriching experiences that happen even outside official Church programs (cf. 5.3.4 and 5.3.7). Whilst participants expressed feelings like rejection by adults, they had healthy relationships with Sunday school teachers and other leaders. In chapter 3, it was argued that the African culture is based on values and traits like family loyalty, strong group awareness and a weak sense of individuality (cf. 3.4.2). As such, it could provide a basis for building healthy relationships between children and adults in the faith community.
- Sunday School teachers and certain (child-friendly) pastors involvement with children through care giving and showing of dedication created experiences with children that is considered by some as the most powerful and formative influence in their lives (cf. 5.3.4; 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.3.1).
- Participants are convinced that the Children's Movement is the "nursery" of the Church where God-fearing and well-trained members are developed for the future of the Church (cf. 5.3.9). The emphasis on and the processes for the continuation of faith in the Old Testament (cf. 2.3.3 and 2.3.4) seems to have found expression in the way that the Church of Pentecost pursues to raise succession for the Church and its traditions.
- The focus of the Church on education and spirituality is understood by participants as the way to raise transformational leadership for the Church (cf. 5.3.7). Children's learning in the Hebrew community of the Old Testament was considered a family and communal responsibility (cf. 3.3.5.1). In 3.3.4 and 3.3.5, the research showed that families in the New Testament church were linked to children's education, participation in religious feasts and rites, and learning of life skills.

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- There is a perception in the Church that children's ministry is a separate ministry resourced by specific people who is entrusted with the ministry (cf. 5.4.1.8; 5.3.6 and 5.3.10). In the New Testament, the church entrusted church responsibilities to ordinary people (3.4.2.2).

5.6 CONCLUSION

The data collected during the focus group meetings managed to capture in 5.3 important feelings, attitudes and perceptions from participants regards the Church of Pentecost and the ministry. However, I am of opinion that a deeper exploration of some children's ministry issues like the training of children's workers, teaching content and methodology for Sunday School, could have strengthened the findings for this study regards to the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost. The wide scope of enquiry where church and children are simultaneously explored, open up fields that may be important and even relevant for this study. However, it would have taken the study outside its original scope of investigation. In the light of the findings in this part it could also be valuable to revisit the focus and formulation of the ten open-ended questions used in this study to include more focus on specific themes captured in questions like: What does leaders mean when children are considered future assets of the Church?; What do participants understand about the concept of church and in which way does the Church address children's social issues in the Ghanaian society. Despite a number of possible challenges for the research process it is concluded that the empirical research process managed to sufficiently address the three objectives set for the enquiry.

The answers to the research question: "What was the ministry strategy of the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost focusing on children?" generated a number of important themes in 5.4.1; 5.4.2 and 5.4.3, which assisted in constructing a picture of how the Church is functioning strategically and how participants experienced the Church when they were children and even as adults today. The various key

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strategic elements that emerged from the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost will be dealt with in chapter 6. Significant findings in chapter 5 regard the Church of Pentecost and children's ministry is summarised as:

5.5.2 The ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost entails:

- Excellence in ministry is a particular strategy of the Church of Pentecost (cf. 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.1.2). In this regard a clear vision, mission, value statement and well-developed governance structures serves as guidance to the Church (cf. 5.4.1.1).
- Planting churches and erecting church buildings can also be considered as part of a ministry strategy (cf. 5.4.1.1).
- The building or place of worship serves strategically as an environment created for members to participate in church life. The multiple activities in and around the building seems to render an understanding of what *church* is about. (cf. 5.4.1.2).
- Missional activities like church planting, evangelism and community projects are a particular ministry strategy that the Church pursues (cf. 5.4.1.3).
- Adults are the focus of the Church's input and the church building is considered a place for adult worship (cf. 5.4.1.2).
- Children are strategically considered as future assets of the Church (cf. 5.4.1.1).
- Aspects like discipline, ethical and moral upholding is considered as major virtues of the Church and can be considered a critical strategic focus (cf. 5.4.1.11 and 5.4.1.12).
- The dependence on ordinary member participation in all activities of the Church is considered a major strategic focus of the Church. This approach is supported by various training inputs; leadership development programs and involvement in leadership roles in the Church (cf. 5.4.1.8).

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- Selection and appointment of specific leadership for specific roles is also considered a strategic focus of the Church. Leader's serves as role models and a source of inspiration for children (cf. 5.4.1.6).
- Differentiation in ministry is a key strategy in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost (cf. 5.4.2.3 and 5.4.3.1).
- Separating children from adult ministry and place them under the care of the Children's Movement is considered as a children's ministry strategy (cf. 5.4.1.3; 5.4.2.1; 5.4.2.2; 5.4.2.3 and 5.4.3.1).

5.5.3 How the Church of Pentecost included children in the ministry of the Church:

- The creation of the Children's Movement as one of the ministries of the Church can be considered a strategic move by the Church regards children (cf. 5.4.3.1 and 5.4.3.2).
- The Children's Movement becomes the main environment where Children are served and accommodated (cf. 5.4.2.3).
- Children enjoy the attention of the Church during special occasions like Founder's Day and Children's Week (cf. 5.4.3.2).
- Children are strategically considered as future assets for the church (cf. 5.4.3.1).
- Children are intentionally separated from adults during main services due to various reasons (cf. 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.3.1).
- The inclusion of children in ministry activities and programs like drama and singing in main services seems to be an under-valued strategy (cf. 5.4.3.1).

The above findings highlighted a number of significant elements, which could be considered part of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost. However, there was also reflection on a number of needs, which could serve as suggestions for the Church of Pentecost to investigate further:

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- There is a need for leadership in general to consider a more accommodating attitude towards children and include children more intentionally as integral part of ministry (cf. 5.4.3.2).
- Children are to be considered more than just future assets for the Church (cf. 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.2.3). They are valuable to the Church today.
- Children expect to be included in the other ministries of the Church (cf. 5.4.2.3).
- The Church need to react proactively as technological advances seems to change the dynamics of society and which affect children (cf. 5.4.3.3).
- The focus on families could become a key element of the ministry of the Church (cf. 5.4.1.9).

In concluding this part of the research, I am left with a perception that there are different views and expectations concerning the children's ministry from both the Church leadership and members. Chapter 6 concludes the study and recommend new possibilities for the Church of Pentecost to consider their ecclesiological position from another angle in the quest to include some of the insights developed in chapter 3 to inform the children's ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost.

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CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The opening statement in chapter 1 postulated the nature of the enquiry and suggested that churches in general seem to neither understand nor appreciate children as being part of the church now or the importance of children's inclusion in the church for the future. Initially this argument was subjectively supported by various personal exposures and discussions with church and organisational leadership in a number of countries in Africa and other Western world countries. The motivations posited in 1.2.1; 1.2.2; 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 and the proposed significance of this study to the field of Practical Theology in 1.6, pointed to the need to investigate the ministry of the church focusing on children academically from a theological perspective. The Church of Pentecost in Ghana that was chosen as the object of the study for reasons posited in 1.2 and 1.6 provided the context and elements for a successful research process. The study explored the children's ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost based on the research question: What was the ministry strategy of the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost focusing on children between 1970 and 2010? It is concluded that the literature review in chapter 2 and the findings in chapter 5 pointed to significant strategic ministry elements of the Church of Pentecost. These findings are further interpreted in this chapter in the light of what was also explored about the church in chapter 3. The following assumptions will guide the conclusions and recommendations in line with the set objectives:

- That objective 1.4.1.1 concerning the historical overview on the Church of Pentecost was already achieved in chapter 2 and that the information is integrated in the final interpretation process and reaching of conclusions. The reformulation of the objective in 6.2 is done as to focus more

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intentionally on the research question as to highlight significant elements of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children.

- That objective 1.4.1.3 concerning the ministry practices in the early church was achieved in chapter 3 and that the findings is integrated in the final conclusions.
- That objectives 1.4.1.5 and 1.4.1.6 are combined in the final conclusions.

The findings and interpretations of the study will then in 6.2 contribute to final conclusions made in relation to the following overall set objectives of the study:

- To **provide** an historical overview on the Church of Pentecost.
- To **identify** possible contributing factors that influenced the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost with the focus on children;
- To **identify** aspects of the ministry practices of the early church in the New Testament and its relationship with the Old Testament with the intention to **develop** a biblical perspective for defining the church as a welcoming and accommodating environment for children that can inform the ministry approach of the Church of Pentecost as it focuses on children.
- To **explore** where, when and how did the Church of Pentecost include children as part of the faith community.
- To **develop** a framework for a best practice in children's ministry whereby the Church of Pentecost can measure their own ministry approach.

In 6.2 key conclusions regarding the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost will be stated in terms of strategic themes discovered in the functioning of the Church of Pentecost as an institution, the ministry activities of the Church and the children's ministry. The study will then conclude with recommendations in 6.4.

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6.2 KEY CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST

Following are the findings of the study with regards to the purpose of the research that was to explore the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana. The following key aspects emerged during the study and are noted under the following objectives of the research:

Objective 1. To provide an historical overview on the Church of Pentecost as to describe what the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost entails.

The ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost revealed some important elements that encompass their ministry strategy. Strategic elements that could in a way relate to the Church's focus on children are dealt with in his part.

6.2.1 Governance strategy.

The ministry of the Church of Pentecost developed from a very basic form and functioning of church (cf. 2.3.4) in the beginning years, to a well-run and organised ministry today referred to in 2.3.5. Most participants in the empirical research process experienced the beginning years as children and over the years transitioned with the Church to what the Church is today. Aspects like management systems and procedures, internal discipline, Biblical values, high view of clergy's position in the Church, accountability from members and clergy and visionary leadership are cited as **key organisational strategies**. As such, the Church of Pentecost excelled in staying a prayerful, well-co-ordinated evangelistic and church planting church with dedicated leadership, responsible membership, indigenous worship style and in all aspects self-sustainable (cf. 2.3.4 and 2.3.5). The study managed to confirm the organisational excellence of the Church through the various reports and declarations made in reports and other documents

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of the Church. This organisational excellence is also implemented in the Children's Movement and the various systems and procedures developed for the children's ministry is part of both an un-intentional and intentional ministry strategy by the Church to ensure a well-run and efficient ministry. Children's Movement leaders are acknowledged by the Church and good quality leadership is assigned to the ministry by the General Council (cf. 2.3.5; 2.4 and 2.5.2). The current children's ministry model based on a separately-run ministry is questioned in the study as it tend to create separation between adult worship and children's worship experiences. The feelings of exclusiveness expressed by participants in 5.4.2.2 suggest a perception of a "they and us" situation in the Church.

6.2.2 Ministry strategies.

Herein all possible ministry strategies are noted which also could in some way influence children and the children's ministry of the Church.

- **Missional strategy.** The Church of Pentecost follows a missional strategy of church planting and evangelism. The Church's vision to plant globally churches globally and nurture them nationally and internationally serves as example of the Church's chosen mission strategy and commitment to evangelism (cf. 2.3.5). As such, it can be concluded that the missional approach to ministry is the Church of Pentecost's most dynamic ministry strategy, which accounts for the constant and dynamic Church growth nationally and globally. Concerning children in the mission of the Church, no specific reference to the inclusion of children in the Church activities or declarations on child issues in this regard was found in any official documents (cf. 2.3.4; 2.3.5). It is therefore contended that whilst children were part of the Church's missions from the beginning years, they were not officially recognised as such. It might also be that children were not at that time being considered a separate part of a missional strategy and therefore not reflected in official documents of the Church.

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- **Financial strategy.** The Church of Pentecost's approach to utilise tithes and offerings as source for finances can also be considered as a ministry strategy (cf. 2.3.5). Tithes and offerings make up the Church's primary source of income and represents more than 90% of the overall income of the Church (cf. 2.3.5). The many policies and procedures with the regular auditing processes aim at good governance and accountability on all levels in the Church. The covenant with God, mentioned in 2.3.5, not to rely on any outside source of funding for the Church, highlights the Church's serious intention to remain self-sustainable and self-sufficient showing only trust in God for the provision for the Church. Their financial strategy also ensures the effective running of the various ministries and assists the Church to achieve its strategic goals in ministry. The participants referred to the need for a relaxing of their financial contributions to the Head Office in order to have more money to invest into the children's ministry. This issue could point to misconceptions with participants about the finances or it could imply that the distribution of the finances is not adequate for the children's ministry needs.
- **Strategic ministries.** The establishment of the five **Movements** referred to in 2.3.5, could be considered the major focuses of the Church of Pentecost's ministry strategy. These are all well-structured ministry departments that in different ways determine the Church's weekly and monthly activities. The inclusion of the Children's Movement seems to be recognition by the Church of the value and place of the children's ministry in the Church. The separation of ministries as departments and apparent absence of an integrated ministry strategy, where children's ministry becomes part of the other ministries, calls for serious debate and revisiting of the Church's ecclesiological premises. Such a debate could also consider ways to integrate all the ministries within the Church as to function as one body with shared goals and responsibilities which would correlate more with the

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inclusiveness in ministry experienced in the early church in the New Testament as discussed in chapter 3.

- **Community programs.** Part of the strategies of the Church of Pentecost is the strategic programs mentioned in 2.3.5. The establishment of schools, health centres and relief services are the strategic programs of Pentecostal Social Services also referred to as PENTSOS (cf. 2.3.5). It is assumed that children in and outside the Church benefit from these programs but no intentional strategy could be sourced. Whilst the Women's Movement engage various social spheres of Ghanaian society the ministry seems to provide opportunities to include the Children's Movement more into activities like the focus on 'street kids' (cf. 2.3.5). The Children's Movement in this regard participate in areas like "street children ministry" where the initiative is treated as a compassion ministry to children. The focus on programs outside the Church seems to be in line with the mission of the church that aims to be a missional church and also to be a witness in society. However, no intentional goal(s) concerning this ministry was found in strategic documents of the Children's Movement and it is assumed that it only later became a more prominent part of the children's ministry strategy.

- **Media ministry strategy.** Media also features as a prominent ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost (cf. 2.3.5). The Pentecost Press (PPL), Pentecost Media (PENTMEDIA), and Radio & TV/Satellite Ministry are all Church initiatives aiming to contribute to evangelism and discipleship (cf. 2.3.5). Although it could be assumed that the children in the Church could also benefit from some ministries there are no intentional strategies formulated to involve children as part of these initiatives.

- **Educational strategy.** The Pentecost University College (PUC) is also an important ministry strategy of the Church to produce well-informed clergy for the

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Church and impact society positively (cf. 2.3.5). Whilst the Church is considered the “cradle” for raising children, the tertiary development is seen as a futuristic engagement with children. It provided great opportunities for children’s future development but the question remains if such an institution could contribute more to children-related studies for the benefit of the Church and Ghanaian society.

- **Member development strategy.** The high emphasis placed on training of lay people points to an intentional plan by the Church to develop well-equipped members for the Church (cf. 2.3.5). The absence of an intentional focus on children-related trainings led to the conclusion that the church still needs to revisit its understanding of the place and value of children in the church. The development of self-sustained churches with emphasis on Spirit-filled and well-equipped members serves as an indication of the seriousness of the Church to develop a high spiritual, ethical and moral quality of membership. Concerning children, these aspects are left to the Children’s Movement to prepare children to become such Spirit-filled members (cf. 2.3.5). In this regard, the Church of Pentecost seems not to value the significance that participation in the whole life of the local church play in the faith formation and socialisation of children and in the faith formation of older members..

- **Children’s ministry strategy.** Establishing a functional children’s ministry called “The Children’s Movement” is considered as a specific part of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost to encourage biological church growth and to prepare and develop leaders for the “future” – independently-run just like each of the other four ministries in the Church (cf. 2.4; 2.5.1 and 2.5.2). The Church has currently more than 500 000 children in its ministry (cf. 2.5.2). The children’s ministry functions within the traditional children’s ministry paradigm where Sunday school activities remain the core input into the life of children. Whilst participants also mentioned their participation, in some of the adult programs, it appears rather

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sporadic and situation bound and not part of an intentional inclusion in the ministry. The leadership of the Children's Movement postulated in their ministry strategy a more inclusive role for children in the Church's ministry and suggested that children should at times be allowed to run programs in the main services such as prayer and preaching (cf. 2.5.2). The lack of facilities for children's programs in Churches mentioned by participants suggests a possible under-valuing of the children by the Church (cf. 5.3.10). It also suggests an approach of differentiation and separation in ministry that could alienate children further from the Church.

Objective 2. To identify possible contributing factors that influenced the development of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost towards a focus on children.

It is concluded that there are various spiritual and ministry orientated factors, which over the years contributed in different ways in shaping the ministry strategies of the Church of Pentecost. This section will treat elements which cannot concretely be translated into a specific strategic activity but which had a significant influence in the ministry strategies of the Church. The following elements are noted:

6.2.3 Historic legacy

The birth and growth of the Church of Pentecost came through a "different" approach to missions through the work of McKeown and resulted in a self-supportive, indigenous and well-structured, value-based and principle-centred church within the Pentecostal family (cf. 2.2.4; and 2.3). The 'heart' of the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost appears to build on and be driven by the Church's reverence and allegiance to their genesis history. What the Church is today and how the Church do theology, as a truly indigenous African church, is intimately linked to the genesis history of the Church. This observation was confirmed by references in formal reports sourced from the archives on various

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meetings of Church leadership over the last 40 years. References in contemporary and academic works in chapter 2 by various leaders from the Church of Pentecost, as well as other Ghanaian academics used in this study, made reference to the place and value of the history of the Church of Pentecost in Ghanaian Christianity. The history is deemed an inspirational factor for children that creates a sense of pride and worth in the Christian community and motivates children to be and remain part of the Church (cf. 5.4.1.1; 5.4.1.4). Children are herein considered by participants as a key strategy in 5.4.13 to continue the legacies of the Church and participants considered themselves as the ones “to hand over the baton of faith.” The fact however, that children’s presence and involvement in the history were not specifically included in any historic reference, does leave a perception that children are either not considered by the Church of Pentecost as key strategic contributors to the legacy of the church or that children are only seen as the future contributors when they became adults. This would probably align with a suggested “futuristic” expectation for children posited in 2.4.1; 5.4.1.1; 5.4.1.13 and 5.4.2.3.

