COMMUNITY-BASED DISCIPLESHIP: A MISSIONAL APPROACH TO URBAN AFRICAN YOUTH- THE CASE OF NAIROBI, KENYA

by

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that

the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

In response to the declining interest and participation of youth in urban churches in Africa, with a specific focus on churches in Nairobi, this study investigates a missiologically related problem of ecclesial praxis that seems to ignore or fail to address the social needs of youth, particularly concerning the need to belong. The churches in Nairobi, as in other parts of Africa, have inherited ecclesial praxis that was shaped in the dualistic cultural context of the Western Enlightenment and the clerical paradigm of Christendom. This dualistic view of reality has dichotomised the understanding of the gospel by compartmentalising it into a spiritual sphere while failing to address the social and cultural dimensions of human life. Consequently, the church hermeneutically understands its primary mission as saving souls and meeting the spiritual needs of its members through the institution of clergy and laity.

In order to address the problem, the study proposes the praxis of discipleship based on a community approach that correlates three integrated dimensions of mission (worship, fellowship, and intentional mission) with a community structure guided by specific urban context, cultural values and missional theology. This constitutes the thesis of this research study and also provides a methodological framework for organising the study. In the first chapter, discipleship is conceptualised in the comprehensive missional understanding of the church as missionary in its nature and calling, sent by Christ into the world for the redemption of the world. In that sense, the proposed discipleship community must be understood as missionary in nature.

The second chapter focuses on understanding the urban context. It examines some of the urban features of Nairobi that could be typical of other African cities, like rapid urban growth, high proportion of youth in the population, housing problems, unemployment, increasing poverty, family disintegration, crime, violence and disease. In that context, the study assessed the church's youth ministry by gathering primary empirical data through observation and personal interviews with youth pastors and leaders. The findings confirmed that most youth ministries are based on the clerical paradigm and are driven by programmes. Participation by youth has been found to be low in most churches. Many churches do not seem to address their real needs. Often the youth ministry is seen as a marginal ministry in the church.

In response to understanding the community from an African cultural perspective, the study investigated the traditional African community on the basis of literature and by using the ancestral anamnesis (remembrance of ancestors) as the interpretative framework for analysis.

In traditional African society, the community is understood as the heart of the culture, the stage where the whole of life is dramatised. Even those who live in modern urban contexts carry with them African community values which have their origin in the traditional African community. Some of the African community values were measured among the urban youth through a survey questionnaire; most of the young people regarded these as important in their lives (Chapter Five). Empirical findings have shown the validity of considering cultural factors in constructing any kind of model for community-based discipleship.

The importance of community was also validated theologically and missiologically by demonstrating the normative praxis of discipleship through community structure in the life of the early church. Theologically, the early church understood itself as the community of Christ on the basis of the concept of *koinonia*, a fellowship based on common faith in Christ. Missiologically, the church perceived itself from its inception as a missionary community sent into the world to witness to the gospel. The research demonstrated that community was the means through which the normative praxis of discipleship formation was carried out in the early church. There was no sense of dichotomy between the spiritual and social dimensions of the gospel as it is normally understood in today's church.

The importance of community as a means for the formation of identity and character was demonstrated through this having been the cultural norm in traditional African society and the theological norm in the life and praxis of the early church. Through the empirical research, the study also confirmed the positive perception of community values among the urban youth. Based on the evidence that was gathered, the study confronts the church in Nairobi and elsewhere to examine its present praxis critically and consider approaching its youth ministry from a community perspective in response to the present missiological problem in youth ministry.

In order to construct youth ministry on community foundation, the study suggests a model called *the covenant model*. It takes the form of a small group existing as a part of the local church but coming together specifically as a community guided by a discipleship covenant that integrates three missional dimensions. The group seeks to adapt in its specific urban context and integrate cultural values that complement the gospel. The covenant model assumes that the urban context is complex and diverse. It allows each group to develop its own shape and features, informed by its context, culture and tradition. It calls for diversity in cultural and contextual expression while maintaining unity as God's people in Christ. The early church exemplified it in being one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

OPSOMMING

In reaksie op die afname in belangstelling en inskakeling van die jeug in stedelike kerklike aktiwiteite in Afrika, toegespits op gemeentes in Nairobi, wil hierdie studie 'n missiologiesverwante probleem ondersoek. Die vraag is of die ekklesiologiese praksis daarin slaag om te beantwoord aan die die jeug se sosiale behoeftes en spesifiek die behoefte aan gemeenskap, om te behoort aan 'n sosiale groep. Die kerke in Nairobi, soos in ander dele van Afrika, het 'n ekklesiologiese praksis geërf wat gevorm is aan die hand van die dualistiese kulturele konteks van die Westerse Verligting en die geestelike paradigma van die Christendom. Hierdie dualistiese uitkyk op die werklikheid het 'n tweeledige karakter aan die evangelie verleen. Aan die een kant is daar 'n spirituele sfeer, aan die ander kant word die sosiale en kulturele aspekte van menslike bestaan kwalik verdiskonteer. Gevolglik interpreteer die kerk haar primêre missie hermeneuties as synde die red van siele en die aanspreek van die spirituele behoeftes van haar lidmate met die gevolg dat lidmate leke bly en die kerk institusionaliseer.

In 'n poging om hierdie probleem aan te spreek, stel die studie 'n praksis van dissipelskap gebaseer op 'n gemeenskapsgeoriënteerde benadering voor, waardeur drie geïntegreerde dimensies van gestuurdheid (aanbidding, gemeenskap van die heiliges en die bewuswording van gestuurdheid) aan die orde kom. Die gemeenskapsgeoriënteerde benadering se strukturele ontwikkeling word ontwikkel op grond van die ter sake konteks, kulturele waardes en missionale teologie. Dit vorm die basis waarop die navorsing van hierdie verhandeling gerig is, insluitend 'n metodologiese raamwerk vir die aanpak van hierdie studie. In die eerste hoofstuk word die begrip *dissipelskap* gedefinieer teen die agtergrond van 'n omvattende missionale verstaan van die kerk as synde missionêr in haar aard en roeping. Christus het die totale verlossing van die wêreld in die oog en die kerk het daarin 'n wesenlike rol. In dié sin word die dissipelskapsgemeenskap beskou as wesenlik missionêr.

Die tweede hoofstuk fokus op die verstaan van die stedelike konteks. Daarin word tendense kenmerkend van Nairobi wat ook ten opsigte van ander Afrika-stede tipies kan wees, ondersoek. Voorbeelde hiervan is versnellende verstedeliking, pro-rata 'n hoë persentasie jong mense, behuisingsprobleme, werkloosheid, toenemende armoede, gesinsverbrokkeling, misdaad, geweld en siekte. Binne dié konteks en aan die hand van empiriese data verkry deur observasie en persoonlike onderhoude met jeugdiges, pastors en leiers, het die studie die kerk se jeugbediening ondersoek. Dit het aan die lig gebring dat die jeugbediening basies binne 'n predikantskerkparadigma asook programgedrewe funksioneer. Deelname van jongmense in

kerklike aktiwiteite is laag. Gemeentes spreek nie die jeug se basiese behoeftes aan nie. Die jeugediening skyn eerder 'n terloopse bediening te wees.

Ten einde *gemeenskap* vanuit 'n kulturele Afrika-perspektief te verstaan, is voorvaderlike anamnese (terugroeping in die herinnering) as interpretatiewe raamwerk in hierdie studie aangewend. Dit is gedoen op grond van 'n toepaslike literatuurstudie. Volgens die tradisionele Afrika-samelewing word die *gemeenskap* beskou as die hart van die kultuur, die plek waar die lewe sigself afspeel. Selfs diegene wat hulself in moderne voorstedelike omgewings bevind, dra die Afrika-gemeenskap se waardes wat hul oorsprong in die tradisionele Afrika-gemeenskap het met hulle saam. Van hierdie waardes is geïdentifiseer deur vraelyste wat onder die voorstedelike jeug versprei is - die meeste van die jongmense het hierdie waardes hoog aangeskryf (Hoofstuk vyf). Empiriese bevindinge het getoon dat die inagneming van kulturele faktore noodsaaklik is vir die skep van 'n model vir 'n gemeenskapsgeoriënteerde dissipelskap.

Die belangrike rol van die gemeenskap is ook teologies en missiologies gestaaf aan die hand van die normatiewe praksis van dissipelskap in die gemeenskapstruktuur van die vroeë kerk. Teologies het die vroeë kerk haarself beskou as die gemeenskap van Christus op grond van die begrip *koinonia*, 'n gemeenskap gebaseer op 'n gedeelde geloof in Christus, Missiologies het die kerk haarself van die begin af ervaar as 'n missionêre gemeenskap wat in die wêreld ingestuur word om die evangelie uit te dra. Navorsing het getoon dat die normatiewe praksis van dissipelskap in die vroeë kerk binne gemeenskapsverbande uitgedra is. Daar was nie toe sprake van 'n tweeledigheid tussen die spirituele en sosiale dimensies van die evangelie soos dit vandag algemeen in die kerk voorkom nie.

Die belangrike rol van die gemeenskap ten opsigte van vorming van die identiteit en karakter van sy lede is gedemonstreer deurdat dit die kulturele norm in tradisionele Afrika en die teologiese norm in die lewe en praksis van die vroeë kerk was. Deur empiriese navorsing is die positiewe gesindheid van die voorstedelike jeug aangaande die gemeenskapswaardes gestaaf. Op grond van bewyse versamel, konfronteer dié studie die kerk in Nairobi en elders om die heersende praksis krities te ondersoek en dit ernstig te oorweeg om in die lig van die heersende missiologiese probleem ten opsigte van die jeugbediening, dié bediening vanuit 'n gemeenskapsgeoriënteerde perspektief te benader.

Ten einde die jeugbediening op 'n gemeenskapsbasis te vestig, stel hierdie studie 'n model bekend as die *verbondsmodel* voor. Dit kom daarop neer dat 'n kleingroep as deel van die plaaslike gemeente as 'n gemeenskap saamkom, saamgesnoer deur 'n dissipelskapverbond

wat die drie geïntegreerde missionale dimensies van die kerk se roeping verdiskonteer. Die groep streef daarna om aan te pas in hul bepaalde voorstedelike konteks en om kulturele waardes wat by die evangelie aansluit, in hul lewenswyse te integreer. Die verbondsmodel maak voorsiening vir die kompleksiteit en diversiteit van die voorstedelike konteks. Dit laat elke groep toe om 'n eiesoortigheid op grond van konteks, kultuur en tradisie te ontwikkel. Dit vereis diversiteit ten opsigte van kulturele en kontekstuele uitdrukking, terwyl die eenheid as God se mense in Christus gehandhaaf word. Dit is deur die vroeë kerk gedemonstreer in die funksionering as een, heilige, katolieke en apostoliese kerk.

.ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND

The main concern of this research deals with the issue of how the church can relate the gospel theologically, culturally, and contextually to African urban youth. Like many other growing cities in Africa, Nairobi is increasingly dominated by young people. At present, youth under the age of twenty-five comprise more than half of the population of Nairobi and other towns and cities in Kenya (Shorter 2001:74). Barrett (2001:585) estimates that by the year 2020, the city's population will have increased from 2.5 million to 15 million, and that by the year 2025, 51 percent of the population in Kenyan will be living in the urban areas. This means that towns and cities in Kenya will be populated by more young people than now. In contrast to the rising population of the youth, the church is experiencing a negative trend. According to some church observers, most churches in Nairobi do not seem to reflect the demographic reality of the society they are in. In proportion to the higher population of youth, less than 12 percent are now actively involved in churches (Shorter 2001:75).[1]   The gravity of the situation is seen clearly in Shorter's (ibid) statement when he says, "70% of young people in Kenya today never go near a church", considering the fact that more than 80 percent of people in Kenya identify themselves as Christians. If this trend reflects reality, it presents a serious missionary challenge to churches in Nairobi, as well as in other urban areas in Kenya. Therefore, the church needs to critically examine itself as to why most of the young people are turning away from it. If the church fails in its mission to reach them with the gospel now, it may soon face the reality of being marginalised and of losing its significance in society as is happening in many parts of Western Europe (Walls 1996:237).

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[1] According to a survey conducted in twenty-three churches in Nairobi by the author in 2006, it was discovered that on the average only twenty percent of the youth who come to church participate actively in youth ministry. In all, this represents only three percent of the church population.

In response to this challenge, the author pondered for some time on the question of how the church can reach the youth by mediating the gospel in a way that is relevant to their needs in a rapidly growing city like Nairobi and other cities in Africa. A few years ago the author was involved in teaching a course on discipleship at the Nairobi International School of Theology. A portion of the course required observing and assessing various models and methods of building disciples in a local church. One such model comprised a small group that operated like a fraternal community led by a youth minister of the Nairobi Baptist Church, Rev. Mulandi, and his wife Levina.[2] It attracted the attention of the author and most of the students in the class (the majority were pastors) to learning of a better way of building disciples. When they visited the group (which met in Mulandi's home instead of in the church building) they were very impressed by what they observed. Mulandi and his wife Levina led a group of thirty young men and women who were seriously committed to growing as disciples of Jesus Christ in their knowledge of the Bible and devotion to God. The youth were excited to be a part of that discipleship group. They felt a sense of belonging, like being a part of a caring family. Apart from fun and fellowship, the group members took their Christian faith seriously. It reminded of how Jesus went about building his disciples in a bonded community of love and commitment. That field trip made a deep impression on the author and influenced his selection of the subject of this research. It caused the author to consider how a community approach could be a feasible and culturally relevant way for mediating the gospel to youth in an African urban context like Nairobi in lieu of the individual approach which is the norm at present. Observation of that field trip pointed out that the community approach seems to meet two crucial needs of young people in that group—the need to *believe* and to *belong*.[3]

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[2] Similar in concept to *Small Christian Communities* (SCC) of the Roman Catholic Church. SCC is described as "a caring, sharing, faith-reflecting, praying and serving community in which ongoing Christian formation takes place. It may consist of an existing community, a neighborhood grouping of five to fifteen families, people with common interests or activities, and so on. It is a natural community or a grouping based on geographical proximity, blood relationship, occupation, social ties or other affinities. It is a basic place of evangelization and catechism" (quoted in Healey 1986:21)

[3] The theme of *believing* and *belonging* is borrowed from Grace Davie's book (1994) *Religion in Britain since 1945*. It is taken from Chapter Six, titled "Believing Without Belonging". Davie discusses

From a missiological perspective these two needs, of *believing* and *belonging,* are important dimensions of Christian discipleship, just like witness and proclamation in evangelisation (Bevans 2004:352). They are interrelated concepts. Believing focuses on the vertical dimension (divine) and belonging on the horizontal dimension (social) of Christian life. They must go together. Christian faith must be expressed in the social context (Hauerwas 1981:1). When the church in its discipleship emphasises the one over the other, its witness is distorted. In the next section (**1.4**) the study will examine the problem of how this distortion has negatively affected the mission of the church in Nairobi, especially regarding its witness among the youth.

1.2   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted from a missiological perspective. Therefore, it is important to locate the study in its proper context of the missiological landscape in order to maintain its focus; otherwise one could wander around on its many trails. Locating the study in its proper context would also help in clarifying the parameter of the study with its various assumptions.

1.2.1   Topic of the Study

Community-based Discipleship: A Missional Approach to Urban African Youth-A Case of Nairobi, Kenya

According to the topic, the primary focus of the study is on the *approach* to making disciples. The study proposes *community* as a relevant approach to making disciples among African urban youth because it is culturally relevant and theologically rooted in the biblical praxis of the early church. The term *community* is difficult to define concisely. However, it is

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these themes from a sociological perspective in the context of the declining interest of people in institutional churches in Britain. The author asserts that declining participation in church affairs is not an indicator of declining interest in religious belief or of secularization of society. It could mean that belief is simply detached from corporate participation and relegated to a more personal and private level.

conceptualised from the African cultural perspective in Chapter Three. Furthermore, it should be clarified that this study places the community in the context of a local church, not as an independent entity like a religious society.

The term *church* generally refers to a local church, the *church militant* here on earth that faithfully expresses its essence through unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity (Cross 2005:287).[4] The local church is simply understood as a congregation, a voluntary religious community (Warner 1994:63).[5] This definition reflects what a local church is in the present urban context, like in Nairobi, rather than what it should be. Sometimes the term *church* is used in reference to individuals, and the leadership of the congregation. At other times the term *the church* in Nairobi is collectively referred to as the Christian body in the city.

In this study, African *youth* in the urban context is the primary unit of analysis. The second chapter describes the youth in the context of Nairobi city. It discusses how the process of urbanisation has been shaping the youth's values and lifestyles and is posing various challenges to them. Since the study focuses on examining *African* youth, it is imperative to understand the African traditional cultural beliefs and practices which provide a window to some of the aspects of the African perspective on life, values and attitude (worldview). In this respect, the social significance of community in traditional African cultural beliefs and practices is examined in the third chapter. Although most of the young people in urban society are no longer part of traditional community, it is assumed that their social aspect of

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[4] The word *church* is an English word originated from German *kirche*, Dutch *kerke* and others. Ultimately it finds its root in the Greek word *kuriakon* "things belonging to the Lord" that refers to a church building. The Latin *ecclesia* and its derivatives although applied to the building came from the Greek *ekklesia* which simply meant assembly, a primarily of citizens in a self-governing city. In the New Testament after the Pentecost *ekklesia* was referred to both a local Christian community as well as the whole Christian community. Cross (ed) 2005. The Dictionary of the Christian Church, page 286.
[5] Warner describes congregation as a voluntary religious community. It is religious in the sense of people who are engaged in activities together; understand all of them as having 'religious' meanings. It is voluntary, signifying that people are persuaded to join the community without coercion or material incentives. Loyalty to the community also is not assumed as if they were all part of the same tribe.

basic worldview is still influenced by traditional cultural thoughts and values. This assumption has been tested in the empirical research.

Since this study has missiological orientation, *discipleship* is viewed as one of the main purposes of church mission (Matthew 28:19). It examines discipleship in praxis of the early church from community perspective. Chapter Two to Chapter Five basically covers the topic of the research study. On the basis of the findings, the Chapter Six provides conclusion and discussion on how the church can fulfil its missional role of making disciples among youth by integrating social and spiritual dimensions through community approach in urban context.

1.2.2   Church and Mission

This section of the study presents a brief discussion related to the role of the church in mission. The purpose of the discussion is to understand how the church has perceived its missionary mandate and has practised it. This may help to locate discipleship in the missiological framework of ecclesiology.

Ecclesio-centric view of the mission: From the emergence of modern mission in the early nineteenth century until now, mission has been understood along different terms by the church in the West. The diversity of understanding is reflected in the way the church has carried out its mission across the globe. David Bosch (1991:389) in his book *Transforming Mission* described four major views of mission as understood by the church in the West (each view with its implications have affected the churches that resulted from its missions):

1)   Soteriological terms: This view understood mission as primarily saving individual souls from eternal damnation. Most evangelical churches represent this understanding explicitly (Bevans 2004:46).

2)   Cultural terms: In this view, mission was understood as primarily introducing people from the East and the South to the blessings and privileges of the Christian West,

focusing mainly on transferring Western values and technology. This view prevailed in the early part of the twentieth century, mainly among the liberal churches (:52).

3) Ecclesiastical terms: This view is dominantly ecclesio-centric. It understood the goal of mission as to expand the church across the globe, mainly through the expansion of denominational churches. The Roman Catholic Church has clearly exemplified this approach in theology and praxis (ibid).

4) Salvation-historically: This perspective viewed the mission as the process by which the world would be transformed into the kingdom of God. This optimistic view was prominent among the Social Gospel movement during the early part of the twentieth century (Bosch 1991:319).

All of the above views understood the mission as originating from the activities of the church—ecclesio-centric view—until the latter half of the twentieth century when the understanding between church and mission began to shift towards theocentric.

Missio Dei: At the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Conference (IMC) in 1952, a new theological paradigm of mission, expounded by Karl Barth, began to make headway in the understanding of mission (Bosch 1991:389-390). The concept of *missio Dei* stresses that the mission is first and foremost to be regarded as God's work. According to Bosch, *missio Dei* has revolutionised the way the church has viewed mission. Now the mission is viewed as God's mission on earth rather than church's mission. The church is called to participate in God's mission. God is the one who sets the agenda for mission, not the church. *Missio Dei* has greatly broadened the scope of the mission to focus on the world rather than to be limited to ecclesiological interest. It has not only changed the ecclesio-centric understanding of mission but also brought Christology, soteriology and the doctrine of the Trinity in cohesion (:389).

Bevans (2004:348ff) points out that *missio Dei* has opened the way for the church to witness its faith as a sent community to certain constants by engaging in "prophetic dialogue" in humility rather than imposing itself on others from a sense of cultural and religious superiority in the world's cultural diversity. According to Bevans (ibid) God's mission for the church must be integrated with the continuing focus on the reign of God as Jesus taught and with the proclamation of Christ as the world's only saviour.   With that in the background, the church needs to engage itself in prophetic dialogue on three missiological fronts: 1) to identify with the issues of the poor who constitute the majority of the world's population, 2) with culture in light of the encroaching secularism and globalisation that tend to level cultural differences, and 3) "with the truth of other religions while maintaining the conviction that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6) (ibid).

The role of the church in mission: It has been pointed out in the previous discussion that m*issio Dei* has radically transformed the self-understanding of the church. It has defined the role of the church in mission from doing mission as part of her programme to being a missionary church. According to Kritzinger (1994:42), the church knows now that it exists for the mission, "Mission … is the reason for the existence of the church." It is the mission of God that brought the church in to existence. The focus of God's mission is not on the church but on the world. The role of the church is now viewed as the fruit, sign and agent of God in reaching the whole world. As a result, the focus of God's kingdom has moved from the church to the world. It was a fundamental shift with wider implication. Bosch (1991:391) pointed out that this view is fully accepted virtually by all Christian persuasions, even the Second Vatican, which clearly states that the church is *missionary* by its very nature. *Missio Dei* has transformed the nature of ecclesiology into missionary ecclesiology. The church cannot separate its ecclesial vocation from mission. Mission has become its primary vocation now, at least from theologically perspective. But in praxis of the church, this may not be the case.

Missional Vocation of the Church: It is one thing to assert the primary purpose of the church as to fulfil God's mission on the earth. But it is another thing to wrestle with the question of how to fulfil that missionary purpose. The answer is not very clear; there is a wide range of views on this issue. In the last century, the church was divided into two opposing camps or traditions (Bosch 1991:323). One camp, under the banner of "evangelicals", insisted that the primary goal of mission was to save individual souls or spiritual conversion from the condition and effect of sin. The other opposing camp, identified as "ecumenicals", came to regard the mission of the church as social uplifting or transformation of society by changing unjust social structures. In real practice, most missions fell somewhere in between these opposing camps, but their primary emphasis indicated the basic orientation of their mission. Kritzinger (1994:124) points out that both camps are right, with some measure of truth. Instead of dichotomising, they need to be integrated. God's mission involves both dimensions. God is interested in saving individuals from their sins as well as redeeming human society. Without "good works" or social concern, proclamation loses credibility. Without proclamation, "good works" do not have a pointer to an invitation to enter into God's kingdom. Fortunately in the last couple of decades the church has begun to realise the importance of both dimensions of mission for the effective bearing of witness to Christ's kingdom. According to Bevans and Schroeder (2004:352), "Witness and proclamation belong together". Both evangelicals and ecumenicals have begun to realise the error of dichotomising the task of God's mission and are finding ways to integrate both dimensions (Bosch 1991:407-408). Bosch has persistently applied the notion of 'creative tension' to the theme of his emerging ecumenical (post-modern) missionary paradigm to various themes and praxes. He writes, "The new paradigm has led to an abiding tension between two views of the church which appear to be fundamentally irreconcilable" (381). This is a positive trend in right direction.

Prophetic Dialogue[6] as Integrated Mission: In light of the above discussion, it is clear that mission must integrate both dimensions—saving souls as well as redeeming society. This study holds the view that mission must be comprehensive. Some of the advocates of the School of Church Growth Movement, especially the founder, Donald McGavran, has defined mission narrowly as evangelism and church planting (1970:34). McGavran believes that social change would result from Christian discipleship. But the critics point out that this usually does not happen (Bosch 1991:406) and not everyone in the Church Growth Movement agrees with McGavran's narrow view of mission. Peter Wagner, a student of McGavran, sees mission in a different light. He understands mission in terms of both the cultural mandate as well as the evangelical mandate (1987:99). However, his view has a tendency to dichotomise the task of mission rather than integrate it when he emphasises church planting as a higher priority over social issues. Wagner (:103) states his position clearly:

> I believe we must minister to the whole person: body, soul and spirit. Both mandates must be obeyed, but the evangelistic mandate is primary. I hold this position not only for pragmatic reasons, but also because I find it thoroughly biblical.

However, in the last two decades evangelical churches increasingly have been recognising "an integral connection between the Great Commission [proclamation] and the Great Commandment [loving witness]" (Bevans 2004:370). Whatever priority one may give to evangelism or to social concern, most of the churches are now coming to view God's mission in terms of total salvation of a person, including his social context. In this regard, Kritzinger's (1994:36-38) way of defining the task of mission in an integrated framework consisting of four essential dimensions is very helpful:[7]

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[6] Bevans and Schroeder in *Constants in Context* (2004) calls *prophetic dialogue* a synthesis of three strains of theology to undergird the theology of mission: 1) mission as participation in the life and mission of the Trinity, 2) mission as continuation of the mission of Jesus to preach, serve and witness to the justice of God's "already" but "not yet" reign, 3) mission as the proclamation of Christ as the world's only saviour.

[7] This study follows three dimensions: the worship (liturgical), the fellowship, and the intentional mission (that combines the kerygmatic and the diaconal dimensions).

1) The kerygmatic dimension: This dimension emphasises preaching, teaching, theological education, literature and other. It focuses on proclamation of the gospel and its values.

2) The diaconal dimension: It involves all forms of ministry and service to the community and the world, caring for the sick, helping the poor, working for social justice, and others.

3) The fellowship dimension: It calls the church to be a community on a journey, calling others to join on the journey to the eschatological destination.

4) The liturgical dimension: It focuses on everything the church does as an act of worship, for the glory of God. It provides a true impetus for mission. Mission is seen as an act of worship, a loving response to a glorious God.

Along the same line, Guder defines the mission of the church comprehensively as to witness the reign of God through its three-fold ministry:

1) Community: Living as a fellowship under the authority of God's reign.

2) Servant: Serving the needy humanity through its involvement with a view to bring justice, peace and joy.

3) Messenger: Proclaiming the gospel, being a signpost to the kingdom of God.

In light of the broad understanding of God's mission, this study assumes the integrated view of mission. It interprets God's salvation in all dimensions of human life. God saves the whole person, not just the soul. God is interested in redeeming human society as well as the human person. It is evident in the prophetic vision of the reign of God as *shalom*—"a world characterised by peace, justice and celebration" (Guder 1998:90ff). However, in praxis the church needs to discern which dimension of mission it needs to emphasise in response to the

specific context. This brings the issue of how to understand and assess the missionary task of the church. In this regard, the concept of 'missionary dimension' and 'missionary intention' is found to be very useful for analysis (Bosch 1980:199, 1991:394ff).[8]

Missionary Dimension and Intention: This concept has been helpful in discerning theological understanding and praxis of the church from the missiological perspective. What action and belief could constitute as missionary? There are many aspects of the church that could be characterised as witness in terms of *missionary dimension*, whether it attracts people or repels them. It could be understood as a passive witness of the church. However, not everything that the church does has *missionary intention*. The *intention* refers to outward focus of the church, an active response to the world in need. The church must maintain its missionary dimension before it can exercise its intention. Bosch (1980:200) says, "Only a Church that manifests this missionary dimension can also be deliberately 'missionizing', moving actively into the world." Dimension and intention are dynamically related. The one nurtures and stimulates the other (ibid).

From the perspective of missionary dimension and intention, Missiology can have two functions (Bosch 1991:494). In its missionary dimension it enters into dialogue with other disciplines to "highlight theology's reference to the world" (ibid). In its intentional aspect of mission, it engages with "inculturation, liberation, dialogue, development, poverty, absence of faith, and the like are not only problems for Third-World churches, but also challenges to itself in its own context" (:496).

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[8] The concept of "Missionary dimension and intention" was originally proposed by Gensichen in his book *Glaueben fur die welt,* Gerd Mohn, Gutersloh, 1971. The church always bears its "missionary dimension" but not "missionary intention". When it practices "missionary intention" it becomes a "missionising" church.

This distinction is very helpful in analysing various aspects of church witness. A church may claim that its sacramental life is missionary. The question to ask is whether it is missionary in dimension only or in intentional as well. Ideally, the church must strive to be intentional in all its dimensions.

Discipleship as Mission: The mission, as it has been discussed, has a broad scope with many dimensions (Bosch 1991:368-510). This study limits the scope of the mission of the church to Christian discipleship in light of Matthew 28:19. However, it approaches discipleship in view of integrated mission as it was discussed above, including both the spiritual and the social dimensions of mission. Theologically it more closely reflects the Type C theology[9], which favours greater community witness in the concrete reality of life (Bevans 2004:65).

Generally, the church has approached the task of making disciples from two different perspectives. In the last two centuries the church in the West under the cultural influence of modernity has built its discipleship ministry on the philosophic foundation of individualism.[10]

 This approach has been prevalent, not only in the West but also in Africa, especially in most mission-initiated churches, which have inherited the Western pattern from their missionary predecessors. The other approach of discipleship is based on community. It assumes that disciples are made in the community. The early church seemed to reflect the second approach until it took the shape of the Roman institutional pattern of centralised political structure from the beginning of Constantine era from the early fourth century onwards, when it started to develop from a persecuted catholic church to an imperial catholic church (Cairns 1981:79,

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[9]According to Gonzales, Type C theology is closer to the theological expression of the early Christianity developed in the Syrian city of Antioch, less tainted by Roman and Hellenistic philosophies (Bevans 2004:61). Type C favours historical witness and is more holistic.
[10] According to Bevans and Schroeder, in their discussion on the issue of salvation, both Type A and Type B theology focus on the salvation of an individual soul. Type A theology restricts salvation "to interior, spiritual renewal and transformation. There is no sense, in other words, that salvation as such includes structural, political or cosmic renewal" (2004:45). On the other hand, Type B theology is characterized by a search for Truth, thus emphasizing salvation as enlightenment with education, human science and progress (:59).

125).[11] In Chapter Four how the early church fulfilled its missionary task of making disciples will be examined comprehensively from a community perspective. In light of the early church's discipleship praxis, the study seeks to find some correlation in suggesting how the urban church in Africa today can fulfil its mission of building disciples in the modern urban context by integrating the social and spiritual dimensions on the basis of a community approach.

1.3   DEFINITIONS

In this section, the study provides a descriptive definition of some of the key terms used in this research—community, individualism, discipleship and youth. It gives a general idea of how these terms have been used and conceptualised in this study.

1.3.1   Community

The word *community* is a very broad term.[12] In general sense, a dictionary defines it as "a group of people living in particular area" or "a group of individuals with some common characteristics" (Penguin Complete English Dictionary 2006). In sociology, it has been defined and used in "at least 94 different ways by sociologist[s]" (Court 1997:268). However, this study would rather provide a descriptive definition of it that is relevant to the African context. Although the primary focus of this research is on community, one must understand that it deals with the term *community* in relation to the opposing concept of individualism, which is the pervasive and dominant philosophy of life in the present modern age.

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[11] According to Cairns (1981:79ff), there was no pyramidal hierarchy of offices in the early church. The leadership of the church basically comprised two kinds of officials: charismatic and administrative. They were chosen by the congregation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the second and third centuries, the concept of monarchial bishop began to emerge. The supremacy of the Roman Bishop was increasingly recognised because of the prestige of Rome as the capital of the empire (:116).
[12] The English word *community* is derived from Latin *communitat, communita, which* came from *communis* (common). The Middle English *communete* was borrowed from French *communete.* (The Penguin Complete English Dictionary , 2006).

A community is a social phenomenon. It is a group of human individuals who are bonded together socially through sharing some common traits or characteristics, like cultural beliefs and practices, religious beliefs and practices, kinship, race, age, language, social status, economic status, educational status, experiences, geographical location and others (Kritzinger 1984:117). It could be a sharing of one characteristic or the combination of several characteristics. The degree of cohesiveness of the community depends on the number of common characteristics its members share together. Traditional tribal communities would have more things in common than modern urban communities. Therefore, most tribal communities are generally characterised as *homogeneous units*[13] with strong cultural ties. Their sense of community identity and bonding would be much greater and stronger than with modern urban dwellers.[14] According to Gittins (2002:35), homogeneous communities tend to be isolated or to create isolation, like Amish or monastery communities.

Bellah (1996:333) defines community as "a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it." Bellah's definition of community tends to place stress more on participation in group activities than on social bonding. In contrast to Bellah's view, this study focuses on the concept of community from the individual's perception of being bonded together with the members of the group, identifying with the group socially—"individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity with one another" (Johnstone 1993:654). As a result of having a sense of belonging to the

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[13] The *homogeneous unit principle* (HUP) was coined, developed and defined by Donald McGavran in his book *Understanding Church Growth* (1970:198-215). HUP denotes a group of people who share important characteristics and stay together. In recent years this concept has come under intense criticism when it applied to church planting. Critics say that it reinforces tribalism or exclusiveness, which is contrary to the gospel message. Its theological basis has been question. According to Kritzinger (1994:17), the term *people group* is now widely used by the proponents of Church Growth.
[14] According to F. Tonnies in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), a traditional rural or tribal community tends to reflect gemeinschaft, a close-knit relationship: whereas urban living promotes gesellschaft, an associational-type relationship (in Court 1997:269).

group, participation and interdependency follow. This definition comes closer to the African view of community.

It is important to clarify some distinctions between the term *group* and *community*. Quite often a group of individuals who may share something in common is indiscriminately described as community. Robert Bellah (1996:72) calls such group a "lifestyle conclave" or a social club. They come together on the basis of shared lifestyle, mainly for personal enjoyment. Socially they are segmented. A group of individuals who may share the same characteristic does not necessarily form a community unless they are bonded together socially by that characteristic. For instance, a group of individuals who speak Swahili may not be considered as a linguistic community unless each member in the group understands his identity in relation to the group as whole. He finds social solidarity with the group based on common language. Otherwise, the group should be understood as a collection of individual Swahili speakers, not a linguistic community. Similarly, a group of people may attend a common form of religious worship service but may not constitute a community because they may lack a common bond with one another or "social solidarity" (Durkheim, quoted in Court 1997:269; Bellah 1996:74).

The study assumes that, for a community to be Christian, the members of the group must find their primary starting point of bonding or solidarity in Christ; otherwise there is a danger of the community becoming a social group based on race, ethnicity, tribalism, class, geographical location and other aspects in the name of Christianity (Kritzinger 1994:21). The homogeneous group unit concept by its nature has a tendency to social exclusiveness that contradicts the purpose of the gospel, which is to unite humanity. However, it should be understood that there is room for diversity within the Christian unity.

In this respect, a variety of Christian communities based on some common characteristics is believed to be essential for fostering a sense of belonging for people of different backgrounds

who can relate to each other meaningfully within the group, as long the group does not become exclusive and isolates itself from the greater Christian community. Humans are not created to live alone. They are social beings by nature (Trainor 2001:3)). This ontological human characteristic necessitates a human person to be in relationship with other humans with whom he can relate. In the words of Eugene Nida (1954:92), "People associate with one another primarily in order to satisfy the basic psychological need of belonging and recognition. Such needs are fundamentally egocentric, and yet they depend upon associations for fulfillment." However, a Christian community must maintain a healthy tension between the Christian unity and cultural and social diversity.

Apart from a human group with some sense of community, it is difficult to talk about human character. The very notions of 'love' or 'hate' assume relationship with another human person. Therefore, a human person is not complete apart from human society. Even Jesus, as perfect human being, belonged to a human community. His Jewish identity (Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph) came from his belonging to the Jewish community in Nazareth. Even his behaviour was evaluated in accordance to the norms of his Jewish society (Luke 44:16). A community is important to the moral and character formation of individuals (Rasmussen 1993:19). It would be helpful to present a brief discussion on the idea of individualism here in order to highlight the concept of community better.

In Bellah's (1996:viii) view, the words of Alexis Tocqueville that describe an individual as with "independence and self-reliance" captures the essence of individualism. The common characteristics that define individualism are freedom and autonomy (:23-24, 65). Individualism finds its root in the Cartesian philosophical understanding of human person. It defines the person as "I think, therefore I am". Therefore, individualism encourages an individual to determine what *he/she* wants to be. In contrast, an individual in traditional African community tends to seek his personal identity *in* the community, not apart from it—

"I am because we are" (Bujo 2003:24). Therefore the modern view of a person as a free and autonomous self runs counter to the traditional African view of person.

Since the modern liberal society views the individual as a determiner of his own person, it places a very high value on freedom to choose. Therefore, counter to traditional society's expectations, modern urban society provides more choices not only in consumer goods but also in lifestyles and moral values. Such a high degree of choice gives a person a sense of 'freedom'. The high degree of choice does not mean the person is happier. However, it is one of the highest values of modern liberal society.

On the dark side of individualism, Wuthnow (1993:38) and other sociologists, like Bellah, and ethicists, like Rasmussen, have been greatly alarmed to see that individualism in the present modern society, especially in America, has been exerting a negative effect on society, as people are moving away from community values or common goods and more towards the individual self, "becoming more selfish and inward with each successive decade."

1.3.2 Discipleship

The English word *discipleship* is derived from the term *disciple* (Wilkins 1995:39). It simply means the ongoing process of growth as a disciple (ibid). The nearest equivalent to this expression in the New Testament is the verbal form *matheteuo* which means "make or become disciples" which occurs four times (Matthew 13:52, 27:37, 28:19, Acts 14:21). Since disciple is a common referent for Christian, discipleship and discipling imply the process of becoming like Jesus Christ. The term *disciple* is derived from the Latin words *discipulus* (masculine)/*discipula* (feminine) and the Greek terms *mathetes* (masculine)/*matheteria* (feminine). The Latin verb *discere* and the Greek verb *manthanein* denote "to learn". As

nouns they refer to "learners" or "students". The term gradually was broadened to mean "adherents" of a great master or teacher (ibid). According to Wilkins (:38-39):

> The Greek term especially [in] the late Hellenistic period during the time when the New Testament was written, was used increasingly to refer to an adherent. The type of adherent was determined by the master, but it ranged from being the companion of a philosopher, to being the follower of a great thinker and master of the past, to being the devotee of a religious figure. Therefore, in most common usage, whether in the Roman or Greek world, a "disciple" was a person who was committed to a significant master…The type of "disciple" and the corresponding life of "discipleship" was determined by the type of master, but commitment to the master and his ways was central.

The term *discipleship* has been defined in many ways in the wider Christian community. Often the concept of discipleship depends on how the term *disciple* is understood. In reviewing literature on discipleship, no clear consensus on the meaning of *disciple* and *discipleship* was found. According to Doug Fields (1998:157), a veteran American urban youth minister from California, there is no specific definition of discipleship. He gives a very general definition of "helping students become more like Christ" (ibid). Dr Obed (2006:54), an influential church leader and pastor from Nigeria, describes *disciple* as "…a disciple of Christ, therefore, is one who has accepted Him as a model to influence his own life, and who is ready to study and be taught for the purpose of conforming to His doctrines and lifestyle and for propagating them." On the basis of this definition, he defines discipleship as simply "a process of making disciples" (:56). The definition is simple, but it requires one to understand what he means by the term *disciple*.

On a broad scope, Roger Greenway (1992:45), in *Discipling City,* views discipleship as comprehensive evangelism, not just proclaiming the salvation message but helping the converts to "commitment to the King and to the purposes of the King in the world." Urban discipleship means to be totally engaged comprehensively in the ministry of the church in the society and in the world at large (:46).

There are others like Robert Coleman[15] (1964) who, in *The Master Plan of Evangelism,* views discipleship as preparing workers for the harvest. He presents eight steps derived from the life example of Jesus, from the initial selection of the twelve disciples to the point of transforming them into fruitful reproducing leaders.[16] This approach to discipleship is highly focused on training individuals. Another popular book, *Disciples are Made not Born* (1981) by Walter Henrichsen, similarly understands discipleship as building and training disciples in order to become like Christ, and that they in the process start discipling others in like manner. Both of these books present Jesus as a model disciple-maker and call Christians to imitate the same practice. They assume that this is the norm of discipleship for everyone in the Christian community, even today. However, they seem to be confusing leadership training with discipleship. No doubt, Jesus personally trained his twelve disciples in order to lead his church after his departure. He had many other followers beside the twelve. He did not train them in the same way as he trained the twelve. He did not place the same demands on them as he did on the twelve. But the believers after Pentecost were meant to be discipled by the church community under the leadership of the twelve. It is unrealistic to assume that all the believers should be discipled personally as Jesus had dome. Often these writers demonstrate the pattern of building individuals as reproducing disciples by pointing out Paul's approach to discipleship in 2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV): "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."[17] In this context Paul is referring to training leaders for the needs of the growing church. He did not seem to have all Christian believers in mind. This pattern of discipleship was applicable to a selected few, appropriate for training leaders. It is hard to comprehend how it could be applied to the whole church, where many new believers coming out of pagan backgrounds with sinful habits and lifestyles could qualify to be 'faithful men with a capacity to teach'.

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[15] It is a very popular book--four million in circulation, 45th printing in 1987

[16] Other authors like A.B. Bruce in *Training of the Twelve* (1930) and Bill Hull in *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker* (1984) hold a similar view of discipleship. They assume that the way Jesus trained his disciples is the norm for everyone in the church.

[17] NIV: The Holy Bible, New International Version. All the Bible references are quoted from the New International Version in this study. If other version is used, it will be stated clearly.

The Apostle Paul in his lifetime personally only trained a handful of Christian workers. The majority of Christians were made into disciples through incorporation into the church community. Therefore, all Christians are called to discipleship, but not everyone is called to leadership that calls for higher commitment and training.

In this study, the term *disciple* is understood as a follower of Christ who professes Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. The *discipleship* is defined as the process of identifying with Christ as his follower and learning to live a life of witness[18] in obedience and in conformity to his teachings in view of becoming like him in character and attitude. This definition bases its understanding on Matthew 28:19-20 where Jesus commands his disciples, and subsequently *the church*, to make disciples in order to fulfil his mission in the world until he returns. "The theme of discipleship is central to Matthew's gospel and to Matthew's understanding of the church and mission" (Bosch 1991:57, 73).[19] In Mathew 28:19 the main verb *matheteuein* functions as an indicative imperative plural verb, "the heart of the commissioning" to the church (:73). The other three main participles *going, baptizing* and *teaching* are subordinate to the main verb *make disciples*, describing "the form of disciple making to take" (ibid).

Baptising "them in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19) is metaphorically understood as the identity formation of a believer, one who has become a disciple of Christ by fully identifying with him, as well as with the Father and the

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[18] Bevans and Schroeder (2004:353ff) describe evangelization as witness and proclamation. The idea of witness involves proclamation, "for neither can really be separated". The witness as individuals involves living a life in the light of biblical faith. As a witness of Christ some live a life that is extra-ordinary, like Mother Teresa and Albert Schweitzer. Others live their ordinary lives with integrity—"a person of prayer, a faithful spouse, a patient and loving parent, a meticulous carpenter, a physician willing to listen to patients, ...a dedicated organic farmer, a person who engages in business with ethical integrity,…a poor parent valiantly supporting his or her family—these are people…whose faith-inspired lives bring new life wherever they are; they raise questions about their motives and their visions in people's minds. Personal witness prepares the way for authentic proclamation of the gospel" (ibid).

[19] Donaldson (1996:48), in *Guiding Readers—Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew's Narrative Strategy*, argues that, in order to have future disciples, the church needs to make disciples as Matthew saw the importance (this is not clear) of it.

Holy Spirit. The thrust of this identification is elaborated in John 17:21 in the prayer of Christ, "Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." This identity formation is understood both as an event and a process of becoming like Christ. Through baptism, an individual also identifies with the community of Christ. In baptism, disciples of Jesus continue to live their life in the light of their identity with Christ and in solidarity with the people of God.

Teaching "them to obey everything I have commanded you" focuses on learning to live in "obedience to the entire will of God" (Bosch 1991:81), a journey of sanctification, growing in the likeness of Christ in conformity to the gospel values taught by Christ and later by his apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The church that does the will of God in the mission of making disciples is not seeking a spiritual conversion from sin only, but also a conversion to a new life of obedience under the authority of Christ, the living Lord. Matthew's emphasis on *obedience* to Christ's commands is summarised in Matthew 22:37-38: "Love the Lord your God … Love your neighbour as yourself." These two commands comprehensively cover the Christian obligation to worship and serve God while loving one another in the community of Christ and caring for the needs of fellow human beings in the world, including those who are poor, hungry and oppressed (Matthew 25).

Growing in one's identity with Christ and learning to live in obedience to the commands of Christ are mutually dependent on one another. When a person grows deeper in his identity "in Christ", his obedience to Christ will be greater in proportion to it. The same thing can be said about the church. The more the church as a local corporate body of believers identifies with Christ, the greater will be its collective witness in obedience to the values of God's kingdom,

in being, doing, and saying (Guder 1998:107). Paul says in Colossians 1:28: "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ." This is the goal of discipleship, at both individual and corporate level—becoming like Christ in being (identity), doing (obedience), and saying (proclaiming). In pursuing such a goal, the Christian community becomes a hermeneutic of the gospel, an evangelising community through its witness and proclamation (Newbigin 1989:227; Bevans 2004:352).

1.3.3   Discipleship as Community of Character

The aim of discipleship, as it has been defined, is to grow in one's identification with Christ and learning in obedience to his teaching in order to be like him in character and attitude, in order to be his witness. For this aim of discipleship to be realised in community, it is essential that the discipleship community becomes a community of character.[20]   The community of character, as collective body and individual members, in all of its endeavours strives to become Christ-like in character. In its witness, the community expresses its identity with Christ collectively through its loving obedience to the teaching of its founder, who is the Lord, in all aspects of life.

Stanley Hauerwas (1981) used the title "A Community of Character" for his book on Christian social ethics. The title refers to the church. In his thesis, he views the church as "a community capable of forming people with virtues [characters] sufficient to witness to God's truth in the world" (:3). The church plays an important role in the formation of the character of its members as well as collectively, in reflecting the character of its Christian convictions. Hauerwas (:1) stresses that "the truth of Christian convictions cannot be divorced from the

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[20] The Random House Dictionary (1980) defines *character* as "the aggregate of features and traits that form the individual nature of some person or thing." Here the aggregate features and traits together express the nature of the community.

kind of community the church is and should be." Therefore, it is imperative that the gospel truth must be mediated in the social realm rather than merely taught as some abstract religious truth or doctrine to believe. The truth of Christian conviction must be translated through the character of its members. In that respect the church must be seen as the community of character in its being and doing. Similarly, Larry Rasmussen (1993) in *Moral Fragments and Moral Community* calls the church a community of moral conviction. Moral conviction is an aspect of character formation—"character is formed in community, as moral convictions themselves are" (:12). Rasmussen (:19) would strongly agree with Hauerwas that moral conviction or character is formed in the community of faith in the concrete social reality of the lived world. The church as a community of character cannot divorce itself from the world. It forges its members' characters in the concrete reality of world experience.