6.2.4 Indigenous character

The intentional activities in the Church to maintain and promote the indigenous character of the Church of Pentecost are considered as a particular ministry strategy. Both the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost in chapter 2 and the way the Church intentionally developed without any outside financial or ministry support contribute to the perception that the Church of Pentecost is an indigenous African Church doing theology in a Ghanaian way. The Church of Pentecost started with a missionary approach, which relied much on an individual missionary and not an institution. The absence of outside control, outside funding and influence from a foreign mission allowed the Ghanaians to develop as an indigenous Church. This approach became part of the Church’s missional values and strategy and is maintained in the more than 94 countries where churches were planted by 2010 (cf. 2.3.5). The success in relation to cultivating an

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indigenous character of the Church overall could not be evaluated, as it was not part of the investigation.

6.2.5 Indigenous worship style

The intentional development and maintenance of the Church of Pentecost's indigenous worship style is considered another ministry strategy (cf. 2.3.5). This element is considered to be a reason for the prolific growth of the Church as it accommodated Africans' needs and became part of the Church's culture. However, when outside organisations contributed to the development of different ministry focuses like children's ministry the Church did not escape some measure of influence in certain practices. Children participate and follow the Church of Pentecost's worship style wherever they are present. There is however, a perception that the outside influence of organisations like Child Evangelism Fellowship and Scripture Union resulted in some instances a worship style that tends to accommodate more of a Western culture in terms of the type of songs, words, actions and even way of prayer (cf. 2.4.2). It was in this regard that Asamoah-Gyadu (2005:107) observed that the lack of acknowledging the Ghanaian's need for indigenous worship with a pneumatological emphasis contributed to the Christian community's shift to Pentecostalism and resulted in the diminishing influence of organisations like Scripture Union in the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches and by implication children's ministry.

6.2.6 Prayer and fasting

Prayer and fasting are both core values and a ministry strategy. Total reliance on the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit is also a key aspect of the Church of Pentecost's ministry strategy. The Children's Movement seems to have provided guidance to children concerning the work and place of the Holy Spirit in children's spiritual life but the study could not confirm children's intentional inclusion within the main stream of the Church in terms of prophecies and gifts of the Spirit (cf.

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2.3.5). There was evidence that some children did participate in prayer and fasting in the Church program but it seems mostly a casual inclusion rather than a ministry strategy (cf. 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.3.1). Participants referred to opportunities to participate in prayer and preaching activities in the Church which contributed to an experience of inclusion and a feeling of their worth (cf. 5.4.2.1).

Objective 3. To explore where, when and how did the Church of Pentecost include children as part of the faith community so as to develop a framework for a best practice in children’s ministry whereby the Church of Pentecost can measure their own ministry approach.

It could be concluded that the inclusion of children as a focus in the general life of the church and in its ministry strategies was rather “accidental” than intentional. Whilst it is clear that children were present and sometimes instrumental (cf. 2.3 and 6.3.4) in the genesis history of the Church of Pentecost there is no reference in historic accounts with regards to this matter. The absence of specific declarations on children or child issues from the General Assembly in the Archives of the Church of Pentecost left a perception of possible misinterpretation and lack of clarity about the place and value of inclusion of children in Church life. It could also point to a change of time where it was not so necessary in the past to focus and include children so intentionally and that the 21st century demands on children necessitates a revisit by the Church on critical children-related issues. The futuristic expectations for children raised by leadership in the Church confirmed the perception that children are currently considered more as part of church life in the future than contributing members now (cf. 2.4.2 and 2.5.1). Formal documents sourced in the research did include reference to the allocation of Sunday services, weekly programs and special weeks like the Founder’s week to various ministries that provides opportunities for inclusion of members in the activities of the Church.

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The one week allocated to the Children's Movement is considered as a very positive gesture by the Church leadership and participants apparently have good memories regarding participation in this event. This event however is interpreted as an independent event not integrated with the other ministries as a unifying and collaborative event. These special events suggest more possibilities for all ministries to join and contribute to some common ministry goals. Participants also expressed feelings of rejection when not allowed to join the main services of the Church, which could be indicative of children's expectations from the Church.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigation into the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost was concluded in 6.2 and 6.3 explaining various strategic aspects of the Church, the ministry of the Church and the children's ministry of the Church. Consequently, the following recommendations suggest what the Church of Pentecost can do even better in ministry and by doing so continue to raise strong Christian leaders among children in Ghana.

6.3.1 To develop clear-cut theological tenets on child theology as part of the Church of Pentecost's 10 core tenets. The Church functions with well-formulated theological tenets on many matters like specific doctrines, church and ministry. The absence of a documented theological statement on children-related matters, could allow for misinterpretation and misconceptions to be formed when children's ministry is discussed or explained by the Church. Appropriate tenets can in particular contribute to the provision of answers for some negative issues raised by participants about the Church's response to children (cf. 5.3 and 5.4). The exploration of the church and children in Biblical texts in chapter 3 provided a rich resource for biblical reflection and formulation of some practical theological

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underpinnings for a children's ministry (cf. 3.3; 3.3.2; 3.3.3; 3.3.4; and 3.4.4) and may be of help for the Church of Pentecost formulating their own theological tenets for children's ministry. Specific theological tenets on children-related matters could also contribute to support the children's ministry strategies.

- 6.3.2 To explore through research a theological and anthropological understanding of whom the child is as a person.** No reflections were found in the research of any focus by the Church on a theological anthropological position nor was there any reference in the literature sourced that relates to this aspect. The uniqueness and God-given potential of children should not be undervalued. Insights would provide parents and Sunday school teachers with better understandings about the children they are responsible for and could be included in future parental and Sunday school trainings. This aspect was not explored during the study but due to the significance of the focus for the strategies for children's ministry, it is posited as a recommendation for further study.
- 6.3.3 To explore more ways to create a welcoming environment for children in the Church.** The negative perceptions expressed by participants, that they did not feel welcomed and part of the Church, suggests that there was a form of rejection experienced. This matter could also relate to the issue of exclusiveness raised in 1.2.5, 5.4.11 and 5.4.12. The exploration of some Biblical perspectives (3.3.2, 3.3.4 and 3.4.2.2) concerning the inclusiveness of children in the faith communities suggests that communities could become welcoming environments. Herein the *Ubuntu* character of a communal life style serves as an example of what is possible within the local church (cf. 3.4.2.2 and 3.4.2.3).

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6.3.4 To revisit the Church's ecclesiological understanding concerning the mandate and calling of the church concerning children. The way *church* and *doing church* is interpreted is a response to perceptions referred to in 1.2.3 (children marginalised in theology) and 1.2.5 (what and who is the church). In the light of the various suggestions that children are marginalised by theology and in church life, chapter 3 offers various perspectives of how children were included in the presence of God's people in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament (cf. 3.3; 3.3.2; 3.3.4; 3.4.2.1; 3.4.2.2, 3.4.2.3 and 3.4.4). Becoming a welcoming and inclusive community could open up more possibilities for the Church to facilitate the integration of the life-world of adults and children so as to engage the world (society around them) as an extended family.

6.3.5 To become more inclusive by including children as an integral part of Church life both as members and participants. This recommendation refers to an intentional inclusion of children in conversations, statements, references and in ministry strategies. It suggests a subtle change of focus from children being only receivers of the ministry of the church, where they are spoken to and on behalf of, to members with a voice doing theology as part of the Church. Changing the view on children's participation in church life, could also address the perspective held by the Church in that children are considered as only future assets (cf. 2.4.2 and 2.5.1)? The Church of Pentecost is by definition serious about the particular gifts (charismata) of the Holy Spirit, given unconditionally and individually to believers to serve the body of Christ. Children are not excluded from the particular gifts and the Church should discern, encourage and guide children to discover their unique charismata and to use it to the edification of the whole church (cf. 2.3.5). Responses in 5.3 suggest that children have a need to be included as an integral part of church life. In 3.3.5.1 and 3.4.2.3 and 3.4.4, the

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inclusiveness of children in the Hebrew communal life and later in the life of the church serves as motivation for a more intentional inclusion of children. This can lead to acknowledging the value of children to the church as members for today and their inclusion more equally with adults in church life.

6.3.6 To intentionally include children in the ministry practices of the Church. The Church could encourage more involvement of children through intentional inclusion in special ministry events like evangelistic outreaches, church-planting activities, missionary outreaches and in lay leadership training programs. In 5.4.2.1, 5.4.2.2 and 5.2.2.3 reference is made to the telling impact that participation in ministry made to children. The fact that children live as part of society in 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 suggests the potential value that children can bring to the ministry of the Church. The inclusion of children's ministry in the ministry strategy of the Church will allow children to become more integral part of church life and being together with other adults as role models can enhance at the same time their faith development. It will furthermore encourage synergy between children's ministry and different other ministries like the mission department, evangelism, Women's Movement and Lay leaders training programs (cf. 2.3.5) and that could contribute to achieving common set goals applicable to more than one ministry.