1.3.4 Youth: Who are they?

Generally, youth is understood in terms of the physiological development phase beginning from puberty until the body stops growing, from age eleven until eighteen. From the psychological perspective, youth can be seen in different phases of growth. In some societies it lasts until the mid-thirties (Cangia 2004:14). Social institutions, like school and workplace, have their own social categories according to age and experience. There is also a culturally determined idea of what youth is, characterised by "strong interplay with musical, visual and verbal signs that denote what [is] young in relation to what is childish or adult" (:16). From the perspective of advertisers, youth is seen as "the most meaningful time of life" (:17). One has to be "young in order to be considered beautiful, smart and vital. To lose one's youth is to have lost the most valuable thing in life" (ibid). There is no standard way of defining youth. It is culturally and contextually determined. In the Western context, youth is broadly defined by age, beginning at thirteen and continuing to eighteen or twenty-one. Even this period is further divided into adolescence, teenage and youth.

In urban Africa defining the category that can constitutes youth becomes more complex because marital, educational and job status also influence in determining the concept of youth. For instance, an unmarried student in his thirties can be classified as a youth while a twenty-five-year old married person may not. John Njuguna (2004:68) says, "A youth, very simply is a person who is neither a child nor an adult, the age gap is said to be between sixteen and twenty five years, though at times pushed up to the early thirties".

Based on some of the literature reviewed and the author's own observations and interaction with various church youth groups in Nairobi, 'youth', in this study, is defined as a person who is in the age bracket of thirteen to thirty. In some churches or youth groups, young people from age thirteen to eighteen are categorised as teen because they are considered as still at secondary school level. Those from age 18 and above are considered as youth because they are beyond secondary school level. However, the discussion has made it clear that there are many ways to categorise youth. Generally, the term 'youth' is reserved for a person between the ages of thirteen and thirty. When there is a need for further distinction, it will be made clear through further explanation.

1.4   RESEARCH PROBLEM

The aim of discipleship, as it has been defined, is growing in one's identification with Christ and learning in obedience to his teaching in order to be like him in character and attitude, in order to be his witness in all dimensions of life. The present praxis of discipleship among the youth in most urban churches in Kenya is based on an individualistic approach rooted in the dualistic view of modern reality, which tends to promote a false dichotomy between the spiritual and social dimensions of the gospel. Due to this distortion in the history of western mission and the local churches, most African urban youth fail to perceive the relevancy of the gospel to their daily lives, especially in relation to their social needs. They have learned to see

the gospel in terms of meeting their *believing* need, with no relevancy to their *belonging* need. They have learned to regard the church in terms of receiving religious instruction in view of safeguarding their souls after this life, with no direct bearing on their present lives in the society.

Consequently, the church has been failing in its discipleship vocation among the urban youth, which can have serious missiological ramifications in terms of losing the next generation of Christians. Therefore, the aim of this study is to address this problem by proposing how the church could fulfil its discipleship ministry to meet both spiritual and social needs (believing and belonging needs) by changing its praxis from the individualistic to a community orientation.

Historically the church in Kenya, as in other parts of Africa (Joda-Mbewe 2000:26), has been a recipient of the gospel from the Western missionary enterprise that operated from the matrix of the Enlightenment or the modernity paradigm (Bosch 1991:269-273). Under the influence of the Enlightenment, the gospel was understood and presented to the rest of the world from the perspective of a very dualistic worldview. According to Paul Hiebert (1994:219), the Enlightenment worldview is deeply Neo-Platonic in nature. It dichotomises reality into a two-tiered world, drawing a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the material world. Belief in God or supernatural phenomena is relegated to the non-material or spiritual sphere of life that has no direct bearing on life in the natural sphere. Human existence, along with plants and animals, is understood in natural terms—a part of the material universe. Consequently, the modern Enlightenment worldview tends to categorise everything in life in terms of *natural* and *supernatural*, including the social and cultural sphere of life. Religion naturally falls into supernatural realm, and much of the cultural aspect is relegated to the natural realm which can be studied through the sciences of psychology, sociology and anthropology.

With the advancement of science in the twentieth century, many previously unexplainable phenomena have found explanation in natural terms, the need for God to intervene in human affairs has been minimised, and the secularising effect on Western thought has been maximised (:220). To many Western Christians it has brought "a spiritual schizophrenia" (ibid). On the one hand believing in God provides them ultimate meaning and purpose in life. On the other hand, there is little room for God in their daily lives. Science and technology grounded in the secular view of the universe provide the answer to existential need.

In addition to the dualistic worldview of Western Enlightenment thought, the anthropological view of the Enlightenment has promoted the concept of the human person as a rational and autonomous individual (ibid). By implication, one's religious belief is now seen as a domain of the personal or a private affair. Since rationality is one of the key principles of the Enlightenment, the cognitive domain is strongly emphasised. As a result, missionaries from the Western world rooted in the modern cultural paradigm strongly stress the importance of teaching biblical truths as a set of propositional statements appealing to the cognitive side of the human person, with an assumption that, when these truths are believed, the conversion of the soul to Christ would result. In order to emphasise the supernatural dimension of salvation, the social and cultural dimensions were often ignored because they were considered as relatively secondary in importance, just an aspect of the natural world. Because of the dualistic worldview, most of the missionaries basically were interested in the spiritual dimension of mission. It followed that the gospel provided the answer for meeting one's religious need. As a result it was reduced to individual salvation (Guder 2000:133). Consequently, it met the *believing* need of people while the *belonging* need remained unanswered. In the process, the gospel was not integrated well with the other dimensions of life.

Because of this one-sided gospel inherited from the cultural context of the individualistic Cartesian worldview, the witness of the church in Africa, especially in urban areas, has been

greatly distorted by the dualistic form evident in its emphasis on spiritually focused ministry.[21] Paul Hiebert (1985:114) highlights this distortion and its resultant effects when he says, "This dualism has led Western missionaries to make a distinction between 'spiritual ministries', such as evangelism and pastoral work, and the 'social gospel' that deals with the material problems of this world." Because of this dichotomy, the gospel is often confined to the spiritual realm at the expense of unmet physical and social needs.

Professor Bahemuka (1996:104-109), a sociologist at the University of Nairobi, in her article *What hope does the church offer the young people in Africa?* points out that the social needs of young people are often not met by the church. She believes that the need to belong is "at the core of youth problems in Africa" (:109). It is unfortunate that the church is failing to meet this crucial need. The gospel is still relevant but it is not adequately integrated holistically—both culturally and contextually—because of the pervasive influence of false dualism. It is evident in the way the church has structured its youth ministry, basing it on the individualistic approach with the goal of meeting the *believing* need of the youth while ignoring the *belonging* need. This problem is further discussed and highlighted in Chapter Two, in section three (2.3), based on empirical evidence.

In light of the problem that resulted from the Western dualistic view of the gospel and its praxis, there is an urgent need for another approach to discipleship that can help the youth to integrate the gospel in a meaningful way—an approach that does not dichotomise *believing* from *belonging* but integrates both needs comprehensively in the discipleship mission of the church. Such an approach is presented in the next section as the thesis of this study.

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[21] The dualistic approach to the gospel has been perceived in the study as a major factor for the distortion of the gospel rather than the only factor.

1.5   RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

It is evident from the discussion above that the church has been failing in meeting the *belonging* need of the urban youth while catering for the *believing* need in the existing mode of individualistically oriented ministry. As a result, it has created a situation where most young people are adopting an attitude of Christian nominalism, believing without belonging. They view the church as a *place* where they can come to meet their religious need, not a *community* where they can belong.[22] This hinders Christian discipleship and the missional witness of the church.

Therefore, in order to address the existential *belonging* need as well as the need for *believing*, this research study proposes that the urban church in Africa consider structuring its youth discipleship ministry on the basis of the community approach that is grounded in the contextual, cultural and theological dimensions of *koinonia*. Theologically, *koinonia* is understood as a fellowship of believers who are fully committed to the Lord Jesus and to one another (Tillard 2002:646). The early church as a discipleship community demonstrated the form and essence of the theological understanding of *koinonia* in its praxis. Culturally, most of the African values are community-centred in nature, rooted in the symbolic concept of *Ubuntu*, the human self deriving its identity in relation with others. Contextually the urbanisation rooted in modern values of autonomy poses a diverse and complex challenge at all levels of human society, from the material, psychological, social, economical, and political to the moral, ethical and religious aspects of life. In that contextual urban reality, the church is called to make disciples, which is a challenging task.

These three dimensions—theological, cultural and contextual—provide an integrated framework for a community approach to building the youth as the disciples of Christ.

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[22] Guder in *The Missional Church* (1998) refers to the church as a religious vendor that provides religious goods to religious consumers.

Discipleship involves formation of character in the likeness of Christ. The study proposes that the church build such character among the urban youth in community structure. Therefore, the church as a community of character formation requires Missiology and the church in praxis to correlate critically three of the following important dimensions of discipleship with a community structure in the context of African urban life in various spheres of its witness:

1) Praxis of believing—Connecting to God through Jesus Christ: This involves the members of the group in supporting and nurturing one another's commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and its related values through worship, prayer and Bible study. (Missional dimension of worship)

2) Praxis of belonging—connecting with one another: This involves the members of the group in meeting the social, emotional and physical needs of one another as well as holding one another to mutual accountability. (Missional dimension of fellowship)

3) Praxis of giving and receiving—connecting with the society and the world: This calls for the group to engage in the ministry of words and deeds to others as well as the social engagement of urbanisation issues like poverty, social justice, etc. in the wider community, and cultural engagement for impacting the witness of the gospel. (Intentional dimension of mission)

As part of the missional ecclesiology within which to place and develop the normative hermeneutical part of the study in Chapters Four and Six, the first two praxes relate to the missionary dimension, the third praxis pertains to the missionary intention. By integrating all three missional praxes in a community structure and correlating these dimensions with the context, a condition is created for youth ministry to be relevant missionally in an urban context like Nairobi. Thus, community discipleship has the potential of transforming the church itself in fulfilling its missionary vocation as it meets the social and spiritual needs of the urban youth in the process.

These dimensions are not to be seen as separate strands or programmes that can be put into practice apart from others. They should be viewed as a three-legged stool, a missiological guide to the praxis of making disciples, integrating the two great commandments of our Lord: Loving God and loving neighbours as ourselves.

The overall assumption behind the proposed community-based approach and praxis is that a basic worldview changes slowly. The term *worldview* itself has several definitions. Paul Hiebert (1985:45), as an anthropologist, describes worldview as "the basic assumptions about reality which [lies] behind the beliefs and behaviour of a culture." According to Hiebert (45-47), these assumptions implicitly operate in three dimensions of culture: cognitive (knowing, explanation, concepts, etc.), affective (feeling, aesthetic, art, etc.) and evaluative (values, priorities, morality, etc.).

Wuthnow (1993: 104) defines it as "a person's guiding outlook on life" based on sets of beliefs and assumptions, in the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. It helps the individual to make sense of life cognitively; understand his feelings; and guide his conduct. According to Wuthnow (1987: 45), the idea of worldview generally assumes a belief system. The belief system implicitly assumes that an individual "reflects on the world and holds beliefs about this world." However, he suggests another way of understanding the view of reality or the world of meaning through the world of symbols. He calls it the meaning system. A symbol or a set of symbols evokes meanings at the cognitive level, the volitional level, as well as the emotional level (ibid). The worldview or belief system tends to seek consistency in reality whereas the symbolic world or meaning system emphasises coherence in reality (:46).

This study assumes that outward cultural practices may change rapidly as new symbols are added to the individual's or the group's meaning systems, but basic underlying assumptions, whether of belief system or meaning system, take very long time to change. On the surface many urban youth may seem to abandon traditional African beliefs, values and practices by adopting a modern lifestyle. They are superficial adjustments to new realities. However, those traditional values and thought patterns may still linger on in the background (Kraft 1995:88). They may take different forms in an urban setting. Kraft and others have argued that they cannot be erased so easily within a generation or two. Peter Paris (1995:25), an African American professor of social ethics, in his studies of the African diaspora detected the presence of some of the basic African moral values even after several generational gaps. When John Mbiti (1990:1) makes a statement about the religious nature of African people by saying that an African person is "notoriously religious", he is talking about the basic assumption concerning the particular spiritual reality deeply imbedded in the culture of African people. Secular or modern thinking does not erase those basic assumptions and values which have been etched by long history and tradition. However, they can be masked temporarily. Parrinder (1962: vii) also makes similar claims, "Yet behind the facade of modernism and education many traditional beliefs remain, for religions are hard to kill and have a way of rising again after an apparent lapse of centuries." Since African culture is deeply rooted in community, it is assumed that assumptions and values of community would be operating in urban settings but in different forms and expressions.

1.6   GOAL OF RESEARCH

In order to address the missiological crisis that has resulted from the church failing to draw urban youth into its fold because of its shallow missional praxis based on the assumptions of modernity that foster a false dichotomy between spiritual and social realities of human life experience, the goal of the research study is to provide an alternative solution. In response to the problem, the research proposes a community approach to discipleship that is compatible

to biblical norm, culturally relevant and contextually appropriate. It calls for discipleship that integrates all dimensions of life: secular and spiritual, individual and societal, and others in all spheres of Christian witness.

The secondary goal of the research is to create the awareness in the church of the importance of paying attention to the needs of youth in urban areas. The church cannot afford to neglect its mission to reach them. They are the silent majority living on the margin of the society, neglected and often misunderstood, crying out for help and guidance. They are open to being invited into the kingdom of God.

1.7   MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

Besides finding a relevant discipleship approach to meeting the social and spiritual needs of youth, the research was motivated by a compassion for the poor and destitute urban youth. They are in the prime of their lives, full of hope and energy. On the one hand, the urban world seems to offer promising future and material comforts. On the other hand, most young people under the present urban circumstances encounter the cruel and harsh reality of life, which leads to greater despair. The process of doing this research has broadened the author's understanding of the youth and their issues in the urban context and has led to a greater appreciation of the opportunity that the church has to serve them and turn them into a vital witness for the kingdom of God through discipleship.

1.8   PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH

Although the churches have many opportunities to serve the urban youth, one of the cries often heard from pastors and church leaders in Nairobi is that they do not understand their young people. They do not know how to respond to the needs of young people. They provide them with one programme after another with a hope to attract them but the apathy and lack of response from the youth remain. This research hopes to contribute to greater

understanding among the leaders of the church in discerning the needs of young people. Often the young people are not asking the leaders to do something for them, but to understand them better and to allow them and empower them to address their own problems in a creative manner. The community approach would hopefully allow such collaboration and understanding between the leadership and the youth in the church through working together rather than struggling against each other.

At present, most of the courses on youth ministry in Bible schools tend to focus on pastoral care and programmes designed and developed from the clerical paradigm (Dingemans, 1995:84). Such an approach already assumes the need of young people rather than finding out through research what their needs are. As a result, there is a great disparity between the church's youth ministry and the real needs of youth. The contribution of this research would help in promoting and giving training concerning the importance of conducting empirical research among the youth by the practitioners of youth ministry, rather than assuming knowledge of the needs of young people. While promoting research and listening to the needs of youth, this study hopes to contribute towards better understanding in appreciation of the overall context of each youth ministry. The church frequently imposes a particular programme on youth in a region or citywide, without taking into consideration the social, cultural, economic and geographical context of each community. This study hopes to encourage research among the students in theological institutions that prepare youth pastors. The author hopes to bring a greater awareness of the importance of field research to the students in the institution where he teaches while encouraging others to do the same.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According Babbie and Mouton (2001:72-75), the goal and nature of one's research must determine the plan and methodology of the research. This research is considered as empirical

in nature because it addresses an empirical question to determine whether discipleship based on a community approach among African urban youth could be a relevant answer to the missiological problem of youth who are not finding the church helpful in meeting their social needs. In order to the answer the research question, the researcher conducted the study by examining the following components of the framework, which are presented separately in each chapter (2-4): contextual, cultural and *koinonia.*

1.9.1   Research Framework: Context, Culture and *Koinonia*

The contextual study focuses on issues related to urbanisation and its effect on youth and church youth ministry. Information was sourced from both available literature and empirical data collected through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. For understanding the cultural dimension, the study examined the significance of community in traditional African society. Most of the material was based on anthropological texts. The theological component of the research examines the praxis of discipleship in the life of the early church community. The data for this aspect of the research was collected from the literature on early church history. After examining the urban context, African community pattern and values and theological praxis of *koinonia* in early the church, these components were used as a framework for examining and analysing various community models, case studies, and for proposing a discipleship model based on these components, in the final chapter.

1.9.2   Empirical Research

In this study, three kinds of empirical research were conducted to collect various data.

1) Interviews with youth leaders: This part of the empirical study entailed collecting data by interviewing[23] youth pastors and leaders from more than twenty-four churches across the

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[23] **Use of a qualitative interview approach**. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 289) describe it as "an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words and in a particular

city, representing various denominations and socio-economic levels. The aim of collecting this information was to gain understanding of how the churches conduct their ministries to young people in Nairobi and what kind of challenges they face in youth ministry in the urban context, as well as to discern why the church is losing its young people and in what way it attracts young people.

2) **Quantitative Survey Questionnaire:** Quantitative field research was conducted among the Christian youth in various churches in Nairobi through survey questionnaire. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:263), the survey approach is quite useful in describing certain characteristics of a large population. The aim of the survey was to discern the youth's perception of community values rooted in traditional African culture. The survey questionnaire was administered to church youth representing different denominations and socio-economic levels across the city, so the sample of over 1400 respondents would provide an accurate representation of Nairobi church youth.[24] The result of the survey was used to find an answer for the cultural dimension of the question of the thesis of this study concerning whether the community approach to discipleship is culturally relevant to African urban youth by comparing the total percentage of positive responses with the total percentage of negative responses about the youth's perception of community-related values.

3) **Case Study:** A case study of a youth discipleship group that seemed to reflect a community model was conducted over a six-month period, with the author as a participatory observer[25] through becoming a member of the group. This case study was done to seek an

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order." The author mainly asked each youth leader to describe their ministry activities; the goals or purpose of their church ministry; the challenges and opportunities; about youth participation and the response of church leadership.

[24] The sample of 1400 seemed to be adequate. According Babbie and Mouton (2001:263) for a large population, 2000 respondents are sufficient. The author checked with the head of the Daystar Research Department, Dr. Grace Gathu, who recommended 1000 respondents as adequate for research of this kind.

[25] In a participant observation, the researcher plays a dual role simultaneously: a member of the group he is studying and a researching doing the study (Babbie 2001:293)

emic[26] point of view in order to understand the theological, cultural and contextual dynamic of community factors in meeting social and spiritual needs of urban youth. The second purpose of the case study was to discern to what extent the community approach correlated three dimensions (worship, fellowship and mission) of discipleship in community structures in the African urban context

1. 9. 3   Scope of the Study

The study was limited to youth who attend mainline mission-initiated churches in the Nairobi area, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. Youth from African-Initiated (Independent) Churches were not included because time and expenses would not permit to broaden the scope of the research. Most of the African Initiated Churches are small in size and do not have definite addresses to locate them. The research was limited to the following mainline mission-initiated church traditions or denominations: Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, African Inland Church (AIC), Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic. These denominations together represent more than 90% of the historic mainline mission-initiated Christian community in Nairobi (ACM-FTT Afriserve. 2004).

1.10   CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction

This first chapter has presented a brief description of the background of the study. Then a discussion presented the broader conceptual framework from the missiological perspective that identified the concept of *missio Dei* as the starting point of mission of the church. In that framework, discipleship is located as integrated witness of the church in all dimensions of life. The church as the community of character is called to discipleship formation by integrating worship, fellowship and missionary intention in one. After providing a descriptive

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[26] One of the most distinct features of qualitative research is that it allows collecting information from the perspective of the actors themselves as they see the reality rather than by the researcher imposing his or her interpretation of the reality on the actors (:271).

definition of discipleship, community and youth, the chapter introduced the research problem and hypothesis. The hypothesis proposed the community approach to discipleship. The community needs to be understood from the perspective of context, culture and theology. Finally, the chapter presented an outline of the design and methodology of the research.

Chapter Two: The challenges of youth and the praxis of church youth ministry in the urban context

The second chapter focuses on understanding the youth and the praxis of the church youth ministry in the urban context. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes Nairobi as a rapidly growing African city with a large population of youth. The second section discusses various impacts and challenges of urbanisation on the youth population. Much of the effect of urbanisation has been negative, creating social alienation and poverty. In that context, the third section examines the praxis of the church youth ministry in serving the youth of the city. The findings of the research show that, although the youth are the majority in the city, they are a minority in the church and are marginalised. This section also highlights the research problem by pointing out the present praxis of church as main reason for the malaise in the church youth ministry. This chapter is essential in providing the **contextual understanding** of the research problem. Most of the data for this chapter have been gathered from pertinent literature and from survey questionnaires and extensive field interviews involving church youth leaders, by the author.

Chapter Three: Community in traditional African perspectives

The third chapter looks at the significance of community in all aspects of life in traditional African society. It examines the nature and various elements of traditional African community through a descriptive account. The information for this study was collected through a literature review of African cultural studies done by prominent African scholars like John Mbiti, Laurenti Magesa, Benezet Bujo, Bolaji Idowu and others. The chapter provides basic understanding of the African perspective of community and its significance in African cultural life. It provides a **cultural basis** for discussion in relation to a relevant approach to

discipleship and community formation. It is vital to the thesis of this research because the community plays a significant role in meeting the social needs, especially through a sense of belonging, of African people. This chapter has been the main source for providing materials in the designing of questions pertinent to community values according to the African cultural hermeneutical lens in the survey questionnaires.

Chapter Four: Perspectives on discipleship community in the early church

The fourth chapter examines the theological understanding and praxis of the early church as a discipleship community. First it looks at the concept of *koinonia* as the biblical and theological basis of the church as community. Second, it seeks to demonstrate how the early church fulfilled its mandate of discipleship by integrating *believing* and *belonging* needs through community structures in the cultural context of its time. This part of the study relies on a literature review of the New Testament writings and the history of the early church and Christianity.

Chapter Five: Quantitative survey research

This chapter describes the methodology, and provides the analysis and findings of data collected through the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to a sample population of more than 1400 respondents. The aim of the survey questionnaire was to measure the youth's perception of African cultural values related to community. This set of data is important as the scientific basis for the argument of the thesis that proposes a community approach to discipleship ministry. In this chapter the differences in perceptions concerning African community values of the two groups of youth—urban and rural-oriented and divided according to the place of upbringing—is also presented and discussed.

Chapter Six: Community-based discipleship in urban context

The aim of this chapter is to develop a model for community discipleship on the basis of a framework consisting of three components—theological, cultural and contextual. Within this community framework, three missional dimensions (worship, fellowship and missionary intention) of discipleship are integrated in order to develop a relevant community of character. The findings from the quantitative survey provide a cultural understanding of urban youth in regard to African community values. It provides a scientific basis to propose the community model for discipleship for them because it is in agreement with their values hermeneutically. Using the above framework, this chapter also evaluates other community models, like Cell Group, Small Christian Communities, and Small Group, which are operating in some Nairobi churches. The study proposes a model similar to small group called the Covenant Model. It also looks at the case study to discern and evaluate the dynamics of community discipleship in the urban context. Finally, it proposes the need for further research in different areas in relation to community discipleship in urban context.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHALLENGES OF YOUTH AND THE PRAXIS OF A CHURCH YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Since this study seeks to address the discipleship need of the youth in the urban context from a missiological perspective, it is appropriate first to introduce the city of Nairobi in this chapter by briefly sketching its social, economic and historical background in order to get the broad picture of the urban landscape that is shaping the lives of its young inhabitants. Then, how the process of urbanisation has been affecting the young people in the city will be described in order to provide broader understanding of various challenges faced by youth. After that, a critical examination of how the urban churches have been responding to the challenges of meeting the needs of their young people in the face of rapid urbanisation follows. Without adequate understanding of the context and the effect of urbanisation on the lives of young people, one would not fully appreciate the various missiological challenges faced by the churches in serving their youth in urban areas and in designing a discipleship community to build their Christian character.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on Nairobi, a city that could characterise other sub-Saharan African cities in terms of the effects of urbanisation on its growing population. After that, the second section of the chapter provides a demographic description of the youth, along with various social and economic life challenges encountered by young people in the face of rapid urbanisation. A brief theological perspective on urbanisation is discussed, being important for a church to view urbanisation from a broader hermeneutical framework to understand challenges of the social, political and economic dimensions as well as the effect of urbanisation on the cultural and moral values of young people. The third section of the chapter describes the profile and approach of the youth ministry in Nairobi churches. It examines some of the challenges and struggles, as well as

opportunities, faced by various churches in their youth ministries. Much of the primary research data was collected by the author through personal open-ended interviews with the various youth leaders and pastors of twenty-three churches representing a variety of denominations in different parts of the city, as well as from survey questionnaire given to a population sample of more than 1400 youth.

2.2   NAIROBI: A CITY OF YOUTH

In many ways, Nairobi as an African city represents the dynamic vitality of youth. It is a young, rapidly growing vibrant city. It is the largest in Kenya. Young people make up the largest segment of its population—80 percent are under the age thirty (Central Bureau of Statistic-Kenya 1999). Its youth population reflects a slightly higher percentage than the youth population of Kenya, with 75 percent under the age of 30 (ibid). It is evident that the city's population is overwhelmingly young. It is a city of youth.

The current population of Nairobi is close to three million (nine percent of the country population—33 million) or even more (ibid). According to Aylward Shorter's (1997:32) estimation, five hundred people are added to the city every day through birth and migration from the rural areas. By the year 2020, the population of Nairobi may reach 15 million (Barrett 2001:585), five times its current population. It is a sobering challenge to think about all the ramifications of population growth on the infrastructure of the city and its inhabitants. One thing is definitely clear: the city will be dominated by more young people than now.

2.2.1   Nairobi: From Railway Depot to International City

Historically speaking, Nairobi is a very young city, started just over a century ago. In 1896, when the British colonial power began to build a railway line to connect Kampala to the port of Mombasa in order to consolidate the colony, no one dreamed that a city would rise up in the open marshy highland of Kenya close to the edge of the Great Rift Valley. The city of

Nairobi came into existence as a small railway depot between Mombasa and Kampala around 1901 when the construction of the railway line was finished. It grew from a small colonial administrative town into a large city within a span of eighty years. In 1920, the town had a population of 5000 residents. At independence (1963) the population was close to a quarter million. By the end of 1980, it had reached over one and a half million (Shorter 1991:9). At present, it is reaching closer to three million (CBS-Kenya 1999). Originally the town was designed to sustain the white colonial administrative staff and their families. The mild and cool climate was more conducive to white settlement compared to the hot and humid climate of the coastal town of Mombasa. The large segment of high ground on the western part of the town was allocated to European settlement. The Asians of Indian origin settled the northern part of the town close to the commercial area, since most of them were engaged in business activities. Beyond the east side of the Nairobi River and north of railway line, a huge low-income African township began to mushroom towards the east. The western part the city still appears to have more space and relative affluence than the eastern part. The affluent, one third of the city population, occupies more than the two thirds of the total surface area of the city, with the Eastland being the most densely populated part of the city (Shorter 1997:33).

The largest slum, Kibera,[27] with an estimated population of eight hundred thousand is located on the western side of the town. It started as a small squatter camp at the time of Kenya's independence in 1963. Due to its proximity to the industrial area, Kibera's population has expanded rapidly. The poor residents live in densely crowded quarters in houses with mud walls and rusty corrugated metal roofs. The sanitary condition is appalling, lacking basic amenities like water, sewage and electricity. The city council does not provide any assistance for improving the area because it is considered as squatter land.

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[27] The National Geographic Magazine's September 2005 issue on page 7 displayed a full panoramic picture of the Kibera slum of Nairobi.

Nairobi as a youthful city serves as the capital of Kenya. Geographically, it is centrally located in Kenya, between Kisumu and Mombasa, two major cities linked by the railway. Kisumu on the west is located on the shore of Lake Victoria and Mombasa, on the east, is located on the coast of the Indian Ocean. Because of its administrative importance, government buildings dominate the town centre along with commercial ones. The central business district may give an impression of Nairobi as a modern growing city with trendy commercial offices, retail shops, hotels and ubiquitous traffic. However, apart from the city centre and the western part of the city where the affluent class lives, most of the city reflects widespread poverty and decay. Because of its central location, the city has been experiencing the growing pains of rapid urbanisation. Its capacity is overloaded with the increasing population. The infrastructure of the city was designed to sustain a quarter million people at the time of independence (1963). At present, though, the city is trying to cope with a population ten times larger than it can handle. As a result, many parts of the city face chronic water shortages and frequent power cuts. Uncollected piles of garbage are seen along the roadsides, especially in high-density areas. They are eyesores and a health hazard to the residents.

The city council is barely able to keep up with the maintenance of the city. Since 1963, very few new roads have been built. Most of the existing roads have been deteriorating, with heavy traffic and increasing numbers of potholes. Driving in Nairobi requires much patience and endurance. The residents waste much time and money travelling from one point of the city to the next. All of these add more stress and economic hardship to life in the city, especially to its poor residents.

Besides providing economic incentives to the youth, it attracts young people from all over Kenya with its educational opportunities. Nairobi, as a city, is becoming an important educational centre in Kenya. There are two well-known national universities along with several private universities. It has ten public and private universities, four technical colleges,

several large and small post-secondary institutions, 13 Bible schools and seminaries, and 140 secondary schools. Besides that, the city offers a variety of training institutions offering courses ranging from computer, cosmetic, catering and language teaching to secretarial services (more than 100 institutions and colleges).

Compared to the national educational standard at secondary school level, Nairobi has a higher percentage (54%) of young residents who have reached this level or beyond. This means that Nairobi's youth are almost two times more literate than the rest of the country (Central Bureau of Statistics *1999 Kenya Population and Housing Census*, January 2001).). Because of the high literacy rate among the church youth, it was easier to administer the quantitative survey questionnaire on which the respondents could fill in the answers to the questions by themselves (Babbie 2001:236,258).

2.2.2   Ethnic and Religious Diversity

In spite of crowded living conditions, Nairobi is a unique city in many ways. It attracts people from almost all tribal and ethnic groups in Kenya. It is a city with great diversity. People from different nationalities are also found in the city. A large number of Asians of Indian origin who are engaged in commercial activities have been living in Nairobi for several generations. In addition to Asian residents, the city also boasts of having more than 100,000 non-Kenyans from different nations, including refugees. Many expatriates who work for commercial companies, mission organisations and non-governmental agencies find Nairobi a convenient place to live and work because of its moderate climate and international communication facilities. Many of them maintain their headquarters in the city. Several agencies of the United Nations are also located in a north-western suburb of the city. Nairobi, with its international airport and railroads, provides a strategic hub for communication and transport connections to other African countries. During the recent turmoil in Sudan, Rwanda, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nairobi provided a base for distributing needed humanitarian supplies and a location for diplomatic negotiations.

Internationally, Nairobi is recognised as a prominent and strategic city on the continent of Africa because of its openness to diverse groups of people and its geographical location. It is a city that welcomes diversity.

Besides ethnic, tribal and international diversity, the city is home to many religious communities as well. The majority of city dwellers identify themselves as Christians; 94% of the surveyed respondents indicated their religious affiliation as Christian, according to a recent youth survey conducted by the Daystar University team (Chandran 2004:11). The presence of many other religious groups is visible in the city in different forms and shapes. Closer to the city centre, Islamic mosques and Hindu temples are a common sight. There is a Jewish synagogue and a Buddhist temple, but they are not prominently visible. Christianity in all its diversity is widely seen in Nairobi. The Roman Catholic faith is the dominant denomination. Several large church buildings and cathedrals are scattered all over the city, along with numerous church-related institutions. Many of them represent mainline Protestant denominations: Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Nazarene, Lutheran, African Inland Church (AIC), and various groups of Pentecostal. Greek Orthodox and Coptic Church are also represented along with other sects, like Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, although in small numbers. Nairobi boasts hundreds of church denominations, both local and of foreign origin. It seems that almost every denomination in Europe and America is represented in Nairobi. Apart from mission-established churches, numerous groups of African Independent or Initiated Churches of all shapes, sizes and colours have made Nairobi their home. Most of them are found among low-income groups in slum areas. Although they do not have large and prominent church buildings, they are visible as groups on the roadside on their way to meetings on Sundays from their distinct colourful robes and banners.

Alongside with Christianity and Islam, beliefs in traditional religion are practiced more at individual level than as a community. Diviners and traditional medicinal men and women abound, although they adapt their practices in accordance with the needs of their urban

clients. They advertise their availability through signboards in busy market places and along the roads. Religious consumerism is seen in the way healing and crusade ministries are advertised in the city to attract different segments of the city population. Some middle class families drive a long way to certain churches that cater for affluent community, in order to find a well-organised Sunday school programme run by professionally trained teachers and to experience a contemporary style worship service in modern church facilities. Nairobi as a city offers its inhabitants more choices of religious experience than any other place in Kenya. Freedom of choice is one of the characteristics of urbanisation. Nairobi as a city offers plenty of that to its citizens.

Although the city welcomes diversity, it also allows segregation. According to conventional thinking, the city is supposed to be a big melting pot where people from diverse backgrounds live together and share their cultural values. However, this image of a melting pot is not true for Nairobi. Stew provides a better image than melting-pot for describing an African city like Nairobi (Shorter 1991:25). In stew pieces do not melt away but retain their distinct characteristics. People do not easily abandon their tribal and ethnic identities. In most poor and low-income areas, the population tends to congregate around the tribal and ethnic conclaves linked in the network of relationships. In slums, people from various tribal groups live side by side under crowded conditions. In local church congregations people often do not mix readily but prefer to stay together as tribal or ethnic groups. However, most affluent congregations express greater ethnic diversity in their makeup because middle-income people generally seem to be more open to other groups as they share more common urban values on the basis of economic class, education and lifestyle. English or Swahili remains the dominant languages of worship in the affluent churches, whereas tribal languages are preferred in the small slum churches. Sometimes the language becomes a determinant factor in dividing socio-economic classes in a local church. Nairobi as a city offers people a choice.

2.2.3   Ever-changing Communities and Marginal Groups

Change is one of the hallmarks of a rapidly growing city. When new arrivals move into an old established neighbourhood, it begins to upset the balance of socio-economic or ethnic composition. If the new arrivals are from an affluent group, the rent begins to go up because they are able to pay more. Some owners are tempted to sell their properties to new arrivals. Others move out because of changes in the ethnicity of the community. Neighbourhoods do not remain the same. This brings social displacement. For instance, some neighbourhoods in Nairobi came to be dominated by Somali refugees when they began to occupy more homes in those places. Social mobility is very high in low-income or slum areas because most of the inhabitants do not own their homes. They move as often as they change jobs and incomes. Another important factor that contributes to high mobility is that many migrants from rural areas do not regard Nairobi as their permanent home. On weekends or holidays they go to their rural homes where they maintain their social and cultural ties. They come to the city primarily to seek employment or education. Urban pastors often complain that they find it difficult to keep in contact with their members because they change their residency quite often. People receive pastoral care only when they come to church. This is a very typical African urban phenomenon that affects the church and its ministry.

Nairobi as a growing city hosts a variety of marginalised people. These people find themselves in transition or in a state of disorientation, not feeling at home with any established community. Some people find solidarity with others who are in similar situation and band together to form their own sub-culture as a means to survive in the harsh city environment. For instance, the street children or homeless people tend to form their own groups and share a way of life that tends to give shape to their sub-culture, with its own values and rules.   Each group is in search of a community in which they can have a sense of belonging. A city like Nairobi harbours many marginalised groups, from poor to rich. Many young migrants find themselves in this marginal state. In recent years, a post-modern youth group with its own sub-culture has gradually emerged. They band together as a group, using

their own language called "Sheng", a mix of English and Swahili. They have their own dress code and mannerisms. Some identify with such group for a short period of time; others adopt that lifestyle as a way of life. Nairobi as a city tolerates and welcomes all these groups. As a mosaic city, it expresses its own unique character. In the next section the study explores how this unique city shapes its young people. This process is described under the term *urbanisation*.

2.3   YOUTH IN THE CITY OF NAIROBI

In the previous section, a brief descriptive survey of Nairobi as vibrant city of young people was given. This section explores some of the challenges of life faced by youth in the city and looks at how the majority of its young residents cope with them. The study looks at the city from the theological perspective. Then it examines the youth in the context of the urban-rural continuum. This section also explores the issue of poverty and its effect on family, health and security. Finally, it examines the effect of urbanisation on personal identity. The purpose of this section is to provide a wider context to understand the implications of urbanisation on the youth.

What is urbanisation? How is it understood? The term *urbanisation* can simply refer to a process of urban growth or to a social change that arises due to urban growth. "To some urbanisation means urban growth or the expansion and multiplication of towns and cities. For others it refers to a form of social consciousness, a mentality that emanates from the town, affecting not only those who live there, but people in the rural hinterland also" (Shorter 1997:31). In the context of massive migration from rural to urban, Paul Hiebert (1985:289) describes urbanisation as a drastic change in lifestyle. Taking these views together, urbanisation does not effect superficial lifestyle change only, but the outlook on life (worldview) as well. It places people in a different context where old symbols are redefined and new symbols are added. It affects all dimensions of young people's lives, including

beliefs, values and behaviour. Urbanisation is a complex subject. It can be approached in many ways. In this study, it is understood as the way an urban environment shapes or affects the lives of its residents' social and religious outlook and behaviour. It is not enough to understand the dynamics of urbanisation from a sociological perspective only; one should also have a theological perspective. The theological perspective allows us to look at the city as having another dimension beyond the scope of empirical reality.

2.3.1   A City from the Theological Perspective

In the biblical text, the city occupies a place of great importance in many prophetic and historical accounts. Some of the cities, like Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome and others, were regarded as centres of economic, political and religious power. In biblical thought the image of a city has been depicted both negatively and positively—a dwelling place of God and his people as well as a centre of Satan and his evil host. Jerusalem is associated with the city of God, a place of peace (shalom); while Babylon symbolises a city of Satan (Linthicum 1991:25). However, Linthicum (ibid) argues that, while Jerusalem symbolically represents good and Babylon evil, every city in reality contains both forces, of God and of Satan, struggling for the souls of its people and their structures. The city is a battleground for the forces of good and evil. Proverbs 29:2 alludes to this battle, "When the righteous thrive people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan". According to Linthicum, this dualistic tension between good and evil must be in mind to understand urbanisation theologically. This tension is clearly reflected in the title of his book *City of God City of Satan.*

In the early days of Christianity, the city was not considered a cursed place to avoid, but an instrumental centre for the propagation of the gospel. Christianity took root and spread in the urban centres of the vast empire of the Rome and beyond. Shorter (1991:60) points out that

"The Christian *ecclesia* or assembly was embraced [by] the whole town and the liturgy was celebrated in the basilicas at different times." The city was a welcoming place in spite of all of its wicked manifestations. It was only from the fourteenth century onward that the view of the city became more negative, as a place of evil and decadence (:61). It acquired the negative image of Babylon, Nineveh and pagan Rome (ibid) rather than the heavenly Jerusalem. The pessimistic theological perception of the city developed as a result of several negative factors perceived to have originated from cities, like the Black Plague in Europe, rising heretical ideas, and the grim realities of life which resulted from the Industrial Revolution (ibid). Since then, much of the anti-urban bias began to develop in Christian thought. Shorter (:63) explains that this anti-urban bias kept most of the early Western missionaries, who came from rural setting, from developing churches in the urban centres of Africa and Asia. Those missionaries saw cities as places of violence, corruption, pollution, ungodliness, oppression, injustice, pleasure, suffering, greed, and pride. They favoured rural communities as mission field while neglecting the cities. But in the last few decades rapid expansion of cities in Africa and elsewhere has caught the attention of leaders in mission, and they began to focus their missionary efforts on reaching people in urban areas where more than 50 percent of the world population lives. Grigg (1981:24), in his book *Cry of the Urban Poor,* estimates that one third of the people in city populations in many third world countries are found in the slums, living in abject poverty under oppressive conditions. Nairobi reflects such poverty as well.

In spite of all the negative images, the city has been associated with the kingdom of God in the Bible. God is at work in the city (Campolo 2000:243). In the book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem is symbolically represented as the kingdom of God. It is the place of hope, peace and joy. This was the vision of some of the prophets of the Old Testament. The well-known passage from Isaiah 65:17-25 paints the picture of Jerusalem as a great place of peace and rejoicing, no more tears and crying, a secure and safe place with abundance of food, a

place of peace and comfort, even the lion and the lamb dwell together. Since God has a great plan for the city, it calls the church to participate actively to join in the work of God in overcoming the forces of evil that opposes God's kingdom at every turn.

In spite of the beautiful vision of the heavenly city, the cities on earth increasingly appear as places filled with wickedness, violence and oppression. Daily newspapers in Nairobi are filled with the account of thefts, carjacking, rape, murder, corruption in high places, mismanagement of funds, accounts of injustice, deceptions, properties loss, environmental pollutions and many more. They delineate the city as dark and evil place. Reflecting on the North American urban context, Campolo (:244) says many social scientists are at a loss to explain some of the evil manifestations of urban phenomena empirically. "Theoretical interpretations of the evils they survey do not convince them that they completely understand what is going on." It has been argued that, at macro level, the city is the ground where two opposing kingdoms are at war with each other. How can the evil in the city be understood theologically?

The evil in the city has been interpreted from three different primary theological persuasions. They are not necessarily exclusive of one another. Some of them are combined. However, each perspective expresses some dominant feature in its approach to the city. Linthicum discusses these perspectives in Chapters Two and Three of his book, *City of God City of Satan* (1991).

Evil as personal: According to Linthicum (:41), this perspective looks at the evil in the city as personal. It is true that the Bible has much to say about sin as personal. When sin accumulates among its people, the city takes on the character of such sin in a corporate dimension and reflects it collectively like Sodom did. Evangelical Protestant theology that

emphasises individual salvation—the calling of the sinner to Christ— has a tendency to look at the evil in the city in individual terms. As a result, it approaches the evil in the society by seeking the conversion of individuals. It holds the view that the society will change when more of its members turn to God through faith and repentance in Christ. Donald McGavran (1970:34) has been one of the key evangelical figures to espouse this view. Linthicum (:45) is correct in pointing out a serious weakness in this theological approach: "The danger with such an approach is that those who stress exclusively the individual dimensions of salvation can neither understand the full extent of evil nor appreciate the full salvific work of Christ." Churches and individuals who hold on to this view of theology often shy away from addressing evil in social structures and institutions. For example, in South Africa during the apartheid era, many evangelical churches and individual Christians from the White community did not oppose the structural system of apartheid openly (Kritzinger 1994:84). They kept their focus on addressing evil on the individual level by seeking personal conversion.   Similar pronouncements can be made about many evangelically oriented (including Pentecostal) churches and individuals in Nairobi who are reluctant to confront blatant corruption and social injustice in urban economic and political structures and institutions. Because of this theological myopia, most of the mission effort has been narrowly focused on saving individual souls with very little regard to oppressive social structures.

Evil as corporate: Another theological perspective views evil in the society as perpetuated by corporate structures and institutions that usually serve the interests of some powerful minority groups or ruling elites. For instance, in recent years the political and economic policies of neo-liberalism, under the guise of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), have greatly increased the hardship of the poor but benefited the rich investors in many countries in Africa and elsewhere (Calderisi 2006:19-20).[28] On a macro-scale it has greatly widened the

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[28] Neoliberalism in a broader sense refers to an economic and political philosophy that tends to reject governmental intervention in the market and people's relationships to the economy (Heyden 2007:3). It resists social and collective control over the behaviour and practices of firms, the movement of

gap between the rich and the poor within the country and between the developed world and the underdeveloped world (ibid). People who are helpless often become the victims of the systems that have turned corrupt and evil. Although social structures and systems are sanctioned by God for the benefit of people, powerful elites can turn into an instrument of oppression. Even a religious system can become an instrument of social injustice, as has happened during the apartheid era in South Africa (Kritzinger 1994:82).

Liberal theology tends to accommodate the view of evil as operating in corporate form and in its praxis calls for action to address evil in social structures and institutions by exposing the oppressive practices and empowering the poor. However, when it focuses on correcting social evil at corporate level, it ignores the evil of individual sin. This reflects a major weakness of its approach. Linthicum (:45) is correct in his argument that the scriptures deal with both personal and corporate sin. The evil in the city is not only a reflection of personal sin collectively, but it is also perpetuated by structures and institutions that seem to have "a life of their own" (quoted by Durkheim in Campolo 2002:249). Linthicum (1991:47) identifies three primary systems that make a city function: political, economic and religious. These systems are interrelated. By examining these systems, we can come to understand the nature of evil in the city. These three primary systems of any given city can work together in holy alliance for the benefit of people or can turn into an evil system for "the economic privilege of a few while exploiting the poor and powerless, using the political order to further such exploitation while maintaining a city's order and turning faith commitment into formalized religion that legitimizes 'the powers that be' while benefiting from the powers' largess" (:63).

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capital, and the regulation of socio-economic relationships (ibid). At the most general level, "neoliberalism has been named by David Harvey as a global project to restore, to renew, and expand the conditions for capital accumulation and, in related fashion, to restore power to economic elites (or to establish it where it did not already exist)" (ibid). Critics perceive neoliberalism as a tool for accumulating wealth and income by the rich and powerful elites.

A broader theological perspective is important in understanding how structures and institutions can have a capacity to perpetuate evil in the city and how the church can respond to these challenges in its role as a prophetic agent of God's mission in the society. God is not interested in transforming individuals only, but social structures of the society as well. The church is called to play a very significant role in this mission of God in the city rather than a passive and helpless spectator.

Evil as demonic powers: There is another theological view that looks at the reality of evil and decadence in the city beyond the personal and the structural and institutional terms. It sees evil in the city as the work of invisible demonic forces that seem to manipulate the institutional structures to oppose the kingdom of God (Campolo 2000:245; Linthicum 1991:67; Grigg 1992:148).[29] Campolo, Linthicum and Grigg hold this perspective in their urban theology. This view interprets Ephesians 6:10-18 as pointing to Satan and the powers of darkness for causing suffering and pain in human life. In relation to city, they gain control over the societal structures and institutions, which are ordained by God for the good of human beings, and turn them into an instrument of oppression and evil. According to Campolo, those who look at life with a modern empirical lens tend to look at the social urban problems at visible level, failing to recognise the possibility of invisible demonic powers in control of structural evils which are so visibly evident. Campolo claims that some of the prominent theologians like Hendrick Berkoff, Walter Wink and Albert van den Heuvel, are beginning to recognise the "principalities and powers" in Pauline's theology in Ephesians 6:11 as possible links to evil spirits. Campolo (2000:247) writes, "The idea that demonic forces might pervade the institutional structures of a societal order and constrain those who live within that

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[29] The concept of good and evil in African cosmology is explained by the philosophy of *vital force* by Placid Tempels in his book *Bantu Philosophy* (1959). The good is perceived as anything that promotes a life of fulfilment and abundance with the capacity not just to survive but to be protected while one continues life for the benefit of posterity. Tempels (1959:46) writes, "Supreme happiness, the only kind of blessing is, to the Bantu, to possess the greatest vital force: the worst misfortune is, he thinks, the diminution of this power." Anything that diminishes this vital force, like sickness, depression, or disappointment and other is considered as evil (:47). According to Mbiti (1990:78-79), spirits are usually associated with evil or agents of evil: "people fear them".

social system to behave in ways that bring destruction on themselves and on others is gaining credibility these days".