6.3.7 To explore a focus on the role of families in the Church. A focus on families is hereby encouraged and postulated as a critical focus for a children's ministry strategy. Whilst the study did not explore families intentionally, this focus emerged during the study. In 3.3.5.1 the inclusiveness of family in the Old Testament and in 3.4.2.2 the communal character of the church, placed a prominent focus on the role of the family

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in the lives of children. It is in particular in the communal learning environment that families seem to be significant role players in the lives of children (cf. 3.3.5 and 3.3.5.1). The study found a low emphasis on the value and roles of family in the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost (cf. 2.4 and 5.4.9) and the absence of the inclusion of a focus on the family in the ministry strategies of the Children's Movement (cf. 2.4). In this regard, the inclusion of family-orientated activities in the ministry of the Church could become the most critical focus of the ministry strategies of the Church. The understanding of the concept of families should also be re-interpreted in terms of prevailing realities posited in 1.2.2 like urbanisation, growing orphan numbers and family disintegration in society. In church and social activities, single parents can be included in other family units for experiencing interaction in a more balanced family structure. An emphasis on the value of role models in children's lives as postulated in 5.3.4; 5.4.8; 5.4.9 and 5.4.10 can encourage more intentional relationship-building between families in a communal environment and the development of a sort of "mentorship" program for children.

6.3.8 To include ministry strategies for and with children that reach beyond Sunday school. Whilst Sunday school experiences featured as the most positive experiences of children, the study also found that the influence of Sunday school teachers went beyond the Sunday input (5.4.10; 5.4.11; 5.4.2.3). In this regard, chapter 3 pointed to the possibilities that exist when a community exists for the sake of others (cf. 3.4.2.3). In 3.4.2.2 and 3.4.2.3 the importance of an environment of mutual care and relationships suggests that both people and community is needed for children's formation. The Church's ministry activities that aim at children's spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual and physical growth and also their participation in general church life should therefore not only be left to

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Sunday school teachers, but should involve the “faith community” as a whole. Also in 3.3.5.1, the family is considered as a context for learning. The implication is that the community should become a welcoming and receiving environment where all members are involved with the children as family or extended family while learning together.

6.3.9 To encourage adults to become part of children’s formation as mentors. According to participants, the active involvement of Sunday school teachers remained impactful and formational in their lives (cf. 5.4.1.1; 5.4.1.8; 5.4.1.10; and 5.4.3.2). The biblical reflection in 3.4.2.2 and 3.4.2.3 emphasises the friendship environment of mutual care and relationships where individual adults could also play an important role in the lives of children. In this regard, the acceptance of children in the faith community will provide a necessary platform for adults to become more involved in the lives of children (cf. 3.3.2). The study also points to the role of children in the mission of the church in 3.4.4. For this reason, it is suggested that teachers should not consider their task as only sharing spiritual lessons on Sundays but should also contribute to children’s physical, disciplinary, academic, and social learning throughout the week. Such an approach however calls for a wider community involvement with children where the church as a village community take shared responsibility for children (cf. 3.4.2.2). This is not a strange concept to Africans. From a children’s ministry perspective, goals could be set as part of the Church strategies to develop community members for this task through trainings and specialised skills development like counselling, teaching, mentoring and management.

6.3.10 To develop children’ skills more intentionally and create opportunities for children to participate in ministry. Participants referred to the value of

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experiencing the opportunity to use their gifts in the Church (cf. 5.4.3.1 and 5.4.3.2). Drama, music, action songs, Bible verse memory, and evangelism were the main activities that participants remembered and as such points to the value of participation in learning experiences (5.4.3.1). It underscores the potential value that such ministry inputs might have for children and for the church. Participation in ministry activities by developing and utilising their talents and gifts in aspects like singing, music, drama and leadership could provide children with a sense of belonging in the greater community while also developing them personally. Expanding the children's ministry approach to include the empowerment of children so as to become agents of ministry like witnesses (evangelists, preachers and teachers), caregivers, and social workers, would open up new approaches to ministry where children can be prepared to assume new roles in the church and society. In 3.4.3, it is postulated that the mission of church is to be hospitable. Such an environment of hospitality would consider the cultural context (cf. 3.3.3), express the church's mission (cf. 3.4.3) and allow children to become part of the ministry of the Church (cf. 3.4.4). Several skill-based and knowledge-based trainings for lay leaders in different ministry-related topics like prayer, music, worship, accounting, management, evangelism and counselling could form part of the Church's capacity building where children and the wider church could benefit.

6.3.11 To develop a children's ministry that take into account the findings of this study.

This part concludes with five suggested children's ministry processes (cf. 1.9.6) which could integrate children more fully into church life. The

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processes are applied to some of the ministries of the Church of Pentecost⁴⁴ as to serve as examples for an integrated approach to ministry. The suggested processes are herein interpreted in the light of what chapter 3 and other parts of the study revealed about the church and children. These children's ministry processes are expressed in four distinct contexts namely: the home, the church, the school and the community. The five ministry processes are not treated in a particular order of importance. Some of the ministry processes will sometimes be more relevant in a particular ministry context and therefore enjoys a greater focus. It should also be noted that the five processes are interrelated and should not be separated and individualised. The Witness Movement is taken as example of a main ministry of the Church of Pentecost where the various generations and ministry focuses could synergise in ministry. The following section describes the children's ministry processes with examples of possible applications for the ministry of the Church of Pentecost.

6.3.11.1 Children's ministry as a **healing process**

- **The ministry focus.** Healing is a restoration from brokenness to wholeness. Brokenness affects children's well-being and their life world as well as that of the faith community⁴⁵ in a broader sense. From a

⁴⁴ This part will refer to the Church of Pentecost in most instances as the Church and where the concept *church* is used it would be an application to the broader Body of Christ. The Church forms part of the faith communities in particular societies in Ghana.

⁴⁵ In this part the reference to a faith community could mean a particular congregation or in some instances, where so indicated, a collection of congregations (not necessarily from the same denomination) within a specific society and context where children grow up. Various congregations would constitute a Christian community's presence in a particular society. Reference to the church would here mean a Christian expression of the church as people of God in societies representing the global church.

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theological perspective, it suggests the **restoration** of a hurting and traumatised child to a state of wholeness and peace with God, self and others. Whilst the general explanation for a healing process is focusing on particular counselling interventions, the understanding herein is much broader. The focus is on the creation of healing communities⁴⁶ [broader sense] where children could find healing and care throughout childhood and later life. It is also important to recognise that the brokenness of this world affects all children at different stages and in different degrees.

- **What the ministry need.** The children's ministry needs strategies for intentionally developing healing communities. It calls for an environment where children could be welcomed, heard, protected and guided to wholeness. The church is described in 3.4.2.2 as a faith community where people find a sense of belonging. Such a community could also be interpreted as a village community or faith community expressing an attitude of welcoming and an acceptance of brokenness and broken people. It suggests the creation of a particular environment (welcoming and inclusive) by the church where children and others are being accepted, affirmed, helped and cared for as a collective responsibility by such a faith community. Chapter 3 also suggested that the New Testament church can be interpreted as a called-out gathering of God's people. Such a gathering will ideally consists of relational people who welcome, invite and accept other people into the faith community (cf. 3.4.2.1; 3.4.2.2; 3.4.2.3; 3.4.3 and 3.4.). The Church of

⁴⁶A healing community is a group of people with an active interest in the well-being of its members and with an ultimate purpose to intentionally share this well-being with *all* members of society. It can also be described as an association of caring individuals with the focus on relationships rather than constitutions and structures (in Coetsee & Grobelaar, 2014:3)

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Pentecost could become healing communities in the various societies in Ghana and create safe environments where trust, values and beliefs are fostered (cf. 3.4.3).

The Church has opportunities such as the lay leader's trainings to empower and equip members [including children] of the congregations with understanding, knowledge and skills to enter into the life-world of children. Families (including all generations) could become a valuable resource for the Church to pursue this healing process as part of the mission of the Church. It is also noted that the healing ministry might sometimes require the services of special skilled people in the field of counselling for particular case studies.

- **The ministry application.** By creating a community that can facilitate healing processes the ministries are able to engage children's lives on the level of their brokenness. The Witness Movement is taken as The Church has the opportunity to implement the healing process as an intergenerational ministry practice through activities such as:

- Inclusion of all generations in the ministry of the Witness Movement;
- Encouragement of role players representing various generations to become advocates for the rights and protection of children. The Witness Movement also provides opportunities for the Church to join the many voices referred to 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 in advocating on behalf of children. In this way the Church can support efforts by the United Nations and organisations like World Vision, Compassion International and Viva network to take responsibility for the plight of children and specifically those at risk (1.2.2);

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- Focus intentionally on the marginalised and poor children in societies. The Witness Movement could convey and demonstrate messages of hope for children who cannot speak for them. Children could play different roles in the ministry strategies such as advocates and counsellors;
- Woman could take care of traumatised, rejected and hurting children by providing care, safety, and protection. The Church could support this ministry focus by providing family run shelters, feeding schemes and counselling services through this ministry;
- Youth could provide counsellors, peer-group supporters and care-givers for children;
- Children's workers could provide fellowship, Biblical teaching and spiritual guidance for traumatised, hurting and rejected children. It is an opportunity for the ministry to introduce children to Jesus Christ as the "Healer." The ministry could assist children further by developing necessary Biblical foundations and Christian experiences; and
- Men (young and old) could provide the necessary "father" role models and leadership in families where children could find guidance, security and refuge.