Linthicum (1991:66) strongly believes that this Pauline theology which seriously takes into consideration the possibility of powers and forces beyond the normal human realm is valid and very helpful for understanding the dynamics of evil and good in our cities. Much of Pauline theology as reflected in his nine letters originated from the context of urban ministry. Linthicum (ibid) points out that "Paul developed a theology that analyzed the systems of city and empire and presented principles and strategies for undertaking ministry in that light. In summary (:68-72), Pauline theology conveys that the principalities and powers are created by God, but they are captured by Satan and are now being used for his evil purpose.[30] However, the Christ has come to conquer the sin of the powers and set them free from their own bondage. Through Christ, the church is called to confront these powers and systems and seek their transformation from the bondage of evil ones. In support of this theological position on empirical grounds, Griggs (1992:148), speaking from his personal experience and observation while working in the slums of Calcutta and Manila, claims, "I do not know of a single church among [the] poor in any of the cities I have studied that has not been planted in the midst of signs of healing, deliverance, and miracles".

This theological view of evil that sees powerful spirits either exercising control or influence over social structures and institutions has greatly influenced the Argentinean born evangelist Ed Silvoso's ministry of church planting in cities. He writes, in his book *That None Should*

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[30] In Judeo-Christian tradition, Satan is referred to as the supreme embodiment of evil. The word is derived from Hebrew *shetan* (satan), an adversary, especially one who plots against another. In the Old Testament it is used of an angelic being hostile to God. Another word, *devil,* derived from Greek term *diabolos,* referred to the chief of the fallen angels. In Genesis 3 the serpent is often traditionally identified as the Devil or Satan, a crafty deceiver by nature. The New Testament expresses the later Jewish teaching on the devil, a being who opposes Jesus and his kingdom. Source: Cross & Livingstone (2005:578, 1466). *The Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd Edition revised. London: Oxford University Press.

Perish (1994: 98), "In order to reach our cities for Christ, the Church must engage and defeat the occupying army of demons under Satan's command who are blinding the lost to the light of the gospel….This means warfare, spiritual warfare." Silvoso ministry follows the methodology of a prayer-based approach to evangelism, confronting the demonic strongholds over the city's structures and institutions. Besides prayer, he calls for unity among the city churches and leaders. "When the Church in the city drinks of the cup together and shares the same bread, something happens in the heavenly places that undermines Satan's power over the Church and, eventually, the city" (:248).

Although this theological position has a strong biblical basis, the danger of this theological perspective of evil in the city in the African context is that it greatly appeals to the spiritual sensitivity of African people who have a tendency to explain phenomena in life as caused by supernatural powers (Mbiti 1990:73). Even churches are not immune to it. From the author's personal observation, some Christians in Nairobi churches, especially from evangelical and Pentecostal/charismatic traditions, are in the habit of blaming their urban woes on Satan and demons while ignoring the real abuses in the city's structures and institutions due to high-level corruption and mismanagement. Sometimes they do not see themselves as personally responsible in contributing to evil in the city, whether through ignorance or by compromising with the system. As a result, they seldom become involved in voicing objections against the evils of corruption, injustice and abuses in the political and economic life of the city and the country. They often pray for the spiritual and economic healing of the city, but have taken very little initiative in confronting the powers and principalities of the city which have fallen under the dominion of invisible evil forces. It appears that they expect God to solve their social problems without committing themselves to social action.

What can the church do? Tony Campolo (2002:243) and others, like Silvoso, advocate a strategy of exposing the lies perpetuated by those in power and in institutions with truth,

"Christians should recognize that in challenging the evils that are inherent in the structural systems of social institutions, truth is our greatest ally." This requires diligence in pursuing truth through research and study. It is a step forward but more needs to be done, especially in the African context. The church has not yet learned to exercise its role of prophetic ministry in the public arena, especially as related to urban issues. For example, apart from some charitable work, the church has hardly raised an issue with the government concerning the lack of basic services in slum areas, where more than 50 percent of the people in Nairobi live.

In summary, in its urban theology, the church must recognise evil in the individual person and by all means preach the gospel to seek conversion of souls through repentance and faith in Christ. At the same the churches must address evil in the structures and institutions of the city through prayer and bold creative action. The churches in Nairobi must realise that they have a power and influence over the city. God has called them to represent his kingdom in the city. It means that they are called to engage in the battle with the forces that oppose God's kingdom. Through confidence in Christ's victory and power, the churches must continue to persist in the struggle to overcome these forces until the city comes under the full dominion of God's kingdom.

2.3.2 Urbanisation: How is it affecting youth in Nairobi?

Urbanisation definitely affects people who live in the urban environment for a longer period of time. It changes lifestyle, manners, character, values and outlook on life (worldview). This part of Chapter Two broadly examines how the youth are affected by virtue of living and growing in the city. Although urbanisation covers a wide range of subjects and issues, this study limits its scope by examining the subject according to three broad thematic categories that seem to provide an adequate understanding of the context that relates to urban youth: Migration, Poverty, and Modernisation.

2.3.2.1   Migration from rural to urban

It was pointed out earlier in the discussion that Nairobi is a city of youth. Young people under the age of 30 represent eighty percent of the city population. The current population of Nairobi is close to three million (9 percent of the country's population) or even more. It is projected to grow very rapidly. It is estimated that the city's population will reach fifteen million by the year 2020 and that more than half of the Kenyan population will be living in urban areas by the year 2025 (Barrett 2001:585). Many observers of urban growth have attributed migration from the rural areas as the primary cause of the mushrooming population of the cities in many third world countries over the last few decades (Grigg 1992:28). Although natural growth through birth adds to the population growth, the cities attract more young people from rural area where jobs are few and the land is not available for further expansion. It is a sobering challenge to think of the resulting impact of population growth on the infrastructure of the city and on the quality of life of its inhabitants. If this growth continues as it is projected, then it seems obvious that young people would be affected the most. Among the many factors responsible for rural urban migration are limited farm land, jobs, education, media, roads, and family connections

In Kenya, the majority of the migrants who came to the city in past decades were male. According to the Daystar Survey of 1989, two out of every three migrants, were men and 90 percent were under thirty years of age (1989:13). The reason then was that many single and married men came to the city to seek work. Married men often left their wives in their villages. This ratio is gradually changing now because the gender gap between men and women has been narrowing with more young women also moving into the city looking for jobs and education. The 1999 Central Bureau of Statistics information on economic activity reflected a very small gap between male and female.

In addition to finding work, many young people come to the city for better education. In Kenya, the standard of education in urban areas is considered to be higher and job prospects better than in rural areas (Shorter 1991:17). Nairobi, as an important educational centre in the country, attracts young people from all over Kenya on account of educational opportunities.

The media, through radio, television, films, magazines, and the newspaper, play an important role in raising young people's expectations in the rural areas. It projects the city as an attractive place where life is filled with excitement. Among many other factors, like jobs and education, some young people see the city as a place to experience freedom from social constraints in close-knit rural communities (ibid).

In recent years, new highways to rural towns have made it easy for people to travel. Fifty years ago, most rural areas in Kenya were not as easily accessible as now. Most people in rural areas did not have cash income towards travelling. In recent times, modern transportation systems and roads have brought the rural world closer to the city. Many young people therefore find it easy to travel and move to the city in the hope of finding a promising future. Shorter (ibid) remarks, "…in Africa today towns are no longer alien place[s] for most people."

Urban-rural connection is a unique African reality. Unlike in First World cities where urban dwellers are hardly connected with rural communities, people in African cities are socially connected with their rural counterparts. Shorter has done extensive study on the relationship between urban and rural connection. From his observations he writes, "If there is one characteristic that stands out as differentiating African towns from those in other continents, it is that there are close socio-economic ties between urban and rural areas in Africa" (1991:14). These rural-urban ties are often strongly expressed when one is asked to identify where one considers his home to be. People often refer to the parental or ancestral village as their home, especially among the adult population. This perception is changing among the youth. Not

everyone thinks of the rural areas as his/her home. In the survey questionnaire distributed by the author to over 1400 youth, a question asked "Where do you consider as your home?" Close to 48 percent indicated their home as town or city versus 52 percent who said rural area. This is an interesting shift in the youth's perception of home. Shorter's comment "The basic truth is that African town dwellers never really sever their ties with the rural homeland" may be true for adults who grew up in rural communities, but for many young people who were born and grew up in the urban environment, the city has become their home. It seems that the forces of urbanisation tend to weaken people's ties with their traditional roots. "Home" is a very powerful symbol of one's sense of identity and belonging. For anyone to say that "my home is Nairobi" is a strong indicator of the effect of urbanisation. One has truly become a town-dweller. It is no longer valid to make the statement "African town dwellers are basically rural-to-urban migrants" (ibid). This trend is changing as more and more young people are making the city their home.

One should note that, although a great number of young people live in the city, not all of them experience the effects of urbanisation in the same way. Each of them experiences different levels of urbanisation, depending on many other factors besides geographical location. Social location, economic status and level of education can greatly affect how an individual is affected by urbanisation. Some may have lived in the city for many years but their life orientation remains very rural. A young migrant who has lived in the city for a long period of time in a community that maintains a rural lifestyle and connections is more likely to remain rural in his outlook and behaviour than one who goes to a college and adapts to a social group that is modern in its thinking and lifestyle. The degree of urbanisation depends on several factors in addition to living in the city and the length of time. Some of the factors are education, job, socio-economic status, social and religious environment, media, and others.

There are youth who come from villages to Nairobi for work or education, who do not desire to be a part of the urban life. They resist the pressure to be conformed to urban values and

outlook. In order to maintain their rural values, they speak their tribal language, using English or Swahili only where it is necessary. They maintain their physical surroundings as rural way as possible. They may grow vegetables, keep chickens, or goats if they have open space. Even their diets may resemble what they eat in their rural homes. It is most likely that they would attend a church where the members come from their home areas. They would try to maintain their rural setting as much as possible while living in the city. They are generally characterised as 'backward', unskilled people by many urban dwellers because they do not share the progressive value of modernisation. This attitude is prevalent among the youth who consider themselves urban.

During the interview with one youth leader who was a university student, the author wanted to know how one could identify a student who has rural orientation in lifestyle and outlook. He mentioned that rural students are known by the way they use the language. Among themselves, they would speak their tribal language. Among the urban-oriented students, they would speak English or Swahili. Taking the cue from this student, the author included the question "What language do you often use when you speak with your close friends?" in his survey questionnaire. Close to nine percent of the respondents said they speak their tribal language among themselves. This confirms that there are youth in the city who desire to retain strong rural ties while living in the urban environment, especially when they are with their tribal group. The majority prefers to be integrated in the urban setting. In the survey, more than 31 percent of respondents indicated that they speak *Sheng* among their friends. Sheng, an urban language, is a mixture of Swahili and English, as was explained earlier. Most adults are horrified to hear young people speak Sheng as they see it as corrupting Swahili and English. Speaking Sheng is a strong indicator that urban youth are forging their own identity beyond their tribal linkage and rural connection. It shows that nearly one third of youth now consider the city to be their home, a place to which they perceive themselves to belong, rather than their rural homes of their parents. It is a significant shift in youth's attitude towards their traditional rural link. For the church to minister to these emerging

urbanised young people, the leadership has to take this contextual factor into consideration in creating discipleship communities in order to be relevant.

2.3.2.2   Urban Poverty

The subject of poverty always seems to come up in connection with any given social issue in African context; it is an unavoidable subject. Among the long list of problems related to the urban setting, poverty can be listed as the mother of all. The subject of poverty is broad and complex and much has been written on this topic. However, in order to keep the subject within the scope of this study, this section will limit the discussion to how urbanisation contributes to economic poverty and how the youth are being affected by it in various aspects of life: work, housing, family, health, security and others. The aim is to understand how the overall social context is impacted by poverty in relation to urbanisation. Since we live in a global village, urbanisation should be seen in relation to globalisation and other forces beyond the national border. Such broader contextual understanding is important for the church as it engages in developing a community of discipleship among its youth. Throughout the study, the term poverty is used in its economic sense of material poverty or income poverty.

Although the term *poverty* is hard to define because it is relative to one's perception in the social and cultural context, a descriptive definition of poverty based on absolute income is used in this study as a more reliable way to describe urban poverty in Africa.[31] In African urban contexts, poverty can be described as a state or condition when people struggle to meet their basic daily needs, such as food, clothing, housing, security, healthcare and education. These needs are important for one's sense of wellbeing in the city. When people are unable

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[31] According to Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2001:1889), income poverty is typically defined by official thresholds. Those families whose income falls above the poverty line are considered 'not poor' whereas families whose incomes are below the threshold are considered 'poor'. Two general types of thresholds are used: absolute and relative. Absolute poverty thresholds are based on an absolute level of resources; as such, a family's poverty status is not (influenced of other families' incomes. A relative poverty threshold is measured by comparing a family's resources to that of the average family. These thresholds normally are defined by half of the median or mean income of all households in the respective countries. Most of the European countries tend to use the relative scale to measure poverty.

to meet these needs, they experience absolute poverty. According to the UNDP report of 1995, 37 percent of the population of Kenya lived below the national poverty line, with an average per capita income of $238 per year (Gakuru 2001:53). According to Gakuru's assessment (:56-57), a sociologist from the University of Nairobi, the standard of life of the average person in Kenya has not improved in the last two decades, but has become worse. A study conducted in 1998 on household budgets showed that the largest share of the expenses (75%) was spent on food, a clear indication of a very high level of poverty (:56). In contrast to rural poverty, poverty in the urban setting is directly linked to monetary income. Almost everything in the urban area requires money. That means one must have a source of income in order to survive. Therefore, the urban poor face greater hardship than their rural counterparts.

2.3.2.2 (i)   Population growth and urban poverty

In spite of harsh reality of life in the cities, in the last few decades many cities in Third Word countries have experienced a great influx of people from rural areas. This rapid surge in the population growth of cities has been identified as one of the primary factors contributing to poverty in many Third World cities; it is especially evident in burgeoning slums and shanty towns. Griggs (1992:11) in *Cry of the Urban Poor* captures the flow of rural migration into the destitute urban slums of mushrooming cities graphically in a moving description:

> If the destitution of the urban poor is staggering in itself, their numerical growth is just as devastating. Since World War II, an endless convoy of smoke-belching, overladen, chicken-squawking bus after bus have careened down newly-constructed highways into the mega-city capitals of the Third World, disgorging crowds of wide-eyed impoverished farmers and teenagers looking for the next step towards affluence (or, more likely, poverty) in the squatter areas. Wherever land can be found, huts and plywood shacks go up. Few governments have the capacity to prevent it or to provide services for the people arriving. The majority of new arrivals remain in squatter areas. Each capital city will continue to grow exponentially as it exploits the resources of its rural hinterland.

This account gives a true picture of many newly arriving migrants in Nairobi and other African cities. Each day hundreds of young people enter crowded cities like Nairobi, Lagos,

Kinshasa, Dar-es-Salaam and others in search of jobs and a better life. Such migration has created a situation that has caused greater poverty because the jobs are scarce and the urban resources are stretched to the limit. Shorter (1991:9) paints a very grim picture of African urban reality when he says, "African countries are poor and high urban growth rates mean that there is a higher concentration of poverty in the towns. Unlike, the urban poor of Latin American cities who are a distinct and visible minority, the vast majority, perhaps 70 percent, of African urban dwellers are poor." Although Shorter wrote this more than a decade ago, the image accurately describes Nairobi today, where the majority are very poor and live in crowded slums under sub-human conditions. Kibera, a slum of Nairobi in which more than 800,000 people live together under overcrowded conditions was mentioned in the first section of this chapter,. More slums have been added each year wherever empty public land is found. In most of these places, sanitation and water are often lacking because government sees such places as squatter land and find no legal justification to assist the poor and destitute residents of these places. Often the government officials do not seem to care for such poor slum dwellers. Very little foreign donors' money reaches them due to high level of corruption.

With scarcity of land to accommodate the ever-increasing population, many poorly constructed high-rise buildings have been cropping up in low-income areas. Five- to seven-story buildings are commonly visible now. In those buildings, poor tenants rent single or double rooms. It is not common for a family of four or five to be crammed into one room. These kinds of high-rise slums have been contributing to higher population density in areas with inadequate infrastructure to sustain a basic decent living with human dignity. Urban living for many poor and low-income people in Nairobi has become a bitter daily struggle for survival. Unless the government does something to improve the infra-structure of the city, urbanisation will add still more social problems in the near future as more people will try cram in to places with no further room for expansion— appalling living conditions like in Calcutta, where more than 200,000 permanently live on the streets, may become a reality in Nairobi in another decade (Grigg 1992:40). Du Bose (1984:58) is right in saying that "the

greatest concentration of poverty the world over is found in the slums", especially the cities of the Third World where the poverty-related social challenges are staggering.

The growing population in Nairobi and other African cities as well as other Third World cities has obviously been identified as a primary contributing factor to urban poverty. In contrast to the developed world, where urbanisation came about in response to industrial growth over the last two centuries, urbanisation in Africa brought expansion of population without a sustainable economic base (Grigg 1992:34). Du Bose (1984:56) also voices a similar argument when he says, "The cities of the Third Word have developed in history more from a political than economic process. They developed from a ruler's decision, not from a revolutionary economic process, as in the case of the industrialized cities of the North Atlantic world."

Historically, the cities, as a seat of political and economic power, were meant to serve a ruling class. Cities were divided into the elite and the poor with a small middle class population. The poor lived there to provide services for the elite, as in colonial cities. Economically, most cities were trading centres, so the need for labour was limited. With industrialisation, cities in Europe were transformed into manufacturing centres. Since the industries needed much labour, the population of the city grew in proportion to the demand. The middle class gradually grew in numbers as the demand for managerial and technical services increased.

In the African context, most cities existed as political and trading centres with little or no industrial base. After independence, the numbers of people entering the cities became more than the jobs that could be created for them.   With the abundance of labour, wages declined. Poverty was inevitable. The poor became poorer. This situation has become worse due to the continuing rural to urban migration. In addition to high migration from rural to urban areas, a high birth rate has also compounded the problem of urban poverty in many Third World cities

(:58). This has resulted in a sharp division between the have's and the have not's in most of the Third-World cities.

In addition to the above-mentioned problems, the Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) guided by the policies and ideals of neo-liberalism has exacerbated the condition of the majority of Kenya's population in recent years (Kulkarni 2005:15). Kulkarni and Fogelberg (ibid) argue that the primary interest of neo-liberalism is to promote market for capital growth at the cost of human capital. As the government follows the policy of economic privatisation, it tends to ignore the social needs of large numbers of people who are poor. For example, in the face of the recent health crisis related to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, the poor have not benefited from the SAP because of the forced retrenchment of workers in order to run the government and corporations efficiently and profitably. The effect of the SAP has been felt all levels in the urban population with the increase unemployment. However, the SAP has been regarded as beneficial for the economy that seems to favour the affluent minority who are able to enjoy greater profit and capital growth.

Since the majority of the residents of Nairobi are youth with very limited resources, they experience the brunt of poverty that causes them to lose their hope. It dehumanises them when they are unable to find adequate shelter, clothes and food. Ndirangu (2000:82), a youth counsellor, reports that Nairobi alone has over 50,000 street children. Some of them dropped out of school. In order to find food and clothes they roam the streets. Some become beggars or participate in criminal activities involved with drugs, prostitution, theft, and so on. They have become a social menace to the city and have turned the city centre into an unsafe place for the public. Many poor young girls who are unable to feed their young children turn their children into the streets to beg or to feed themselves. The youth receive very little support from the government or welfare agencies. The local government has not been able to deal with the problem due to a lack of economic resources and political interest. Most of the agencies' resources are stretched beyond their capacity, which means that they are unable to

offer any help to the needy young. Contrary to the high expectations of a good life in the city, many young people end up as part of the destitute crowd in the growing slums of Nairobi. The description portrays a very bleak picture of life of most of the urban youth.

It is sobering to note how the effects of poverty are deeply felt by many youth in Nairobi who are not in the limelight of media coverage because they do not have any voice to draw attention to their plight. In the following discussion, the study continues to examine the implications of urban poverty under the topics of family, health, and crime.

2.3.2.2 (ii)   Effects of poverty on social and family life

It is the poverty that results from urbanisation that deeply affects the youth's perception of themselves. The youth is generally characterised as optimistic and full of promising life; "It can be said without any doubt, that youth in Africa is *that period when young adults are most colorful, vibrant, experimental, creative, challenging, and sometimes risky and chaotic* [italics in text]*"* (Bahemuka 1999:105). However, in modern African urban society, poverty brings much disorientation and stress to young people as it destabilises all aspects of life. It causes them to question their self-identity as they compare themselves with others. In rural community, most people are usually at the same socio-economic level. Therefore, the perception of being poor seldom affects one's sensibility and dignity. Against such a background, "[p]artial or full detribalization often makes for a deep identity crisis and a loss of sense of community and belonging. This result can be devastating in terms of social and cultural alienation" (Du Bose 1984:54).

Most African young people who are accustomed to having a secure and stable extended family in close proximity and having a deep sense of belonging usually find urban life very disturbing and intimidating to their sense of wellbeing. Urbanisation tends to promote an independent, self-seeking lifestyle which tends to undermine family ties. In the urban environment, it becomes harder to maintain close family ties due to constant job and

residential shifts. Aunts and uncles no longer live nearby. Grandparents are far away; often in their rural homes. Most families tend to define their family boundary in nuclear terms, limiting them to parents and their children due to economic reality and tight housing situation. Those who are born and grow up in the city live with their parents. But those youth who come from rural areas may find it difficult to move in with their relatives. Sometimes they are not welcomed because of limited space and economic hardship. They may feel rejected or feel as imposing a great financial burden on their host. Life is quite expensive in the city and many of their relatives live in crowded quarters. Some live in a single room and do not have enough space to accommodate another person. Some may out of obligation provide an accommodation for a few days or weeks until they find a job and a place to stay.

Family ties are often loosened in the urban setting as individuals struggle to provide for their own needs. Since the obligation to help one's relative is such a strong African value, it often comes into conflict with urban reality. In the survey questionnaire, when the youth were asked "When a relative comes to my place, I feel under obligation to help the relative" 67 percent responded positively. They are willing to help their needy relatives. However, 21 percent responded negatively and 12 percent were not sure. Those with rural upbringing were more willing to help their needy relatives than those who grew up in the city. There was a difference of ten per cent in their attitude. In light of traditional African commitment to hospitality, such a response is a significant indicator of the effect of urbanisation in eroding this value. In rural society it would be unthinkable to deny help to one's kin. They are always welcome. However, urban life makes it very difficult to welcome one's relative with open arms. The obligation to help a relative is still strong value in the city but with some reservation. Relatives are helped as much as one is able to, but with some sacrifice. Those who have poor relatives living in slums, are most likely to go there when they arrive in the city and eventually learn to adapt to slum life, unless they are fortunate enough to find a good paying job that allows them to escape the poverty and life in the slum.

It is evident from the above discussion that urban poverty not only challenges family ties but also undermines the cultural value of caring for one another.

2.3.2.2 (iii) Health and disease

Due to urban poverty, poor people often suffer diseases and sicknesses which are unavoidable because of the crowded and unhygienic conditions where pollution is very high. As a result, many young people suffer from intestinal and respiratory diseases. Lacking financial resources, they often fail to receive medical treatment. In the city, the cost of medical care is very high. Government health care facilities are often ill-equipped, and often poor people fail to receive adequate medical care. Patients sometimes have to buy their own medicines, which is beyond the means of many poor. According to one doctor,[32] seven children die daily in Kibera due to the poverty of parents who cannot afford to buy antibiotics for their sick children.

Besides unavoidable diseases and sickness due to poverty, some youth contract diseases through wrong lifestyle choices. Urbanisation tends to provide a greater freedom from social bonds and moral constraints when people move into the city away from their tightly knit community. In the city people hardly know their neighbours. This provides some young people with the freedom to do what they wish. Often it leads to a lifestyle which has the potential to contract diseases. Then there are other diseases to which young people are susceptible or which are due to an irresponsible lifestyle and unprotected sexual activity. Although HIV-AIDS is prominent among them, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are harmful as well. According to health experts, a high percentage of young people in Kenya are infected with HIV-AIDS. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya is in the forefront of the HIV-AIDS epidemic (Williams 1997:1). According to the National AIDS Control Council (NACC), an estimated 2.2 million Kenyans are infected and 1.5 million have already died

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[32] The information obtained from Dr. Max Calison, who worked in a church-sponsored Tumaini Clinic in the Kibera slum (Interview in Nairobi January 2001).

(NCPD 2003:10). The majority of them are young people. The public health survey shows that the knowledge of AIDS is almost universal among the youth. In Nairobi, 99.6% of the respondents indicated that they had heard about it and 94% of them know how to avoid it, according to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey 2003 (KDHS 2003:27). Lack of knowledge is not the main factor in the spread of the disease. The KDHS (:32) test results showed that more than 12 percent of the infected sample population in urban areas were HIV positive. The percentage of young women in the age bracket of fifteen to twenty-nine who were HIV positive was almost two times higher than in the case of men. Sexual contact is cited by National Council of Population and Development (2003:11) as the primary vehicle of contracting HIV virus, followed by infected blood transfusion. These statistics are alarming.

HIV/AIDS is a silent killer. Each year thousands of young people succumb to it. Since it does not make newspaper headlines, it seems to be at the margins of life. Most of the deaths resulting from HIV-AIDS are reported as 'long illnesses. This conspiracy of silence was only recently broken in Nairobi by Paul Tito Amukuba's family when they made an announcement of his death in the local media with a red ribbon on either sides indicating that he died of HIV/AIDS (Maisha Magazine, 2002:29). This bold move by the family brought unusual reaction from friends and relatives. It was hard to overcome the social stigma in the minds of many people when they read the announcement.

Apart from having to overcome the social stigma, HIV also adds high social and financial cost to families and businesses. Many families are ruined financially by having to pay high medical costs. In Kenya, parents often invest in their children in the hope that they will eventually take care of them. They are losing their social security net, often ending up with the additional burden of caring for a sick son or daughter, sometimes even grandchildren. The social cost of these diseases is very heavy when it stretches the resources of the extended family to its limit. It affects everyone socially and economically (Shorter 1997:108). Charles Nzioka (2001:66) reports that HIV/AIDS affects the business sector in many ways: it raises

the cost of labour, cuts into company profit, adds the extra cost of training new workers to replace the lost workers and increases labour turnover.

Poor youth seem to be the most vulnerable to HIV, with poverty forcing many young girls into prostitution (Bahemuka 1999:112). Shorter (1991:51) mentions that "The absence of normal family relationships and the morally disorienting experience of the shanty-towns favour sexual promiscuity. This also means that the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases is high." Socially, the youth are deeply affected by these diseases. They are filled with anxiety, fear and insecurity. Often they desire to get married but are not sure whether their partner is infected. Since many youth are sexually active, there is good reason to suspect of the possibility of being infected. The HIV virus often remains dormant for some time. So even if the partners agree to be tested, they cannot be sure of being free from diseases. Sometimes these tests are not reliable either. Often, young people are reluctant to be tested; they do not want to find out the truth and they fear that it will bring social stigma, loss of job or shame.

One young university student shared his deep anxiety about finding a mate with the author. He saw several of his peers dying in his village because of HIV-related diseases. He was very scared of getting married. In the city, young people hardly know each other's background or past history. Too often they enter into a marriage relationship without any precaution and find themselves with the disease. It adds a great amount of suffering to one's life and to others in an already stressful urban environment.

According to recent Daystar Survey indicated that youth in Nairobi acquire much of the information on sex through the mass media or from their peers are heavily influenced by the cultural values of modernity (Chandran 2004:29). Nearly 40 percent of the youth who responded to the survey seemed to favour sexual intercourse outside of marriage (:30). In terms of sexual morality, the youth are seemed to be confused. This shows that most young

people are not informed about responsible sexual orientation as in the traditional societies of the past (Williams 1997:7). The church clearly is not providing guidance in what is right and what is wrong (Chandran 2004:31). This is where church youth ministry can effectively address the concerns of the youth in Nairobi by providing guidance and counselling in order to safeguard the health of youth.

2.3.2.2 (iv)　　　Violence, crime and drug abuse

Besides diseases and sickness in the African urban context, urbanisation is seen as creating a condition of extensive poverty and unemployment which are now considered to be the main contributing factors to violence, along with drug and alcohol abuse (APFO 1999:15). Nairobi has its fair share of violence and an accompanying crime rate because of the high rate of unemployment and poverty among the youth. According to a research study conducted by Africa Peace Forum, 65 percent of violence is attributed to poverty (:16).

R.K. Merton, a sociologist from the functionalist perspective, in the 1930s developed the *structural theory of crime* (Court 1997:149) an explanation of crime in terms of the structure and culture of society. According to his theory, society defines success in terms of material possessions like having a car, a nice home, expensive clothes, etc. These goals entice everyone in the society to reach for them; however, in reality the means for getting them are not available to many people. As legitimate means to obtain them are not successful in many cases, some people resort to ways which are contrary to the established rules in society and can be considered as crime or unacceptable behaviour.

Merton's theory is quite applicable to understanding the level of crime and violence in a city like Nairobi where the material resources are scarce. Most of the resources are in the hands of the few affluent groups. The vast majority (70%) must compete for the remaining meagre resources to satisfy their needs and dreams. The media, through billboards, television, radio, magazines and newspapers, create an impression that one must acquire consumer products or

attain educational degrees in order to be happy and satisfied. When young people are exposed to these goals, which are beyond their economic capacity to attain, they may respond to one of the following ways: decide to work hard, feel discouraged or resort to crime.

Some may respond to the challenge of attaining the promised economic benefits by choosing to work hard in a legitimate way, with the hope of some day achieving them. In Nairobi some young people venture out as vendors on the streets, selling all sorts of things. Some find odd jobs to do. Others build things from scrap. Many run small kiosks or small repair shops (known as *juakali* in Swahili). All these activities are part of the informal economic structure of the city. Many thousands of youth find some meaningful way of earning some money to provide for their needs as well as for their families.

There are some who give up after 'tarmacking' (searching for jobs) in vain for weeks and months. They become very discouraged and feel hopeless. Many who come from rural areas come with high expectations of success in the city. Often their parents and relatives expect them to earn a lot of money to help pay for their siblings' school fees. Often they do not want to go back to their rural homes to face rejection when they are poor. In the city they also feel lonely and rejected. Many of them become victims of drug abuse, alcoholism or criminal activities.

There are those who, according to Merton, fail to obtain the promised good life with legitimate methods and decide to get it by illegal means. They may resort to violence and criminal activity. Since urbanisation undermines social closeness and family accountability, some youth are tempted to join groups or gangs that provide them a sense of belonging as well as ill-gotten wealth through criminal activities, like stealing and carjacking. A recent study on violence indicated that poverty itself may not cause violence but when it is linked with a lack of social connection, the chances of participation in violent acts increase (APFO

1999:45). In the city, economic hardship and social fragmentation can easily lead young people to violence and crime.

When youth, due to poverty, are enticed into participating in illegal activities, they themselves become the victims of various crimes, besides theft and robbery. Many fall prey to quick money making bogus schemes or conmen. Some youth are exploited by drug dealers to do the dirty job of selling illicit drugs. Often young girls are brought into the city with a promised job and forced into the sex trade under the threat of violence or the promise of reward. Youth growing up in the city therefore often feel insecure and doubtful about themselves. They find it increasingly difficult to trust others and institutions, including the church.

As family and religious ties weaken, young people become more vulnerable to the detrimental forces of urbanisation that promise to fill the social and psychological vacuum. Drug abuse has become a major problem among the poor urban youth, even though many youth know that alcohol and hard drugs have negative consequences. The Daystar Youth Survey (Mburu 1998:26) indicated that a fourth of their respondents drank alcohol and over 12 percent admitted to taking hard drugs. However, the problem is more prevalent than the survey indicated. Products like glue, petrol, cocaine, pan, mandrax, heroin and locally brewed beer are commonly available to youth in the streets of Nairobi.

Drug abuse is not common among the poor youth only, but has permeated the affluent class of youth as well, with more sophisticated drugs. Drug peddlers are increasingly targeting these youth as a profitable market (Ndirangu 2000:6). Many of the youth start using drugs for fun in the beginning, under the influence of peer pressure. Gradually they crave for more until they become addicted. Ndirangu (ibid) has pointed out that one of the underlying reasons for drug abuse is the lack of parental love, which drives many youth to seek comfort in drugs. He was alarmed to find the rapidly growing local drug market that he observed. Due to

corruption and lack of resources, the government is not adequately prepared to deal with this new dangerous phenomenon that is threatening the lives of urban youth.

Drugs are affecting Kenyan youth in many ways. It distorts their self-image and identity and destroys their moral foundations. Ultimately, what begins as fun and curiosity tends to lead them to a life of death and destruction. Ndirangu (:8) has reported that the youth who become involved with drug abuse usually come from relatively affluent homes where they experience problems with their parents. They tend to have a low self-image. Under the influence of peer pressure, they find drugs as a substitute to lift their spirits. Since their euphoric feelings do not last long, they crave for more to sustain the feeling of being in control and emotionally happy. Eventually they get hooked to the point of suffering terrible withdrawal effects when they do not use drugs.

Another reason for getting hooked on drugs is that some youth lack the confidence to say 'no' to their friends who offer them drugs. Youth generally desire to be included and to be liked by their friends. Friends introduce them to experimenting with drugs. After several experiments with soft drugs, they are easily led to experiment with hard drugs like cocaine. Since it is a costly habit, drug peddlers seek out customers with money. Such a habit tends to lead youth into criminal activities (:12-15). Bhang, on the other hand, is easily available and quite cheap in Nairobi. Bhang and miraa (leaves for chewing) are usually used by youth who cannot afford expensive drugs like cocaine. Drugs also are commonly available even in primary and secondary schools. Students who use drugs often, usually experience a slump in their academic performance.

A few non-governmental organisations, like SCAD[33] (Students Campaign Against Drugs) are actively involved in helping young people by educating them about the harmful effects of drugs. SCAD's approach is to form clubs in secondary schools, using the peer-to-peer

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[33] Information on SCAD was obtained through direct interview with the head of SCAD in July 2006.

education approach in promoting a drug-free lifestyle among students, as well as to prevent HIV infection that would result from drugs and substance abuse. Organisations like SCAD could do more to help young people, but inadequate financial resources limit their service to a small segment of the secondary school population.

Getting involved with drugs, alcohol, criminal activities are symptoms of great underlying frustration among many people. Poverty has much to contribute to their frustration as they find no hope but endlessly struggle to survive in an oppressive urban environment. Sometimes unjust systems in the city can lead young people to great frustration as they see those who wield economic and political power serve the minority of affluent population while their needs are ignored. Those in power do not seem to attend to them. Their frustration can sometimes lead to demonstrations, riot, or even armed insurrection. Bahemuka (1999:110), being in sympathy with the youth, points her finger to those in authority for disregarding the plight of young people, "While the youth [are] rioting, decision makers are busy wondering what is wrong with the youth and not what is wrong with themselves."

In summary, this section of the chapter has examined the issues related to poverty in the city. Because of rapid migration of youth from rural to urban areas with limited industrial and commercial base to provide enough jobs, most of the migrants end up living in abject poverty in poor and crowded housing condition. In addition to the increasing population competing for limited jobs, the situation has also been worsened by the globalisation of the economy under the influence of neo-liberalism, which often caters to the demand of the market and seeks capital growth, which, in turn, tends to favour affluent investors with little interest in the social welfare of the poor masses. The present condition of poverty in the urban area has not only created harsh economic condition, but it has negatively affected the social and family ties as well, especially the cultural value of caring for one another. Both economic poverty and social alienation often lead many young people to adapt a lifestyle that exposes to diseases like HIV/AIDS and others. In addition to that most young people in urban

environment find themselves vulnerable to drug abuse, various kinds of crimes and violence. Often they find little help from the church or the government agencies. In this context the church is called to uplift those who are down and oppressed by the systems and structures and fight on behalf of the poor urban youth to protect them against the demonic forces that seem to manipulate the systems and power structures of the city that are oblivious to the plight of the poor.

On a positive note, urbanisation offers a bright and promising future to some. Those who are fortunate enough to obtain education, technical training or financial assistance to start a small business through the help of government, non-government agencies (NGOs) or relatives have been benefiting from the urban opportunities. However, they represent a small percentage of the urban youth.

2.3.2.3   The effect of urbanisation on the youth's identity

Urbanisation[34] is not simply a growth of population in the city or an urban expansion. It is an adaptation to a modern way of life as well. It brings a drastic change in social and cultural outlook with new values and attitudes in people.[35] Education and media play a crucial role in affecting these changes. Education and the media immerse most urban youth in the cultural values of modernity.

The nature of urbanisation as it is expressed today is deeply rooted in the socio-economic culture of Western modernism. Some of the values of modernism, like freedom of choice, personal autonomy, women's rights, and non-violence have contributed positively in the social development of the Western society; while others, like commercialism, individualism, materialism and secularism have been recognised as exercising a negative impact on human

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[34] In sociological terms, urbanisation is simply described as "the process whereby an increasing proportion of the population [is] living in towns and cities (Court 1997:288).
[35] Shorter (1991:26) takes into consideration the social and psychological aspect when he defines urbanisation as "basically a social process or consciousness, and that it has a marked effect on people's way of life."

society, and being especially "subversive to non-Western cultures" (Shorter 1991:26-27). Rasmussen (1993:21) also saw more harm than good in modernity as it is increasingly undermines the common good of human society. In a critique of modernity he says, "my conviction is that modernity, for all its splendid achievements, is killing us. It slowly devours its own children as well as the children of others" (ibid). Urbanisation by its very nature, as it pointed out above, promotes modernisation through socio-economic activities in all aspects of urban life in various ways. In the process, the values of modernity are promoted and reinforced continually through education and media. As a result, some of the values of traditional community "whose solidarity was based in kinship, ethnicity, and territorial identity" is greatly undermined (:36).

Self-autonomy, as one of the central tenets of the modern value system, encourages the individual to define his or her own identity (Bosch 1991:267). However, many African youth in the urban context find their self-identity in crisis as they stand at the crossroads of modern and traditional African cultural values. In traditional rural society the individual's identity is clearly defined for them by the extended family and community. Young people acquire a sense of identity through belonging to the group. The result is that a person seldom experiences social alienation. However, in the urban context no such structure available to give an individual a cohesive identity.[36] One of the many challenges of living in urban society is possible alienation. In the urban context one's sense of identity is fragmented in many ways because urban life is normally divided into several compartmented relationships or into multiple unrelated communities which are always in the state of flux. This affects the youth more as they search for a stable community to belong to in order to define personal identity at this stage of their life. According to Chepkwony (1996:27), "The identity crisis can be said to be the cause of practically all the problems affecting the youth." The absence of any one stable community to which youth can relate creates a serious identity crisis within them.

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[36] Identity: According to Rasmussen (1993:115) "Formed identity is the outcome of socialization, and socialization is largely carried out in and through various communities—including families, schools, and religious communities. Indeed identity formation is largely what moral communities are about."

From an African cultural perspective, relationship with others defines who a person is. In an ever-changing urban context, most young people yearn for a community to belong.

Young people experience a constant shift of identity as they move from one community to another. This can cause a perception of having many identities formed in various communities, with little sense of solidarity (Rasmussen 1993:115). For instance, many young people in Nairobi do not have any choice in where they want to live. They are forced by circumstances to live in slums in shacks with mud walls. They live among strangers from different tribes and ethnic groups who do not speak their own language. Their neighbours do not stay long enough in one place but often move. There is no social continuity and opportunity to develop friendships. Ironically, people in slums appear to live so close to one another, but often they feel socially isolated, not even knowing who their neighbours are. Even if a person is fortunate enough to live with one's relative or among the people of his or her own kind, those people are seldom around to share daily life together. Many of them work long hours to survive. There is very little time for social interaction. Urban realities force people to develop relationships at different levels. Many of these relationships are superficial or short term. At work one forms a friendship, which is often momentary in character. Such friendships often last as long as one's job lasts.

Even for those young people who can afford to go to school, relationships are often shallow and short term. Many young people may go to the same school, but may not attend the same class together. Some of them may share the same class but not for a long enough to build a meaningful friendship. Often, those classes are crowded. Because of the high mobility of students in school, one may meet many people but not find enough time for building a meaningful social relationship.

The above description of the reality of urban living has pointed to the alienating nature of urbanisation. Even in church, youth experience social alienation as they encounter impersonal

organisational and institutional structures and practices that seem to reinforce the modern culture of individualism rather than community solidarity. Besides many other factors, education and the media are seen as significant agents of urbanisation in promoting modern values among youth and in shaping their multiple identities.

2.3.2.3 (i) Education

Education plays a very significant role in the process of urbanisation. Aylward Shorter (1991:10) has seen education to be the same as urbanisation. John Aniagwa (1999:121) has pointed to how urbanisation has uprooted many young people from rural areas by promising western education, which is perceived by youth as a stepping stone to the promising life that the city offers. In Kenya, like in many parts of Africa, those who have secondary level education find the urban areas attractive, where job opportunities seem plenty, more difficult to resist. These educated youth often desire to escape rural conditions where opportunities are limited. Many young people turn their back on rural areas; they consider life in the rural areas as harsh and unrewarding (ibid). Those who can find good job are likely to settle down in the city. In most cases, they would invest their income in buying an apartment or a house in town and adapt to urban lifestyle quickly. As their children grow up in the urban way of life and are urbanised in their thinking and behaviour, they tend to lose ties with their rural community. The author has observed that most teens in Nairobi have difficulty relating to their parents' rural community, especially those who spent most of their formative years in the city.[37]

Social changes are affecting women increasingly also due to modern education. In the past, women moved to the city to join their husbands. But now educated girls are more likely to move to the city to join their family members or relatives while looking for jobs. The gender

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[37] In the survey questionnaire 69 percent of those who indicated that they spent the first fifteen years of life in the urban area considered the city as their home. In contrast the fourteen percent of those who indicated that they spent their first fifteen years of life in rural areas considered the city as their home. This shows how the urbanisation affects one's perception of the place of belonging in the early formative years.

gap between male and female is narrowing in the city, according to recent population statistics.[38]

Education exposes young people to greater social changes in urban setting. It promises a better job, more money and prosperity in town. It greatly affects one's values. It promises greater freedom to young people when they move to the city from the social constraints in a close-knit rural community (Shorter 1991:17). Education affects by creating different levels of sub-cultures within the youth group. Youth with university degrees may find it much easier to relate to the group with university level education than with secondary school level groups. According to Du Bose's (1984:55) observation, poverty maintains illiteracy, and illiteracy produces poverty in the urban environment; "A high illiteracy rate leaves most of the African urban poor—even the youth—with little hope for the future." In urban environment, therefore, education is looked upon as an invitation to a better life and future, a means to escape poverty. Because of this assumption, "[f]ormal Education in Africa is seen as the key that opens the gates to modernism. Parents are at pains to have their daughters and sons educated so that they can ultimately get white collar jobs, and raise the status and standard of living of their families" (Bahemuka 1999:111). This means that a great deal of pressure is placed upon youth to succeed in getting an education so that they can earn a lot of money. "Parents often frustrate, bully, abuse and generally dislocate youth's perspectives to the extent that the youth sees rural life as impossibility. The resultant frustrations lead the youth to crime, rejection, alcoholism, drug abuse and may be suicide" (ibid). Most young people want to be accepted and feel significant. Sometimes they go to extremes to please others. When parents demand that they, in order to be successful, have to get grade 'A' in all subjects. When they fail to meet their parents' expectations, they feel depressed and unloved because of the underlying assumption among most urban people that modern education leads to a happy life in the city.

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[38] According to the 1999 Report of the Central Bureau of Statistics of Kenya, 54% of the population of Nairobi is male and 46% female.

Understanding the impact of education as a vehicle of urbanisation is important in determining the context of urban community which youth can identify with.

2.3.2.3 (ii) Media

Next to education, the media greatly influences the youth's self-perception and identity. Mass media comprise the various forms of communication: printed matter like magazines and newspapers; radio, television, movies, Internet and billboard advertising, and others. Various theories seek to explain how the media affect people. One of these theories, *the cultural effects theory* seems to provide a better argument for how the media affect society, especially in affecting the value of the modern secular society. It explains that "the media has long-term, cumulative effects on people, which over a period of time may affect people's views and understanding of the social world" (Court 1997:312). In urban context, the media, along with education, deeply affects people's view of the world, values and behaviour.

The media often project images, lifestyles, or standards to the youth which they feel they must conform to in order to experience a fulfilled life. As they try to live up to unrealistic expectations or ideals, they experience burnout or a sense of failure. The author's observation is that the media portray a false image of youth in Nairobi as modern, educated, trendy and ambitious. Sometimes the youth are depicted as post-modern in their thinking and lifestyle. This reality it is far from the truth. It is a caricature of the image of Western youth, an imitation of the Western media that seems to have cultural hegemony of the world youth culture through Music Television (MTV) and other. It presents an exaggerated image of urban youth of Kenya, which could be true for a small minority of youth from an educated and affluent class who are presented as highly visible and influential icons to be imitated, as if they represent most of the urban youth. In reality, the vast majority of the young people are poor. They are found in low-income areas, often struggling to survive from day to day. These young people are not the main target of advertising agencies or media because they do not have enough money to spend.   Advertisements and media seldom acknowledge their

presence. Their target audience is middle and high income youth to whom they can sell their products. Media can create a false picture of urban youth culture which may be branded as modern and global. Such a culture is not found in the dusty crowded streets of Nairobi or in the vast slums where the majority of youth live, only in some middle income families or posh suburbs of Nairobi. The majority of the youth are marginalised both in the society and in the church. They are a silent majority whose voice is hardly heard.

Since the modern media are powerful in shaping young people's sense of reality and values in society, it has succeeded in assaulting the age-old traditional moral foundation and religious values all around the world (Senter 2001:118). It has promoted the philosophy of 'Do it if it feels good' among youth, regardless of moral consequences, by appealing to seek happiness and pleasure through music, drugs and sex. Youth without a firm moral anchor and sound ethical principles can be led into a world of contradictions "where things are said to be harmful yet they are glorified in the media as the adults practice them" (Ndirangu 2000:67).