The Church could herein consider reforming existing ministry practices or creating new ministry strategies focusing intentionally on the brokenness in the society that naturally will include children. In the following section a growth process for children is described that could benefit from the healing environment described in above section.

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6.3.11.2 Children's ministry as a **growth process**

- **The ministry focus.** This process facilitates children's holistic growth. **Growth is a life-long process** and happens on physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual levels. The emphasis is more on the development stages (holistic child development) which starts from birth to adulthood with related implications with each stage of life. Children are considered as contributing members as well as resources for the Church as referred to in 5.5.2 and 6.4.10. Children are furthermore unique creations with a God-given purpose and potential that needs to be unfolded (cf. 6.4.2).
- **What the ministry need.** This process needs an intentional ministry strategy that builds on and supports the healing process described in 6.3.11.1. It also calls for ways to include children's participation in their own growth processes by helping them to understand value and know how to take care for their own bodies and minds. Growth is a life-long process supported by the congregation and broader faith community by ensuring inputs into children's physical, educational, social, emotional and spiritual development. The inclusive and creative ways that the family participated in experiential learning in the Old Testament is posited in 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.3. It creates a picture that shows some resemblance with the African concept of how children can be guided by the head of the clan around the campfire. It also resonates with the expression that "it takes a village to raise a child" where the head of the family and other leaders take responsibility. It suggests a casual and contextually relevant environment where children's growth is continuously facilitated and stimulated as part of and in relation to life.

Children could furthermore be empowered to become part of these particular ministry's focuses as participants (doers of theology) in the

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ministry. In 3.3.5 and 3.3.5.1, a particular environment created by God's people in the Biblical times is postulated as an environment that could facilitate children's growth. The family and community concepts found in the Old Testament (cf. 3.3.5.1) open up exciting possibilities for the Church to help children to grow through continues parental and community involvement.

- **The ministry application.** The growth process could involve children from a very early age by including them in Church life through participation in Christian rituals, listening together to the narratives of the Bible and listening to each other. The growth process therefore includes a focus on children according to their needs and helps them to grow holistically within the boundaries of the Church. The various ministries in the Church could herein take up different roles and concentrate on areas which could relate to their particular ministry focus. This strategy should be understood as an integrated approach where the growth areas would overlap and not be segregated or fit into one particular ministry focus. The growth process also acknowledges that different ministry inputs will be necessary for different stages of children's lives. The following suggestions will serve merely as examples of what is possible:

- The Witness Movement can intentionally support activities that take care of children's physical and spiritual needs. This ministry can also assume responsibility for aspects such as advocacy, child protection, education, sanitation, and other physical needs like food, clothes and water. Children can be encouraged to join the ministry in evangelism, outreaches. drama, choirs, community projects and advocacy;
- Women (young and old) could be responsible for taking care of children's health, hygiene, social skills, emotional needs and life-skill development;

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- The youth in the Church could provide peer guidance and opportunities for physical exercise for children through sports and games. They can also play a role in guiding children in their emotional and social development;
- Children’s workers could focus on helping children to learn about God, Scripture, the Church and a Christian lifestyle. It could also provide opportunity for children to discover and utilise their unique gifts. Children’s participation in the main services of the Church could also be encouraged through arts, music, feasts and liturgies; and
- Men are deemed a critical part in children’s lives as it has the potential to foster healthy perspectives of the “father” image and role with children. It could assist the Church in bridging the increasing gap caused by absent fathers in family ministry. Men could focus on areas like becoming role models for children, helping children with problem-solving skills, developing vocational skills and providing guidance in spiritual growth. Later in life these children could assume similar roles as “fathers” and “mothers” to other children.

Whilst the healing process in children’s ministry is considered necessary for restoration of children, it also provides the safe and welcoming environment for children’s holistic growth. The following nurturing process is a short-term ministry process that focuses on the family.

6.3.11.3 Children’s ministry as a **nurturing process**

- **The ministry focus.** Nurturing is a **short term process** starting at conception and ending at early adulthood. It is part of ministry through which **children can experience God’s love** within the family. It serves

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as a first introduction into the faith community. God entrusted children to parents as the primary care givers and as such, children are intentionally brought under the protection and care of a family during their most vulnerable time of life. In the absence of a family in children's lives, the extended family as part of the faith community provides a "*cradle for future leaders*" and a "*nursery*" for the needs of children (cf. 2.5.1 and 5.4.1.13). This process would differ from the healing process and growth process in that it focus more directly on the family or extended family where love and discipline is expected to be addressed intentionally within the formative years of childhood. The nurturing environment will focus on protective systems and policies for the Church and society. It will contribute to provide clear guidance for boundaries for discipline and order in families and society. Activities of care and protection for and by families, extended family and the broader faith community will include the provision of safe living conditions, treatment of health concerns and provision of supportive social services.

- **What the ministry need.** The ministry needs healthy families and a stable faith community with a *communal lifestyle* (cf. 3.4.2.2) of caring, sharing, compassion and respect for each child. As such, a child's physical, spiritual, emotional and social needs become the concern of also the Church as a faith community (cf. 3.3.3). The implication is that adults intentionally go to the children in their life world with a Christian life style. Creating a supportive and caring family for all children seems a critical area of engagement for the Church.
- **The ministry application.** Part of the faith community's "go into this world" is to address the areas in children's lives where the nurturing is absent. Taking collective responsibility for children's nurturing implies that the Church becomes the co-caregivers (with parents) for things like

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food, shelter, health and education. The following ministry focusses could be included in the Church's ministry strategies.

- The Witness Movement could ensure that newborn children are welcomed and acknowledged in the Church. The ministry could also provide assistance and advice to poor families to have access to safe housing and health services during children's childhood years. The Witness Movement could find more ways to express the love of God to the young children such as ensuring that learning centres and day care centres are available for the small children. During evangelism crusades, special attention could be given to the small children and their parents such as providing special seating in the meetings. The ministry could also provide training for laypersons to be equipped for different focuses in the nurturing processes like health, sanitation and safety;
- Women are a critical part of children's nurturing process. Women would best understand the critical areas needed for providing nurture to children the best. Training and advice to parents in the critical areas of the life of the small child could ensure that children receive the needed nurturing as to experience the love of God in a practical way. Interventions in family life could also strengthen families for future roles in the Church and society. Women could also be instrumental in ensuring access for mothers and babies to clinic services and day care centres for small children;
- The youth could proactively be prepared for the nurturing processes through training and practical exposures to small children. Practical areas of ministry such as the field of health and pre-school could become part of young people's career development;

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- Children's workers could ensure the continuous building of healthy relationships between children and adults. They can also encourage and prepare children in the ministry to interact more intentionally with smaller children. Children could also join other ministries where they could be equipped to participate in nurturing processes. Children's workers could also create a space for small children through initiatives like setting up a picture board where a picture and name for each new-born child is posted. Special attention could be given to small children during baptism, birthdays and other relevant occasions. Regular prayers could be offered for specific children; and
- Men could become directly involved with small children as prayer supporters. Men could also create intentional activities like visitations, gifts, repair work, building projects, farming for food and fund development, business development and welcome ceremonies as a show of love and support for newly-arrived children. They can also contribute to the provision of safe, secure and healthy environments for young children.

6.3.11.4 Children's ministry as a **socialisation process**

- **The ministry focus.** The process focuses mainly on the development and **integration of children's enculturation in church life** and the **formation and application of social skills**. It is a process of building relationships and growing community. Socialisation can also be considered as a life-long process. For children to grow up and take their place in the church community was in the early church one aspect of a child's general socialization and faith formation (cf. 3.3.5 and 3.4.2.2).
- **What the ministry need.** This process also needs strategies that form part of general Church life. It focuses mainly on the development of

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social skills and enculturation into Church life. The Church has the opportunity to join God's mission on earth and become the role models and carriers of God's love into the life of children through relationship building and the creation of community (cf. 3.4.3). It suggests a process that starts primarily within the context of a family. The faith community can play an important role to support children's interaction with their family and ensures that children come into contact with values, norms, traditions, and customs of their family and that of the Church and broader faith community. Play is a universal language of children with virtually no boundaries for creativity and is applicable to families and informal and formal groups of people. The contextual and welcoming space (cf. 3.4.2.3) that the faith community creates is ideally the secure and consistent environment where one can expect that adults are responsible to foster and maintain interaction and socialisation with children. It creates an environment where the community takes responsibility for the development of children's social skills.

- **The ministry application.** Given the realities of the life world of children like economic pressures, social pressures and political pressures it can be expected that children encounter stressful circumstances during their lifetimes. Such experiences of social pressure will shape children's perspectives on their social world and will call for the development of their spiritual and social skills so that they are able face the realities of life. The building of relationships with children through effective means is important for the fostering and development of the socialising processes. The various ministries could contribute to the socialisation process in the following ways:

- The Witness Movement could provide space in the ministry to allow intentional relationship building between children and adults. Relationship building could become a core methodology when

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moving into the world. Children could become a target group for relationship building in evangelism and church planting activities. Relationship building would become a main strategy for this ministry as a means to develop community living. Another focus for this ministry is to enter the world of the child through play. This ministry could encourage play in Church life through elements such as liturgy during Church services, role-play, drama, art and games;

- Women could utilise relationship building and play as ways to build up families. The ministry could also encourage the development of listening skills within families where children could experience acknowledgement, acceptance and a feeling of worth and belonging in the family and society;
- Young people could provide opportunity for children to socialise with others by using social gatherings like camps, sports and games;
- Children's workers could utilise play to help children to build relationships and develop their social skills. They could demonstrate the value of play and good listening skills to the Church in programs where children and adults are joined together. Most learning experiences like memory verses, bible stories, songs and doctrines could be facilitated through play; and
- Men could re-discover the joy and value of play. The importance for men to play with children could not be over-emphasised. Men could be encouraged to play with children at appropriate times as a means of relationship building. The socialisation process also involves the ability to listen. Men could herein take the lead in the Church to develop a culture of listening to God and listening to

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each other. Bible studies and prayer nights provide opportunities to develop listening skills.

The children's ministry processes of healing, growing, nurturing and socialising point to an integration of children focuses in the various ministries of the Church. These processes are applicable to various aspects of congregational life. The formation process contributes further to the particular aspect of learning.

6.3.11.5 Children's ministry as a formation process

- **The ministry focus.** This process includes multiple inputs into a life-long learning experience for children. It is distinguished from the growth process in that it focuses more specifically on **the learning aspect of children**. The focus is more on distinguishing what knowledge is required, the way that knowledge is gained and then on the application of the skills to apply the acquired knowledge. It is also considered as a formative process that assists in unfolding⁴⁷ a child to become what God intended that child to become. This formative process should always be approached according to the child's potential and capacity. It could also be considered as contributing to the building of children's capacity as people. Learning could relate to the Old Testament processes whereby parents and the faith community were responsible for children's learning about community living, education and moral and ethical instructions and teachings from God on religious life (cf. 3.3.4).

⁴⁷ The concept of "unfolding" of a child means that children are guided through their development stages to gradually become the people God intended. It is opposite to "moulding" where children are formed according to other people's patterns and ideas.

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- **What the ministry need.** This process needs a learning strategy and appropriate methodology as integral part of the Church as a learning environment. This strategy will be supported by an understanding of learning processes and the way children learn. It pursues appropriate programs and learning methodologies according to children's learning capacities and needs. Learning needs an environment that encourages learning with the support of mentors, consisting ideally of parents, to guide the children in the learning process. In 3.3.4 the interpretation of how families and communities functioned in the Old Testament, highlighted characteristics such as inclusiveness and communal involvement in children's learning processes. The process will also include formal instruction where children have the opportunity to acquire more knowledge of the Bible, the Church, Christian life, and faith practices such as prayer, fasting and meditation.
- **The ministry application.** The inclusive and communal environment provides children the opportunity to grow up and learn in similar ways as the Jewish children in 3.3.3 and 3.3.5. Most of their learning like cognitive skills, life skills, spiritual, and social learning, happens within the family and extended family (3.3.4; 3.3.5 and 3.3.5.1). Children also have an opportunity to learn about God and experience the presence of God in the home through participation in worship, rituals, liturgy and biblical feasts where the father leads the family as referred to in 3.3.3. In 3.4.2.2 and 3.5.3.1. Aspects like hospitality, people's well-being (shalom) and an attitude of common participation emerged as characteristics, for example in the African community life, which could contribute to the way that the Church of Pentecost approach learning as a communal activity in the Church. Such a community creates opportunity for children to discover and learn through imitation where the family can by example, break bread and share the cup in remembrance

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of Jesus's death and payment for people's sin. It is considered as an open invitation for children to learn about and join in Christian life through celebrating feasts and sacraments in the home and in the church. Learning could be facilitated in the various ministries through activities such as:

- The Witness Movement could be instrumental in providing age appropriate materials on subjects and topics the Church considers important for children to know. The ministry could also engage the educational field and contribute to school programs and ensure spiritual focuses in the learning materials. The ministry strategies could also include a focus on areas around the Church where there are a low level of education and where children in particular do not have easy access to education. This ministry can also contribute to the development and publishing of theological articles and works on children's issues. The ministry could furthermore guide children and the Church in effective learning methodologies. Children could also become part of other children's learning by providing peer support and guidance in learning areas that they already mastered;
- Women could encourage learning through support and guidance for children during learning sessions. Women is also ideally positioned to engage areas of low literacy and specifically to reach illiterate women through literacy programs. This approach will have influence that is more positive for children in those specific families;
- Young people could use their tertiary training experiences to encourage, guide and support children in the Church to learn and master their studies.

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- Children's workers could ensure that children are in a relationship with God. Children's faith life needs to be supported by a sound Biblical basis. This ministry could ensure that children learn age-appropriate content about God, Scripture, Church and faith and develop such a Biblical basis. The ministry could also develop more effective learning methodologies for children's learning experiences; and
- Men could form support groups to encourage and pray for children during intense learning processes. Men can also set an example for children through the development of their own knowledge base in important areas of life-related knowledge about children's issues.

6.3.12 Recommendations for further research

The study opened up a number of critical issues that encourages the Church of Pentecost and the church in Africa in general to do more research for the sake of children such as:

- Explore the field of ecclesiology for a deeper understanding of a African way of congregational life where children are fully integrated as part of church (cf. 6.3.4).
- Research the role of families in raising up children as a people of God (cf.6.3.7).
- Explore an African theological anthropology focusing on children (6.3.2).
- Include a children focus in other theological fields such as systematic theology.
- Research more contextual ways to train congregational leaders in seminaries, bible schools and tertiary institutes, especially in regard to ministry with children

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6.4 Summary

From this study, it is clear that children's ministry is to be viewed as an integral part of what church is about. The examples were used to link the various age groups and ministry focuses to the children's ministries. It emphasised the possibilities and opportunities for the Church of Pentecost to consider a more integrated approach to ministry. Integration would mean that a focus on children is included in all of the Church's ministries. Children could then experience Church life as being fully part of the Church of Pentecost. Children's ministry should therefore not be reduced to just another ministry strategy but rather be valued as an expression of being church.

The problem statement in chapter 1 was explored through various means such as historic literature review in chapter 2, hermeneutics in chapter 3 and empirical methodology that utilised drawings and focus group discussions in chapter 4 and 5. The findings postulated in chapters 3, 5 and 6 assisted in making recommendations for the Church of Pentecost to integrate children more in the ministry of the Church. It is also clear from the study that the concepts *church* and *children's ministry* cannot be confined to a particular understanding or model. Church will remain a mystery of God in relation to what the church could be and become. The recommendations postulated in 6.4 provide an opportunity for The Church of Pentecost as an African church in Ghana to develop an approach to ministry where children are more integrated into the total life of the church. As such, the children's ministry strategies of the Church could become a benchmark for the African church to learn from. The study concludes with an encouragement for further research within the Church of Pentecost focusing on the various key findings of the research as to develop sound African perspectives on these issues.

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ADDENDUM 1



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE: HUMAN RESEARCH (NON-HEALTH)

UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH **2010**

Application to the University of Stellenbosch Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Non-Health) for clearance of new/revised research projects

This application must be typed or written in capitals

Name: Prof/Dr/Mr/Ms: Mr

Position/Professional Status: Reverend

Affiliation: Research Programme/Institution:

The Church of Pentecost in Ghana.

Title of research project: (*Do not use abbreviations*)

The ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost in Accra with specific focus on children: An exploratory study

Where will the research be carried out?

In Accra, Ghana

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All the following sections must be completed (Please tick all relevant boxes where applicable)

1. FUNDING OF THE RESEARCH: How will the research be funded?

Two sources:

- 1.) Johan Du Preez study fund through Petra College
- 2.) Personal resources

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

Empirical research project in supporting of the findings of the dissertation

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH: *(Please list objectives)*
1. To discover what is the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost
 2. What is the role of children in this strategy
 3. To discover if there is any relationship between the ministry strategy focusing on children and community transformation

4. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH *(give a brief outline of the research plan – not more than 200 words)*

The case study under investigation is directed towards understanding the strategy with children within the Church of Pentecost in all its complexity. It challenges the general understanding of the Church on children and their value in being part as God's transformational engagement with people and situations. Research Question:

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What was the children's ministry strategy within the Church of Pentecost in Ghana for the period 1989 to 2009 and how did it work and what is the potential contribution to community transformation?