On the one hand, the modern media have brought many benefits by providing access to information and entertainment. On the other hand, it has been responsible for many social problems by exposing youth to sex and violence. In the urban areas, pornographic material is widely available, like drugs, even though the sale of it is prohibited. Like drugs, pornography is addictive. While it costs a great deal of money to satisfy an addiction, pornography has undermined moral health among the youth. Constance Banzkiza (1999:46), in her attempt to control juvenile pregnancy, places some blame on pornographic material. She argues that such material encourage teenagers to imitate what they see so that sex becomes an obsession and a leisure activity.

Advertisers often use soft porn to attract the attention of the youth. Commercial firms spend million of dollars on television/radio advertising. Advertisements increasingly link products to sex. The extent to which sex and violence in the media is socially detrimental has been the

subject of an ongoing debate in Western society. However, in an African city like Nairobi where traditional values still dominate, such images can be offensive to people's moral sensibility. The point is that many young people in the urban environment are exposed to modern values that often contradict traditional values.

Apart from the visual media, music is also regarded as influential in affecting young people's values. Much of the Westernised music seems to focus on sex, violence and social revolt, which appeal to the youth's imagination as they tend to gravitate towards unrestrained permissiveness, which is due to the emotional and social immaturity that is part of being youth (Senter 2001:118). Fortunately, not all the youth in the city of Nairobi have a preference for secular contemporary music. According to the Daystar Survey (Chandran, 2004:21) nearly 60 percent of the respondents to the survey listen to Christian music more often than any other kind. Even though Christian music is available, imported Western style music has more appeal because it appeals to the youth's sensuality.

In summary; the modern media are not neutral. The media have an own agenda for shaping youth's values, self-perception and outlook on life. It is increasingly materialistic in nature, promoting a culture of consumerism. It tends to reflect a modern view of life in terms of independence and individualism that often contradicts the African view of reality and community values. One cannot avoid the modern media or the values they promote. They are a part of urban life. The question is how to accommodate them while retaining the best of African community values that enhance one's sense of identity through belonging with a community in urban context.

After surveying the various effects and challenges of urbanisation on youth, in the next section the study focuses on examining how the churches in Nairobi have been responding to the dire needs of the youth.

2.4   THE PRAXIS OF CHURCH YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

In the previous section of this chapter, a brief description of Nairobi as a rapidly growing African city was presented in order to facilitate better understanding of overview of the context. It was pointed out that Nairobi as a city is increasingly dominated by young people. From the missiological perspective, this is significant for the mission of the church. Following that, the study looked at the various ways urbanisation has been shaping young people's identity and lifestyle and how the youth have been responding to urban challenges of life. For many young people, living under crowded conditions, facing perennial economic hardship and experiencing unstable social structure resulting from rapid urbanisation have become the grim reality of daily life. With that in background, this section now examines how the churches in Nairobi respond to the needs of the urban youth within and without their boundaries and takes a critical look at how the youth ministry rooted in the individualistic approach is fulfilling its discipleship calling. Based on the reflective observation of the following elements of the youth ministry—demographic, Bible teaching and prayer, programmes/activities, worship, and leadership—the study will attempt to show that much of the present missiological crisis faced by the urban youth ministry is due to its praxis based on the individualistic approach that fails to meet the social needs of young people and in building committed disciples of Christ.

In order to provide an accurate description of the state of the youth ministry in Nairobi, information has been gathered from literature, direct interviews with church or youth leaders, a survey questionnaire, personal observation and experience, both as a missionary and as a resident of Nairobi over a period of seven years. Although much is written on the social and economic issues related to youth problems at national and continental level, information specifically related to church ministry to youth in an African urban context is very limited.[39]

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[39] In sub-Sahara Africa, not including South Africa, youth ministry is a new field of study. In Kenya, with so many Bible schools, only one has recently begun to offer a full Diploma and Bachelor degree in youth ministry. Urban youth ministry is now beginning to catch the attention of leaders in the

2.4.1   Demographic Status

For religious affiliation, most youth in Nairobi generally identify themselves as Christian. According to the recent Daystar Nairobi Youth Survey (Chandran 2004:12), 94 percent of the respondents indicated their religious affiliation with Christianity. Out of that, 31% identified themselves as Roman Catholics, 23% Pentecostals, 17.5% Anglicans, 11% Presbyterians, and the remaining 17% as Baptists, African Inland Church (A.I.C.), Methodists, Lutherans, the Salvation Army, and the Seventh Day Adventists. Very few identified themselves with the African Indigenous churches. More than 91% of the youth indicated that they believed the Bible as God's message to human beings and that it is true.

In terms of church attendance, the majority (92%) of the respondents indicated that they attend church, with 58% regularly attending once a week (Chandran 2004:14). However, this figure does not correlate accurately with previous studies. According to the 1989 Daystar Survey of Nairobi churches, 80% of Nairobi residents identify themselves as Christian but only 20% attended church. A recent survey report titled "The Unfinished Task: a National Survey of Churches in Kenya" and published by ACM-FTT Afriserve (2004) shows that the attendance among the Protestant churches in Nairobi has been 16% of the population. Out of that 16% total attendance indicated by the survey, the youth attendance was found to be 23%. It means that only 4% of the city youth population attend Protestant churches. This is quite low. The data of this survey was collected directly from the church records. Therefore, its accuracy seems to be more reliable than that of the Daystar Survey based on a small sample of a thousand respondents. Most of the Daystar respondents seemed to be from churches and educational institutions where the probability of church-going youth is generally quite high. According to Shorter (2001:75), "70% of the youth never come near the church, and only less than 12% are actively involved in the church." Shorter's estimation comes closer to the ACM-FTT survey. In the author's opinion, based on observations and interviews with youth

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church. Aylward Shorter, a Roman Catholic priest and cultural anthropologist, as a long time resident of Nairobi, has written more on the topic of urbanisation and youth from pastoral perspective.

leaders, probably less than 15% of youth attend church in Nairobi and perhaps 3% are actively involved in the church. These figures are alarming. It calls for urgent attention to this issue if the church is to keep up with the population trend.

The author conducted a brief survey of youth attendance and participation in some of the churches which were visited to conduct interviews and survey questionnaires (see Appendix A for the list of names of the churches and denominations). The figures regarding youth attendance are tabulated below:

	Total attendance	Youth attendance	Active Youth
Church A	1200	150	20
Church B	800	300	80
Church C	3000	1800	200
Church D	300	50	20
Church E	5000	1500	200
Church F	120	40	26
Church G	500	100	30
Church H	3000	1000	350
Church I	150	70	20
Church J	1000	300	40
Church K	110	65	35
Church L	1000	130	40
Church M	3000	200	75
Church N	7000	3000	1000
Church O	200	50	20
Church P	5000	500	250
Church Q	450	150	50
Church R	7000	4000	400

Church S	7000	3000	220
Church T	1400	500	100
Church U	300	210	40
Church V	5000	3000	900
Church W	8000	4000	100
Average attendance	2632	1048	183
Percentage average	100%	40%	3%

From the list of twenty-three churches chosen randomly from various denominations and localities, it seems clear that youth attendance is below 50 percent in the majority of the churches and a small percentage is actively involved, especially in churches A, J, M, S, and W. Only four churches (C, K, U, and V) correspond closely to the demographic reality of the Nairobi youth population, with over 60% youth attendance. Ten churches (C, E, H, M, N, P, R, S, U and V) are mega-churches with 3,000 or more members. However, only six of them have a youth attendance close to 40%. In the mega-churches E, H, and R that seem to have a dynamic youth ministry, youth represents only one third of the congregation, falling much behind the urban demographic trend. However, church N is also a mega-church with 44% youth. Because it is located close to a large slum, it attracts youth through programmes focusing on contemporary music, songs and dramas; otherwise the attendance might be low.

On the average, the ratio of youth attendance in the churches has been 2:5. Among the church youth, the ratio of youth who are actively involved in the ministry is 1:5, which is quite low. It means that only 20% of the youth actively participate in the church's youth ministry. On the whole this represents only 3% of the church population. The overall attendance seems to indicate that most youth do not see the church as a high priority in their urban life.

2.4.2   Organisations Serving Youth

Before examining the church youth ministry in detail, this study will briefly explore how the youth are cared for through the specialised Christian organisations in Nairobi. Then it will look into how the established churches respond to the needs of the youth. In the city of Nairobi, several Christian organisations are committed to serving the youth. Some focus on meeting the social and economic needs of the youth while others are only interested in meeting their spiritual needs. Some groups exist exclusively to serve the needs of Christian youth while others are open to serve all youth, whether Christian or not.

The following list of Christian youth organisations was compiled for the reader to get a picture of the extent to which the church as the body of Christ in Nairobi is involved in caring for the needs of the youth apart from its ministry at congregational level.

1.   **Organisations that serve all youth, primarily providing social care:**

* YMCA: Various community developments, health services, leadership,

recreation and others. It seeks to serve young men.

* YWCA: Various community developments, health services, counselling,

economic empowerment, education, and others. It seeks to serve young women.

* Uzima Foundation: Promoting awareness among youth of HIV/AIDS

through peer education and counselling.

* Young Men's Christian Training Centre: Training youth in basic skills like

tailoring, carpentry, accounts and secretarial work.

* Dorcas Dress Making and Tailoring: Run by the Lutheran Church for

equipping young women economically.

* Edelvale: A Roman Catholic charitable society providing care for girls with

moral and social problems, like unmarried mothers.

2.

Organisations that serve only Christian youth, primarily providing social care:

* Christian Industrial Training Centre—Pumwani: Trains youth in marketable

skills.

* Church of Christ Christian Industrial Training Institute: Provides basic training in

Computer skills, electronic skills and the Bible

* Emerging Young Leaders: Leadership development through mentoring

* Friends Hope Center: Empowering youth to wholesome life through

seminars and training in disease prevention

* Jamii Mpya: A ministry of the Lutheran Church for training youth in carpentry and

metal work.

3. **Organisations that serve all youth, primarily interested in providing spiritual care:**

* Youth for Christ: Evangelism and Bible-study groups in schools

* LIFE Ministry: Evangelism and Bible-study groups in schools and

universities

* Scripture Union of Kenya: Promoting the Gospel among youth in schools

through literature distribution and camps

* Young Life: Evangelism and Bible study groups in schools

4. **Organisations that focus mainly Christian youth, primarily providing spiritual care**:

* FOCUS: Fellowship of Christian University Students

* Youth Christian Students: Provides guidance to Catholic youth in schools

* Baptist Student Ministries: Provide spiritual care to university students

* Christian Student Leadership Centre: Provides leadership development

opportunity to university students, supported by major churches

* Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Provides counselling to youth

* KAYO—Kenya Anglican Youth Organisation: Provides spiritual teaching and care to the church youth

* KSCF—Kenya Students Christian Fellowship: Nurtures secondary school students in spiritual growth

* KYCS—Kenya Young Christian Students: Guiding Christian youth in development projects

* Navigators: Helping youth to become effective disciples through evangelism and Bible Study

* Word of Life: A non-denominational camping ministry for evangelism and discipleship

Following observations were made after analysing Christian organisations that serve youth in the Nairobi area:

* Major denominations like the Anglican and Catholic Church have a youth organisation that generally coordinates youth activities at national level, mainly to provide moral and spiritual teaching for their denominational members.

* There are several non-denominational groups in the city that provide spiritual care to youth in secondary schools and universities.

* There are very few groups that are committed to providing for the economic needs of young people by providing marketable skills, like carpentry, secretarial and computer skills.

* There is hardly any Christian youth group that focuses primarily on helping youth with HIV/AIDS prevention and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases, although many groups have included awareness in their programmes.

* There are only a handful of organisations that provide social care open to all youth, irrespective of their church affiliation.

In conclusion, the church as a whole, whether at denominational or non-denominational level, provides enough opportunities for youth in the city to obtain spiritual care, but it is very behind in meeting the social and economic needs of the youth who are already in the church. For those outside the church, the social service is very limited, almost negligible. The reason for this shortfall could be related to the limited financial resources of the church. Training institutes usually require large amount of funding. In Nairobi most of the social and economic care-giving institutions are operating mainly with the financial help from abroad. Hardly any local funding is available for assisting the youth.

2.4.3   The Individualistic Approach to Urban Youth Ministry

After visiting and observing more than twenty youth groups and conducting interviews with several youth pastors and youth leaders over a period of one year, the author has observed a general profile of youth ministry in Nairobi that typically follows a pattern of ministry based on the individual approach. There may be some churches that do not fit this description at all. However, it is expected to be very few.

Traditionally, the churches in Nairobi have viewed their ministry to youth primarily from the perspective of the clerical paradigm[40], reaching youth individually with the goal of bringing them up in Christian faith by teaching the ecclesiastical or denominational doctrine (catechism) with an assumption that such knowledge would instil faith in Christ and help the youth to live good Christian lives. Teaching the knowledge of the Bible and church doctrine to youth has been regarded as the main ministry of the church. This view of ministry is clearly seen in the way the churches carry out their praxis in the form of Sunday school programmes, in classroom-style Bible teaching, and in youth fellowship where preaching and teaching tend to dominate. Most of the activities in the youth ministry of the churches simply reflect this

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[40] According to Dingemans (1995:84), this paradigm in Practical Theology has developed from pastoral functions. It emphasises teaching church doctrine and practice.

goal in its *missionary dimension*. But *missional intention* is lacking because young people are not included as active participants in decision making.

Consequently, youth are treated as passive recipients of the gospel by the leadership in most churches (Mbuy 1996:3). They are seldom given a voice in the affairs of the church. Often young people feel that they are hindered by church structure from acting as active participants in the church activities. There is an unspoken assumption among leadership that young people are spiritually immature and they need to be taught and guided. As a result, youth are told what to do by the elders, and they are expected to know their place as learner and follower. Even their own affairs in youth ministry are usually monitored by the pastor or the older members of the church council, to ensure that the youth do not go astray from the established praxis. Many of the youth leaders have expressed this concern to the author when they were interviewed. This has been one of the common complaints among the youth that the older church leaders do not seem to trust them because of their young age. They are not being accepted as responsible members of the church.

The above description of the youth ministry indicates that such a praxis of ministry flows from a dualistic view of the gospel. It assumes that the gospel is meant for the salvation of one's spirit. Therefore, it calls for a spiritually-oriented ministry while minimising the importance of the social and physical dimensions of life. As a result, the *teaching* of the Word of God is given very high priority in order to impart the gospel truth. It assumes that the *text* of the message has the power to transform one's life. Therefore, the emphasis remains on passing the content or the knowledge of the gospel. Often activities in the youth ministry are designed to impart the knowledge of the Bible and doctrinal truth of the church. Christian growth is normally measured in terms of how much one acquires the biblical truth rather than character transformation. This understanding was found to be the dominant view of Christian discipleship in many churches. Christian discipleship is often reduced to a teaching ministry. It is evident in the way in which the commitment to Bible reading and

study is emphasised. This exercise is seen as a sign of growing and maturing in the Christian faith. Such a dualistic view of the gospel, in being divorced from the contextual social issues of life, tends to be a symptomatic reflection of the individualistic approach to ministry (Engels 2000:21).

The individualistic approach to ministry finds its expression more in the modern Enlightenment view of the human person than in the biblical or traditional African view. The modern view sees a person as an autonomous rational individual self (Guder 1998:27). An individual determines who he or she is. Roger Crook (1994:16), in *An Introduction to Christian Ethics,* explains, "One understands one's personhood not in terms of what one has in common with other people but in terms of one's own unique interests and abilities." On the other hand, the biblical view recognises the person in the human being as a unique individual as well corporate in relation with others. Speaking of a human being from theological perspective, Crook (:84) says, "In a significant sense we draw our identity from the community. While we never lose our individuality, neither do we lose our need for other people". In traditional African society, according to Augustine Shutte (2001:8) in *Ubuntu,* "In the African conception persons depend on persons to be persons. It is by belonging to the community that we become ourselves. The community…enables each individual to become a unique centre of shared life." In the modern Western context it seems to follow that Christian life is also an individual's personal journey, since salvation is understood as an individual's faith commitment to the redemptive work of Christ. Theologically, it is correct that Jesus came to save individuals, but after one's conversion, the person is baptised into his corporate body—the community of faith. The social dimension of the journey of faith cannot be separated from the spiritual dimension. The spiritual and the social dimension must be viewed as two sides of the same coin. The new convert is no longer to walk alone in the journey of faith but as a member of the body: he is called to take the journey *with* the corporate body. His individual personhood is linked with the corporate body, where the social dimension of faith fuses with the personal spiritual dimension. In the author's

observation, the church in Kenya has been guilty of neglecting this social dimension of the gospel in its praxis, although it firmly believes in the importance of the believer's position in the body of Christ theologically. This is because the church has inherited the praxis of the gospel along with doctrinal teachings from the individualistic approach informed by the tenets of Western modernity, where the individual becomes the focal point of church ministry. Such an approach reduces the task of discipleship to nurturing one's private and personal faith. Along that line, the youth ministry simply becomes a means to impart spiritual knowledge to young people.

In its missionary dimension and intention, a church ministry that is individualistically oriented often seems to be occupied with the number of individual conversions in terms of measuring their success in ministry. This tendency has been identified as one of the essential features in the church growth movement. In the recent few decades there has been an enthusiastic call from various mission leaders, like Donald McGavran and others, for planting new churches as one of the best ways to harvest the lost souls. Although it has been a great strategy and has a sound biblical basis in many ways, it tends to focus more on the numerical side of conversion. The number of conversions and new churches (local congregations) is seen as a sign of church growth. In his critique Engels (2000:83) remarked, "We have made many converts but few disciples." Most of the proponents of the church growth movement would deny that this has been the goal, but in reality the quantity counts more than the quality. Donors who provide funds to mission agencies usually like to see the numerical results. The number of conversions or decisions is easier to quantify and report than to account for qualitative growth. The weakness of the church growth movement lies not in planting more churches but in treating the churches as an organised collection point of individual souls while neglecting the social and cultural dimensions that flow from the established community (Guder 1998:73). A church is a spiritual community but it is imbedded in the social and cultural web of human relationships. Youth ministry in Kenya, especially in Nairobi, is no exception. The youth ministry is not an organised collection of individuals who just come to church to satisfy

their religious need by receiving the teachings of the Word of God or to be entertained by certain programmes suiting their personal interest. The leadership of the church seems to forget that young people come to church not only to meet their need for *believing* but also for *belonging*. When their *belonging* needs are not met in the church, they will look elsewhere. Rodney Stark (1996:20), in *The Rise of Christianity,* argues persuasively that people join religious movements on the basis of relationship rather than because of doctrinal truth.

During the interviews with various youth pastors and leaders, it was observed that the pattern of youth ministry is very much based on the Western model, which has an individualistic orientation. Individualistically oriented ministry is normally driven by programmes; Wesley Black (Senter 2001:42) calls such ministry an "activity-based approach". It is designed to keep young people busy with programmes. It is regulated by "the calendar and the calculator" (ibid). Often the youth ministry is measured by the success of the programmes and the success is measured by *how many* youth attend. The focus remains on the number more than on the quality of relationship formed within the group. The assumption of the programme-centred ministry is that programmes meet the needs of individual youth. The youth come to the meetings or programmes primarily to meet an individual need or self-interest. The relationship aspect among the youth is often secondary or incidental. When young people find that programmes are not to their liking, they move to another church group that offers better programmes. It is like a consumer who is shopping for a better service. It is important that the church knows of the need of its youth to nurture both the programmes and relationships. But in the activity-based approach, the programme is the criterion of success and takes precedence over relationship.

2.4.4   Programme-oriented Youth Ministry

In many Nairobi churches, it has been observed that most of the programmes in the youth ministry are limited to teaching the Bible and prayer geared for spiritual growth. Most of the teachings follow a traditional pattern, which involves a lecture or preaching on a

predetermined topic. In many of the Bible studies, the leader would typically give a lecture and the audience would be expected to listen passively. There is hardly any group discussion on the subject. The youth seldom have the freedom to select a text from the Bible that relates to their issues. Some of the youth leaders expressed their concern that not many youth show interest in attending Bible study meetings. They find it very challenging to motivate young people to come for the Bible study. But the youth ministry needs to examine its approach and find creative ways to teach the Biblical truths in a manner in which everyone can participate. A handful of churches are now approaching the study of the Bible in creative ways, like having a group discussion and the use of visual aids. One of the youth groups visited by the author made the learning of the biblical truths an interesting and meaningful experience. There was no lecture or preaching. The youth were divided into small groups of seven to ten. Each group was assigned a certain relevant topic (chosen by the youth themselves) with a question to discuss, like "Should Christian youth be involved in politics?" Each group discussed and presented their views from the biblical point of view at the end to the whole fellowship meeting. Young people were very excited as they participated in the discussion and learned from one another. It was an effective way of engaging the youth in doing theology to address their contextual issue (Schreiter 2001:16-17). In that particular church, the senior pastor was deeply committed to serving the youth, and the youth leaders were given much freedom to lead the youth ministry in creative ways.

Similarly, some youth groups are including a variety of styles of prayer, from organised prayer to spontaneous meetings. Overnight prayer meetings have become popular with a variety of methods from singing, teaching, prayer, sharing of testimonies and others. Most of these prayer meetings are initiated by youth themselves, rather than programmed by adults. These are the positive signs of how the youth groups are attempting to break out of the traditional patterns which are no longer seen to be sensitive to the changing times in urban setting. However, in most churches, Bible teaching is still presented in the traditional way that seem to turn off many young from participating fully in the youth group. The church

leadership needs to realise that in urban context the change is part of urbanisation. Prayer and Bible teaching are important aspects of missionary dimension. However, they should be girded with missionary intention. In terms of praxis, some of the traditional form and style must be adapted to the changing times without compromising the gospel in order to be relevant to young people's sensibility and taste.

During the interview, it is found that besides offering normative Bible teaching and prayer, some youth ministries have been trying different ways to attract youth with some creative programs and contemporary worship styles. Churches like Nairobi Baptist, Nairobi Chapel, and Nairobi Pentecostal Church have been using drama, dancing other creative approaches. Pentecostal churches, especially in the middle-income areas, attract some young people with contemporary music concert and emotionally moving worship experiences. It has begun to impact negatively on many of the established mainline churches, where youth find traditional way of singing hymns and organ music are not of their taste. As a result some of them move to churches where they find contemporary style of worship and attractive programs of their liking. In response to growing competition from Pentecostal churches, some of the traditional mainline churches are now beginning to allow their youth to have their own youth service in the last two years. However, some of the youth leaders have been complaining that they are not given enough musical instruments to do what they want. In one church, the only instrument they were given was the keyboard. This indicates that the leadership of the church does not fully appreciate the importance of youth ministry. They have given the youth freedom to conduct their own programmes but they are reluctant to give them financial and material support. In these churches, leaders need to realise that the youth ministry is an integral part of the church, not a marginal ministry. Young people need to be supported fully even though they do not contribute much to the church financially.

One youth leader commented that the elders in his church regarded the youth ministry as a burden to the church because the youth have always been asking for more funds and they did

not contribute enough to the church budget financially. When the youth ministry has needed more funds, they often had to find other sources, like asking for donations from individual church members. Many of the youth do not have jobs and can not contribute to the church budget. Such lack of trust of the youth from the leadership brings discouragement to youth and their leaders and undermines the collective witness of the church. Some youth go away to other churches which have dynamic youth programmes or just stop coming to the church. This is unfortunate. The church cannot afford to lose any youth.