This question will explore the Church of Pentecost's historic development as Church but will also take in account some broader influences from the wider body of the Church in Ghana. The exploration of this research will focus on the possible strategy relating to children within the Church of Pentecost.

I selected to follow a qualitative research methodology. The research design is based on a case study approach. I intend to use collective case study approach which will assist me in gaining better understanding about the social issue or the population under investigation. In exploring and describing the case under investigation I have the choice of a number of data collecting methods. I chose to use interviews with 40 focus groups within the Church of Pentecost. I am also sourcing data from church documents and also rely on academic and non-academic works from writers. The population of this study would consist out of the members of the Church of Pentecost living in Accra. For the pilot study I selected 4 congregations of the Church of Pentecost as a purposive sample.

The unit of analysis will constitute the following: The interviews are structured around 10 questions.

- i) Church members over the age of 30 years. They will represent a group who will have important information on the church's approach to children over an extensive period of time.
- ii) Leadership of the Church of Pentecost who are over the age of 30 years. They will represent full time as well as lay ministry leaders.

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- iii) Archived information, operational documents and relevant reports of the Church of Pentecost.

Data collection is approach more from a participant observer premises. The data collection process will include field notes, stories (open ended narratives), interviews, observations and electronic recordings. I am also considering applying triangulation during the research process. The process will also utilise a coding and decoding systems which will be designed to support the process.

The data interpretation process will be managed through a system from Moonstats (2002; 2005).

The demarcation will be influenced by the question that needs to be answered which focus on the Church's strategy. The focus on members over 30 years relate to some important developments which happened 30 years ago in the Church of Pentecost. The existing leadership of the Church of Pentecost refers to very important influences by the Church when they were small children. The history of the Church reflects very important developments in the area of children. The literature review depends much on contextual African writers on Church and political life in Ghana and rest of Africa.

The limitations I anticipate during this research require a proactive approach to the research. Some of the challenges are related to a possible language barrier, the cost of travelling and my cultural background. I did however over the years managed to build very healthy relationship with the Church leadership and receive much help from them on this.

In exploring the Church of Pentecost in Accra I chose to use interviews with four focus groups, collecting data from current church documents, collect data from other sources like academic and non- academic works – preferably primary

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sources, the Church of Pentecost's archive material, as well as observations where I will fit into different roles at different stages (De Vos, 2002:284). My pilot study experience in 2009 allowed for meeting some important role players like the leadership of the children's ministry of the Church of Pentecost and a discussion with the General Secretary. It also assisted in getting formal permission for the proposed research project. It also helped to discuss the possible selection of focus groups that will assist in developing the best possible process and content for the required data collection.

The population of this study would consist out of the members of the Church of Pentecost living in Accra. The target is to include 4 different congregations of the Church of Pentecost who will be selected as a purposive sample in Accra (Miles & Huberman, in Welman, *et al*, 2005:204). The four congregations will represent four specific geographical and demographical areas. I plan at this stage to target a congregation in a poor area of Accra, a congregation in an affluent area and two congregations within a middle class area. The specific choices will serve initially as a point of departure and will be reconsidered as the research develops. In the demarcation will be influenced by the question that needs to be answered which focus on the Church's strategy. I selected to follow a qualitative research methodology. The research design is based on a case study approach. I intend to use collective case study approach which will assist me in gaining better understanding about the social issue or the population under investigation. In exploring and describing the case under investigation I have the choice of a number of data collecting methods. I chose to use interviews with 40 focus groups within the Church of Pentecost. I am also sourcing data from church documents and also rely on academic and non- academic works from writers.

Welman, Kruger, Mitchell, 2005:52) states "that the population is the study object and consist of individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events, or the conditions to which they are exposed". The total collection of such unit of

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analysis makes up the population. The problem under investigation will rely on the following units of analysis and their related sub divisions within the specific geographical area of Accra. They will in their own unique way help to reflect on the data needed for this research. They represent aspects like personal experience, historic facts, current understandings and experience and results within the community at large. The focus groups will initially consist of 6 to 10 members.

Fouche and Delport (2002b:276) describe the case study as a process of data collection through a variety of data collection methods. My aim is to develop a well-structured plan which will assist in preparing and executing the data collection process for the duration of the research project. I will approach this data collection as a participant observer or as Babbie *et al*, refer to as observer as participant (in Fouche & Delport, 2002b:284). The data collection process will include field notes, stories (open-ended narratives), interviews (unstructured qualitative interviewing), observations (notes), tape recordings as well as video recordings. This data will then be converted into write-ups through a scientific acceptable approach. The suggested pawing, cutting and sorting process will be followed (Welman *et al*. 2005:213). I am also considering making use of triangulation which will be based on a mixed methodology design (De Vos, 2002:341). Coding and decoding systems for the collected data will be dealt with in the actual planning stage before the research starts and will rely on a well-developed data management system.

5. NATURE AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE RESEARCH

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5.1 How should the research be characterised (*Please tick ALL appropriate boxes*)

5.1.1 Personal and social information collected directly from participants/subjects	Y
5.1.2 Participants/subjects to undergo physical examination	
5.1.3 Participants/subjects to undergo psychometric testing	
5.1.4 Identifiable information to be collected about people from available records	
5.1.5 Anonymous information to be collected from available records	
5.1.6 Literature, documents or archival material to be collected on individuals/groups	Y

5.2 Participant/Subject Information Sheet attached? (*for written and verbal consent*)

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1. YES	Y
NO	

5.3 Informed Consent form attached? (*for written consent*)

2. YES	Y
NO	

5.3.1 If informed consent is not necessary, please state why:

NB: If a questionnaire, interview schedule or observation schedule/framework for ethnographic study will be used in the research, it must be attached. The application cannot be considered if these documents are not included.

5.4 Will you be using any of the above mentioned measurement instruments in the research?

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3. YES	Y
NO	

6 NATURE AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE RESEARCH

PARTICIPANTS/SUBJECTS IN THE STUDY

**6.1 If humans are being studied, state where they are selected:
Members of the Church of Pentecost in Accra, Ghana.**

6.2 Please mark the appropriate boxes:

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Participants/subjects will:
be asked to volunteer

6.2.1 State how the participants/subjects will be selected, and/or who will be asked to volunteer:

In the dissertation I do have a certain criteria which is discussed with the Church leadership.

6.3 Are the participants/subjects subordinate to the person doing the recruiting?

Yes	
No	N

6.3.1 If yes, justify the selection of subordinate subjects:

6.4 Will control participants/subjects be used?

Yes	
No	N

6.4.1 If yes, explain how they will be selected:

6.5 What records, if any, will be used, and how will they be selected?

Archived information in minutes on leadership meetings held over the last 20 years.

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6.7 Will participation or non-participation disadvantage the participants/subjects in any way?

YES	
NO	N

6.7.1 If yes, explain in what way:

6.8 Will the research benefit the participants/subjects in any direct way?

4. YES	
NO	N

6.8.1 If yes, please explain in what way:

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7. PROCEDURES

7.1 Mark research procedure(s) that will be used:

Literature	Y
Documentary	Y
Personal records	
Interviews	Y
Survey	
Participant observation	
Other (please specify) _____ _____	

7.2 How will the data be stored?

Electronically – voice recorder and written notes

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7.3 If an interview form/schedule; questionnaire or observation schedule/framework will be used, is it attached?

5. YES	Y
NO	

7.4 Risks of the procedure(s): Participants/subjects will/may suffer:

No risk	Y
Discomfort	
Pain	
Possible complications	
Persecution	
Stigmatisation	
Negative labeling	
Other (please specify)	

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7.4.1 If you have checked any of the above except "no risk", please provide details:

NB: If a questionnaire, interview schedule or observation schedule/framework for ethnographic study will be used in the research, it must be attached. The application cannot be considered if these documents are not included.

8. RESEARCH PERIOD

**THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST IN ACCRA
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(a) When will the research commence:

March 2011

(b) Over what approximate time period will the research be conducted:

1 month

9. GENERAL

9.1 Has permission of relevant authority/ies been obtained?

6. YES	Y
NO	

9.1.1 If yes, state name/s of authority/ies:

Executive leadership of the Church of Pentecost ; President, Vice President,
General Secretary and Director of the Children's Movement

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9.2 Confidentiality: How will confidentiality be maintained to ensure that participants/subjects/patients/controls are not identifiable to persons not involved in the research:

No names on documents

9.3 Results: To whom will results be made available, and how will the findings be reported to the research participants?

University of Stellenbosch and report to Church of Pentecost in a copy of the final dissertation

9.4 There will be financial costs to:

participant/subject	
institution	
Other (please specify) _____	No costs

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9.4.1 Explain any box marked YES:

9.5 Research proposal/protocol attached:

7. YES	Y
NO	

9.6 Any other information which may be of value to the Committee should be provided here:

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Petra College and in particular me as researcher did build very healthy relationships with the Church of Pentecost over the last 10 years. My involvement with the Church and Petra's training inputs is highly valued by the Church

Date:

Applicant's signature

Who will supervise the project?

Name:

Programme/Institution/Department:

Date:

Signature: _____

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**Director/Head/Research Coordinator of Department/Institute in which
study is conducted:**

Name:

Date:

Signature:_____

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ADDENDUM 2



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27 October 2011

Tel.: 021 - 808-9183
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 515/2011

Rev R Mans
Department of Practical Theology & Missiology
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Rev R Mans

LETTER OF ETHICS CLEARANCE

With regard to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *The ministry strategy of the church of Pentecost in Accra with specific focus on children: An exploratory study*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.
5. This ethics clearance is valid for one year from 27 October 2011 to 26 October 2012.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards



Sidney Engelbrecht
MR SF ENGELBRECHT

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanlora)
Registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC): REC-050411-032



Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling • Division for Research Development

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www.sun.ac.za/research

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ADDENDUM 3

The General Secretary

Church of Pentecost

Ghana

Accra

10 February 2010

Re: Permission to conduct research program in the Church of Pentecost

Att: (Rev) Apostle A Koduah

Executive members of board,

I herewith apply for formal permission to conduct my research for my Dth dissertation in the Church of Pentecost. I am grateful for the support and goodwill that I and Petra College have received over the last number of years. The study is designed to assist me to complete my investigation into the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children

I include some of the important understandings for your consideration in this request:

- 1. Procedures of research – I will rely on a focus group interview approach where the participants will be volunteering to participate with selected group of church members.**
- 2. Potential risks – There appears to be no risk involved for any participant. The members of the focus groups will have freedom to express themselves.**
- 3. Potential benefits for the Church of Pentecost – Although there are no direct benefits for the participants like payment or other incentives I do believe that the findings will be valuable for the Church of Pentecost as well as the global church. Such findings may benefit the church in its dream to affect community transformation in future.**

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4. **Confidentiality- There is also no risk involved for individual participants as the information is not linked to personal names. We will also ensure that a copy of the dissertation will be available for the Church of Pentecost. I will also be in constant communication with Church leadership as the research develops.**
5. **The formal paperwork will be available to you as soon as the application process to the ethics committee is completed.**
6. **There is also no expectation of any cost involved for the COP during this research.**

Looking forward to the continuation of our relationship and the way I could serve the Church of Pentecost as well as the global church through you.

May God bless the Church of Pentecost.

Yours for the children

Rev P R Mans

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ADDENDUM 4

THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST – GENERAL HEADQUARTERS



(GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE)

P O

Box 2194

Our Ref: COP/GSO/00346/2011

Accra

=====
=====

October 20, 2011

Rev. Philippus R. Mans

Republic of South Africa

Dear Rev. Mans,

INVITATION TO CONTINUE WITH RESEARCH WORK IN GHANA

It is the privilege to the Church of Pentecost, to invite you as guest of the Church, to continue with your research work. You are expected to arrive in Ghana by November 1, 2011, and stay up to November 14, 2011.

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We have arranged for members and officers and ministers of the Church, respondents to your intended interviews, to get ready for you. When in Ghana, you will be accommodated at the Pentecost Pension Guest House in Accra. We hope your acceptance of this invitation will boost the long-standing relationship between you and our church.

Thank you.

Original signed

APOSTLE ALFRED KODUAH

(GENERAL SECRETARY)

THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST IN ACCRA
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ADDENDUM 5

Focus group questions

The guiding questions are:

1. You are asked to describe by drawing pictures on how you see where the children fit into the Church of Pentecost (today) and what is the church's relationship with children or how would you express children's relationship with the church. Include any other pictures or symbols that you feel could express what you could remember as a child in the Church of Pentecost.

Consider also the following sub questions as part of the drawing.

- Focus in your mind on a picture on how you remember the Church when you were a child? Where will you draw yourself in this picture?
- Write at least 2 words that express your feelings of your relationship as child with this church in your picture.

Use the front and back page of this question.

2. Look at the picture you have drawn and put you in the picture to answer the following question. When (how old were you?) Why (what encouraged you/) and how (what activities did you participate in?) did you become part of the Church of Pentecost?

When?

Why?

How?

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3. Write in a sentence or 2 about your personal experience of Church as a child in the Church of Pentecost. Consider the picture that you have drawn.
- Think how you felt about church when you were a child of about 7-14 years.
 - What specific activities of the children's ministry and other church activities had an effect on you? Why?

Share with the one next to you and later in the big group.

4. Who in the Church of Pentecost or Christian community made spiritually a big impression on your life since childhood? Why do you say so?
5. What do you think the Church of Pentecost did right or wrong, especially in the beginning years (from your perspective), in accommodating/not accommodating you as child and helped you to grow spiritually?
6. In which way did the Church of Pentecost involve you as a child in the church's ministry? What happen with children and ministry today?
7. What inputs did the Church of Pentecost contribute to your personal life as child to be successful or not successful in society today?
8. What would be the main reason why you are still involved with the Church of Pentecost today? Think back on your personal journey with the Church of Pentecost over many years. (Consider the different activities and roles you are involved with eg member, choir, leadership positions etc.)

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9. What do you think the Church of Pentecost contributes to the Ghanaian society up to now where children are impacted?

10. If you could change anything in the Church of Pentecost today regarding children what will it be and why?

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ADDENDUM 6



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost in Accra with special focus on children: An exploratory study

Institution: The University of Stellenbosch

Degree: Doctor in Theology (Practical Theology)

Supervisor: Dr A Cloete (acloete@sun.ac.za)

Contact at Division for Research Development: Ms Malene Fouche (mfouche@sun.ca.za; cell +2721 808 4622)

**THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST IN ACCRA
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7. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to assist the researcher to complete his investigation into the ministry strategy of the Church of Pentecost focusing on children

8. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- i) Join the selected group for a focus group discussion in your church
- ii) Reflect on your memory as a child in the Church
- iii) Give your opinion on how you experience the church as child and adult
- iv) It is a once off meeting which will take about 2 hours to complete

9. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There appears to be no risk involved for any participant. You as part of the focus group will have the freedom to express your understanding of the questions within an open and relaxed atmosphere. There is no right or wrong answers involved.

**THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST IN ACCRA
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10. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

You would not benefit from the research as individuals. The Global church may benefit in a way as the findings of the result may help the church to understand more the place and value of children in the church.

I anticipate that this research will benefit the church in general as it reflects on an effective model of accommodating children in church life and expect community transformation in future.

11. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment involved for you as part of the focus group.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

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I intend to make use of audio taped information but you will have access to these recordings as a copy will be stored by the COP Archive Department at head Office.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of ensuring that electronic recordings will be erased after completion of study. No names but those of writers will be included in reports or dissertation.

13. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

14. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Rev Benny Adobah, Director of Children's Movement at

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bennyaadobah@yahoo.com or Apostle Koduah, General Secretary at
alfredkoduah@yahoo.com

15. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; +27 21 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Rev Rudi Mans and Prophet Benny Adobah in English and I the participant is in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me the participant. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I Herewith consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

**THE MINISTRY STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST IN ACCRA
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Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

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Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ and or representative. I was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Date

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ADDENDUM 7

Empirical research framework for the process in Ghana

3 to 12 November 2011.

Steps in process	Activity/ies	Responsible person	Target dates
1. Select 3 congregations of the COP within the 6 areas in Accra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify 18 congregations in Accra from the 6 areas for process. COP leadership communicate intended process with congregational leaders Feedback report send to researcher 	Prophet Adobah and COP executive leadership	By 9 September 2011
		Adobah	12 September 2011
2. Select venue where focus group meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select in consultation with targeted congregational leadership the specific place for focus group 	Prophet Adobah and Children's	By 30 September 2011

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	<p>gathering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider criteria for meeting place which is a relaxed atmosphere. The place should be easy accessible to the focus group members concerning their travelling arrangements 	<p>Movement leadership</p>	
<p>3. Select facilitators for process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target 6 facilitators (if possible include some of the group of leaders that met in 2009 in Accra) Select within following criteria –volunteers, mature adults, preferably leadership position, fluent in English. Record names and send information to researcher 	<p>Prophet Adobah and Children’s Movement leadership</p>	<p>By 7 October 2011</p>
		<p>Adobah</p>	<p>By 14</p>

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			October 2011
4. Select focus group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select 4 volunteer church members over the age of 30 years within each of the 18 congregation. They should be members of the COP for more than 30 years • Select 2 members of congregation who are in a sort of national/regional leadership position in COP • Criteria – men and women may be equally represented. The 2 members should not be part of facilitation team • Record the names • Contact the individuals and ask preliminary permission and consent • Arrange for place, date and time for meeting • Send feedback report to researcher 	Prophet adobah and Children’s movement leadership	By 21 October 2011

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	<p>facilitated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect information – questionnaires, consent documents and tape recording of discussions • Researcher visit as many venues possible 		and 23 November 2011
7. Debrief facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher do spot check with 1 focus group per area before final data is established • Facilitate a feedback session where facilitators could respond on own experience of interviews 	Researcher	Before 12 November 2011
8. Prepare data for analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare all data captured for professional analysis process 	Researcher	30 November 2011
9. Write report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write report as part of dissertation 	Researcher and organisation	January 2012

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