Besides the struggle to obtain enough financial support from the church to run their programme, some youth groups experience opposition from their leaders. Some leaders are reluctant to allow their youth to do creative programmes, especially to include contemporary music in their praise and worship. They are afraid that the youth will abandon the traditional pattern of worship and dilute the gospel with worldly patterns. Some pastors and church leaders who seem to be sensitive to the needs of the youth are allowing their young people to worship creatively in order to retain the young people in the church. Contemporary forms of worship with modern music and songs have been a popular trend among the growing youth ministry in Nairobi churches. Those who resist change are losing young people from their churches and do not seem to be aware of the consequences.

Several youth group leaders who were interviewed have indicated that young people are interested in other programmes, e.g. sport and seminars on topics covering the relationship with the opposite sex, dating and courtship. Some programmes, e.g. camping and concerts, are costly. Because of limited funds, these programmes are undertaken once or twice a year. Sports are popular. However, facilities and funds remain the main problems. Often a church youth group utilises the sports grounds of nearby schools. One youth group in the large church has a limited table tennis facility, not enough to satisfy the needs because of limited space. Several youth ministries have reported that they have conducted seminars on HIV-AIDS. They have been attended very well. The youth are very interested in learning new

things if they are presented in an interesting way and are relevant to their needs. Churches have great opportunities, not only to meet the needs of their own youth but to reach out to those who are outside. Unfortunately, negligence or apathy among the leaders of the church hinders such potential opportunities for missionary witness.

One particular church youth group from a mainline denomination in a densely populated suburb of East Nairobi, closer to the town centre, developed a self-funded drama group. In this church, the youth group receives hardly any funds from the church council. In spite of very little material and spiritual support, some of the young people have creatively come up with programmes that could be used as outreach to the youth in the community. They perform drama in a nearby community hall and charge a small fee to their audience who come from the community for entertainment. Such programmes have a potential for success when it is initiated by youth. It is unfortunate that the leadership of this church fails to appreciate the significance of its youth ministry. They have potential to strengthen the church's overall ministry as well to reach the community. The leaders need to trust their young people and support them wholeheartedly and allow them to realise their dreams. Only teaching them biblical doctrine is not sufficient to keep the youth in the church. The future of the church depends on them.

According to author's own observations, there are a few churches in Nairobi that seem to value their youth and are beginning to respond to a call for relevancy by allowing the youth ministry to keep up with the changing preferences and tastes of modern urban youth. Most of them are large middle-income churches with resources. They appear to have success in increasing the youth attendance in the church through programmes that attract a large number of youth. Some of the positive and negative features observed in these ministries are described below.

First, the leadership seems to show their commitment to the youth by providing a full-time experienced youth pastor. Most churches in Nairobi lack a youth pastor for financial reasons. Youth ministry is often placed under the supervision of an assistant pastor or a deacon to whom youth leaders have to report. By having their own pastor who cares for the youth and identifies with their problems, youth are encouraged to go and ask for advice from them and seek help in solving their problems. When a church provides a full-time youth pastor, they usually also show financial commitment to the youth ministry. They desire to see the youth ministry to go forward. The youth pastor can plead their case before the church leadership and can minimise frustration and conflict. Often young people do not know how to approach the leadership with their problem and feel upset when they are not understood. Hence, a well-trained youth pastor can become their useful advocate. The leadership who feel confident in their youth pastor also show more willingness to support their youth programmes, knowing that the youth pastor will be responsible to oversee the youth activities in accordance with the church's established policies and tradition. Often a youth group thrives well under the caring and friendly pastor who listens to them and guides them in solving their problems.

Second, youth ministry is provided with an adequate amount of funding to purchase equipment like a computer, projector, sound system and musical instruments that help the young people to organise and produce attractive programmes. It encourages greater participation among the youth. Funding is always a problem when the youth ministry is not regarded as significant in the eyes of the leaders. This issue has already been discussed.

Third, youth leaders, who usually work together with pastors and elders as a part of the whole church ministry rather than competing with other ministries for funds, often finds it easier to get support for the youth ministry. They can facilitate communication between the leadership and the youth ministry. It is essential that the leadership of the church must see the youth ministry as one of the key ministries of the church. The result is that leadership is more willing to support the youth ministry financially. Such collaboration helps greatly in

developing creative programmes through drama, dances, music concerts, festivals of worship, and others. Although these programmes are costly, they often attract youth to the church from the wider area of Nairobi.

On the negative side, although these churches provide attractive and relevant worship experience to the taste of urban youth, they unintentionally draw away youth from smaller churches that cannot compete as far as the programmes are concerned. Their numerical growth can be deceptive; it is a shifting of members from one church to another and can cause resentment within the wider church community.

Another point of concern that can be raised in connection with a large youth ministry with successful programmes occurs in the area of discipleship. Weekly Sunday attendance is not enough to build discipleship ministry. The majority of the youth do come for an interesting worship service but their social needs might go unmet unless they are also actively involved in various small group ministries. General observation based on statistics indicates that a small percentage of youth (less than 20 percent) in these churches usually participate actively beyond the Sunday worship service. The vast majority of the youth stay on the fringe of church life as passive recipients. This indicates a lack of commitment to Christian discipleship. Great programmes attract people, but do not keep them. Relationships keep them because they meet people's deep need for belonging within the human community. These churches should be careful about counting their ministry as successful on the basis of the number of youth in attendance in their programmes unless they find a way to build a long lasting network of relationships firmly grounded in Christian discipleship.

On the other hand, the smaller churches have great potential to nurture their youth by providing quality social care in a loving community, which is something that a large church usually cannot do well. In a large church, most of the youth are not very well known personally. They can be quite lonely unless they have a number of friends. In a small church

group they cannot hide among the crowd. They can be incorporated into church life more easily. It depends on how the church views its youth ministry—as programme-based or community-based and upon the kind of leader that leads it.

It has been pointed out earlier that programme-focused youth ministry has its own limitations. It attracts young people as long as programmes are entertaining and meet their self-interest. It does not build lasting youth ministry or build disciples. According to youth ministry experts (Senter 2001:86), many of the youth ministries in the United States that are heavily dependent on creative programmes are facing a dilemma in keeping their young people interested in coming to the church. Many come to the youth group to be entertained. After they leave the group, they seldom continue to come to the church. They hardly show their missionary commitment to the world. Programmes themselves do not produce disciples, but relationships do. Jim Burns said, "programs attract kids, relationships keep them" (quoted in Senter 2001:83).

Popular programmes are costly to maintain. Very few churches in the city of Nairobi have the financial resources to sustain good programmes to keep the interest of the youth. Usually, most of the programmes are entertaining but are limited in scope as far as religious formation or discipleship is concerned. In most Nairobi churches, regular weekly programmes like drama group and worship group meetings are attended by a small core of faithful believers. Since they come together regularly, they tend to know one another better socially. They find that their social needs are met in small group interaction. They form the core of many youth ministries. However, other youth who are not actively involved, come to church for popular programmes as religious consumers. They are the vast majority. Programmes themselves often do not meet their social need for building a deeper level of friendship or loyalty to a group where they can feel a sense of belonging. It may be in the best interest of any youth ministry to pay attention to social structure along with good programmes. In Nairobi, most youth ministry appears to be neglecting the social structure that builds deeper bond of

friendship with accountability to the group while relying on popular programmes to boost their membership numerically. Often such ministry does not have a clear vision or long-term discipleship in mind.

It has been shown that an individual focus in youth ministry is normally driven by programmes. They rely on programmes to sustain their youth membership. The churches that cannot afford to offer creative programmes often lose their young people to other churches. Even though the programme-focused ministry does not seem to be effective in meeting young people's social needs, many youth ministries struggle to find support and funding from their leadership who seem to have very little interest in youth work or in their welfare. This assessment seems to indicate a bleak future for many urban youth ministries if they continue to follow this pattern.

It has been mentioned in the discussion above that some of the churches in mainline denominations are beginning to allow their young people to conduct their own service on Sundays. It is an indication that church leaders are beginning to recognise that most of their young people have less preference for traditional forms. They are afraid that they will lose their young people if they do not provide an alternative to the traditional forms. Many urban youth seem to express themselves more freely in using a contemporary style of singing and music that they can relate to. They enjoy clapping hands and joyfully singing short choruses with rhythmic music using drums, base-guitar and keyboard. Often they like loud rhythmic music with variety. They are eager to participate fully in worship by engaging their mind, body and emotion. This freedom they do not seem to find in the traditional liturgical style that calls for solemn reflection. It is not the theologically rich liturgy of Christian tradition that young people are rejecting, but *the style*. Some of the styles of worship developed in the old European context in centuries past have been imported to Africa without any cultural sensitivity to local people. African people usually are very expressive in their worship: they often spontaneously express their joy through singing and dancing with drum music (Mbiti

1990:167-168). These are symbolic rituals that express deep feelings and values which cannot be put into words (Shorter 1998:61). In view of cultural relevancy, the church needs to carefully examine some of its styles of worship which were borrowed from the past European church context that no longer seem to strike a right cord in young African souls. Today's young people are asking for cultural relevancy, a style of worship (a ritual) that expresses their true feeling. It is important that church leaders trust their young people and give them freedom to express their worship of God in a manner that is culturally meaningful to them, as long as they are faithful to the essentials of the gospel. The worship needs to be contextualised, taking into consideration both the urban and the cultural contexts, otherwise, the church will turn those youth away who are faithfully coming because they still love their church community, family and friends and feel some loyalty to their denomination.

2.4.5 Youth Ministry Leadership

The success or failure of any ministry depends on the leadership. According to Doug Field (1998:271), a veteran youth minister, "Leaders can make or break a ministry." The health of a ministry depends on the quality of the leadership team. Chepkwony (1996:36), in his article *The Youth: A Challenge to the Church in Africa Today,* points out that a pastor or a priest is overburdened with the pastoral responsibility of all the church affairs in most churches in Africa. As a result, he hardly has time and energy to meet the needs of young people. Chepkwony (ibid) sees an urgent need for a youth pastor who is sympathetic to young people's problems. He says "…the time has now come to give the youth a full-time minister". In the survey of Nairobi churches conducted by the author through interviews, the need for pastoral youth leadership has been found to be very critical in most churches.

The interviews with several youth pastor and leaders brought to the attention that a small number of churches have a full-time youth pastor. According to one prominent city youth pastor's estimation, probably twenty churches in the city may have a full-time youth pastor. Churches that provide a youth pastor are usually large and at the middle-income level. The

majority of the congregations (nearly 700, according to ACM-FTT Afriserve 2004)) in Nairobi that have a youth ministry are run by a few youth leaders with little theological and formal ministry training. They are usually supervised by a pastor or a designated elder/deacon. The reason is that most churches cannot afford to hire a youth pastor. Even if they could hire one, youth ministry is not seen as high priority in the eyes of the leadership of many churches. The author has met very few senior pastors who share a vision and passion to reach the youth of the city.

Another important reason is that most of the theological and Bible schools do not offer any training to prepare pastors to serve the youth. As a result, pastors seldom think about the importance of youth ministry. It is seen as one of the many departments of the church. Some senior pastors do not make any distinction between the children's and the youth ministry. One youth pastor of a large church during the interview shared the information that youth ministry is seen "as a burden" to the church in his denomination because they always ask for money and are not contributing much to the church fund. He is simply echoing the sentiment of many youth leaders. In his opinion, most pastors lack awareness because the importance of youth ministry was seldom emphasised in their theological training. Some of the pastoral candidates are often older men who seek position as leaders in the church after retiring from public or commercial jobs. These men, although they are influential in their denomination, are seldom aware of the needs of young people. There remains a generation gap between them and the youth.

There is a great need for pastoral training that focuses on youth. To the author's knowledge, only one Bible school in Kenya has recently started to offer a full programme in youth ministry at diploma and bachelor degree level. Occasionally, the Daystar University organises a short three-week course on youth-related issues. Besides these local initiatives, some ministries from the United States organise one- or two-day seminars for youth workers in Nairobi from time to time. They usually try to introduce their brand of youth ministry

which has worked successfully abroad, assuming that it will work in Kenya as well. Most of them comprise a programme-based ministry focusing on methods and techniques for improving leadership skills and organisational structures. Some of these groups that have come to Nairobi are represented by the Purpose Driven Youth Ministry from Saddleback Community Church in Southern California, Willow Creek Community Church of Chicago and others. Their seminars are more relevant to building middle-income urban churches with resources to fund creative programmes that appeal to urban youth who are more inclined to Western pop culture.

It was discovered from observation and interviews that there are very few churches in the city that not only provides a pastoral leader to youth ministry but also allow the youth equal participatory roles as leaders in the church. These churches are exception to the rule. Most churches, however, exclude young people from the decision-making body of the church. Tatah Mbuy (1996:3) has voiced the concern that older leaders often do not listen to the voice of young people and often exclude them from full participation in the life of the church. Mbuy (:4) points out that a child in traditional community does not have any say in the running of tribal affairs, however, young people are groomed through initiation to take over some of the responsibilities of the community from the elders with relative ease. The older generation does not see the younger generation as rivals but as the future life-blood of the clan. He feels strongly that the churches in Africa should be following this traditional pattern by greatly appreciating the contribution of their young people and should train them to be the leaders in the church rather than marginalised them.

In traditional African society, maturity is often measured by age. An older man is considered wise because he has lived many years, so it is assumed that he has more experience. He therefore qualifies to be a leader. Of course age is not the only factor for leadership consideration. However, it is a major criterion along with other factors like having gained the respect of the community and having the knowledge of local customs. This cultural value of

age is often reflected in the attitude of church leadership towards youth. Traditionally, it has been an accepted fact that older men (or women) rule. In one of the youth meetings, the author observed an interesting discussion on the topic of youth leadership. Several young people gave 'age' as the reason for not recognising youth as leaders in the church and society. One young woman said, "If I run for a political office and another older woman with nine children with no education runs for the same office, it is more likely she would be elected than I who [am] single and more educated." She made the point that in both the society and the church, leaders are chosen on the basis of age more than on qualifications. To deny leadership to young people on the basis of age does not have a sound theological basis. Malan Nel, a specialist in youth ministry, finds no theological justification for dividing the church on the basis of age. He says:

> People do not need to reach a certain age before God becomes interested in them and starts working with and through them. Youths are part of the congregation's service to God because they share in God's relationship with his people and are incorporated into the congregation. (Senter 2001:4)

As passive members of the church, youth are normally expected to submit to the adult leadership in many Nairobi churches. They find their social location on the marginal frame of church life, not in the centre, even in churches where they are in majority. Since youth are not nurtured to play an active role in the life of the church, they cannot be expected to play a vital role in the mission of the church to impact their community and the world with the witness of the gospel on their own initiative.

This traditional view of leadership with its related practices reaches a point of conflict with youth in the urban context. Most urban youth expect leadership to be based on competency rather than as status based on age. Several youth in the discussion reacted negatively to the popular saying, "Youth are leaders of tomorrow". According to them 'tomorrow' never comes. They see it as a ploy used by older leaders to prevent young people from assuming the leadership role. The youth want to be recognised as leaders of today not of tomorrow. They

want to participate in decision making rather than be passively led by the older generation. Their grievance is legitimate. The church is a community of Christ in which everyone has a significant role to play according to their gifts and abilities. The leaders of the church in Nairobi need to examine the role of leadership critically in light of the biblical teachings and in the specific urban context of young people, otherwise they are hindering the work and the witness of the kingdom among the young within and without the church.

On the bright side, some progressively minded urban churches in the city are now beginning to include the youth among their leadership ranks. One mainline church in which the senior pastor is wholeheartedly committed to the church's youth ministry has managed to recruit a quarter of the church leadership council members from the ranks of the youth. In that church, the youth ministry is no longer perceived as a marginal ministry of the church, but as a part of the integrated whole. Young people are given freedom to carry on the ministry with the full blessing of the leadership. There is no dichotomy between "we" and "them", between the leadership and the youth. It is encouraging to see how the young people are excited about their involvement in that church. This kind of model is increasingly needed in many Nairobi churches for a thriving youth ministry.

In conclusion, the youth in Nairobi churches are struggling like the rest of the youth outside the church. They are expecting the church to help them. But the majority of the church leaders are apathetic towards their plight (Chandran 2004: 19). The youth are seen as burden rather than as an opportunity in many of the old established churches. In spite of little support and encouragement from the church leadership, many youth have not turned away from the church. They want to participate actively in the church rather than as passive recipients (ibid). They want to be the leaders of today, not only of tomorrow (Aniagwu, 1999:125). They want their voice to be heard and to have dialogue with the church leadership rather than to be told what to do (Chandran 2004:19). Often they want more than just biblical or religious teaching although it is important. They desire to interact on current issues that

concern their daily lives. Sometimes the youth have better ideas and want to go forward. However, limited financial and material resources discourage them. Even though the youth are not able to contribute much to the church financially, the church leadership must make helping them a priority; otherwise they will slowly drift away from the church. It will be detrimental to the church ministry in the long term. The leadership must also make an effort to incorporate the youth as full members of the church, providing them leadership and opportunity for ministry as according to their abilities. The young need to feel that they are an integrated part of the church rather than only having marginal status in the church.

On the final note, in spite of some of the youth leaving, the church has not experienced a negative impact. It is because many youths are migrating from rural areas. When they come to the city, they look for the church of their denominational background. They tend to fill the gap left by others. In the beginning they are content to be in the familiar environment with the traditional form of worship that may resemble what they were used to in their rural areas. This gives the false impression to many leaders that the youth ministry is doing well. If it is not growing in great numbers, then it is not dying either. Such an impression is dangerous. The symptoms have not become acute enough to demand an immediate response. However, the sickness is progressing toward a major crisis.

It has been shown that the church cannot continue to sustain its youth ministry on the basis of programmes. Programmes themselves do not build disciples. Discipleship cannot be measured in terms of how much biblical knowledge an individual acquires. Disciples are built in the context of human relationships. Therefore, the church needs to examine its present approach to its urban youth ministry and to seek an approach that truly meets the social needs of young people and builds commitment to follow the way of Jesus as his faithful disciples. Youth ministry in Nairobi therefore needs urgent attention. The church cannot afford to be indifferent. Otherwise the cost will be very high. It must give the youth high priority in overall ministry of the church. The youth ministry must become the integrated

ministry of the church. The greater proportion of the society consists of youth, so the church ought to take this fact into serious consideration from a missiological perspective.

2. 5   SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter has given a contextual description of Nairobi as a rapidly growing African city, dominated by young people (80% under age 30). Nairobi was also described as a city of great ethnic and religious diversity and significance in terms political, commercial and international interest. Because of its central location and importance, the city attracts a large number of youth who come from rural areas to seek jobs, education and a better life. Because of its inadequate infrastructure and industrial base, most youth end up living in poverty and under deplorable living conditions. As a result of urbanisation, they face myriads of social and cultural problems ranging from family breakdown, loneliness, conditions of poor health, disease, violence and crime, to drug abuse and an identity crisis.

From a missiological perspective, the church has failed to address the needs of its urban youth because much of its praxis has been guided by the clerical paradigm and the individualistic approach that is rooted in the modern dualist view of life that often separates the spiritual dimension from the social. As a result of this view, the church has mainly concentrated its ministry on meeting the spiritual needs of youth through various programs. In light of overwhelming needs resulting from urbanisation, the youth do not seem to find help and guidance from the church nor a place where they have a sense of belonging. Therefore they perceive the church as an irrelevant institution in their struggle to integrate it meaningfully in their lives in the ever-changing urban context. In addition to present problems of keeping the youth in the church, a lack of concern for youth has been detected among the leadership of many churches in Nairobi. Many youth leaders often feel discouraged due to the lack of support and resources from the church leadership who do not see the missiological significance of reaching the youth today and for the future of the church.

Before attempting to address the complex urban problems and irrelevant praxis of church youth ministry, it is important to examine the cultural foundation of African young people, which can help by providing clues to right praxis which can also be culturally relevant and theologically right. With that in mind, the study turns to Chapter Three to discern the significance of community in traditional African culture.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNITY IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Since the study focuses on African youth and the main thesis suggests the important role of community as a means of addressing the social need of belonging among the urban youth, it would be important to understand the significant value of community in traditional African society as a relevant cultural factor in the process of character formation in discipleship. Even though the traditional beliefs, values and practices might not be visible overtly in an urban lifestyle of many young people today, it is assumed that traditional culture implicitly provides some form or matrix of meaning and order to life which we call a basic worldview. Present-day African youth, whether urban or rural are historically part of the continuity of traditional culture although in a different form and setting. The contexts of time and place may modify traditional view of life but do not erase it completely. Therefore, traditional cultural values and attitudes may carry on and find different forms of expression. Communal values are deeply ingrained in traditional African culture; therefore, it is essential to examine traditional African community and its elements in order to understand the African view of life from a traditional perspective, and the effects of urbanisation on traditional values, like corporate identity and kinship relationship.

This chapter looks at the community from traditional African perspective. First, it examines the concept and the nature of community in traditional African society. It surveys its various essential elements—God, spirits, vital force, ancestors, Ubuntu, and others, which together constitute the nature of community. Using the dramaturgic approach[41] as a tool for cultural

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[41] Wuthnow (1987) in his book *Meaning and Social Order* describes the dramaturgic approach as the symbolic-expressive dimension of social structure. It focuses on the expressive or communicative properties of culture based on symbols. By using this approach, culture becomes identifiable as a symbolic-expressive dimension of social structure or relations. It also provides a better interpretative

analysis, the study is guided by two interrelated themes—*believing* and *belonging*. The theme of believing is discerned in the conceptual framework of *the anamnesis of ancestral tradition*; and the theme of belonging is depicted in the concept of *Ubuntu*, which is one of the dominant symbolic expressions of African social structure. In real life situations, these two themes cannot be isolated. They should be understood as two dimensions of one reality.

After understanding the nature of African community, the second part of the chapter describes some of the essential characteristics and values like marriage, children, kinship relationships, rites of passage and others that collectively define the character of traditional African community as family. These values inform some of the content of the survey questionnaire. In order to investigate whether these values are still considered as relevant in the life of African urban youth, an empirical survey questionnaire was designed and administered to measure them (Chapter Five).

The third part of the chapter examines the impact of urbanisation on some of the traditional values and how the youth have been facing identity and moral crises in urban context in the absence of stable community.

Although most traditional African communities do share some common characteristics to various degrees, for instance, a reverential devotion to ancestors; a great cultural diversity often exists among them. In order to understand and appreciate traditional African community in its own right, it is important to grasp the view of the community from an African perspective. An African perception of community may fundamentally differ from the idea of community as generally understood in the modern West, where an individualistic outlook tends to dominate. This is one of the key differences that one has to recognise before

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tool for cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects in holistic ways rather than just emphasising the cognitive domain when the culture is understood as worldview or as a set of beliefs and values (:45). Symbols can represent beliefs but not always in a cognitive sense; it can incorporates both emotion and action when it evokes meaning.

attempting to inculturate the gospel and its value into the African cultural context (Bujo 2001:14). For instance, an African view of the individual person as a dependent member of the community may be very different from a modern Western understanding of an individual person who may be a part of the community (:67).

3.2   TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY: ITS NATURE, SPIRITUAL AND HUMAN ELEMENTS

Community, from the traditional African perspective, can be understood by examining its various deeply interrelated elements which, together, help to provide a better understanding of its social and religious nature. Some of the essential elements are briefly examined here in order to provide a composite picture of its nature, basis and structure, e.g. the concept of God and spirits, the role of ancestors and their tradition, and the view of the human person expressed in the concept of *Ubuntu* (see **3.2.2**).

3.2.1   Religious Nature of the Community

Traditional African community is profoundly religious by nature. There is no dualistic tendency to categorise life activities into sacred and secular. From traditional African perspective one cannot conceive a community where religious dimension is separated from social and cultural dimension in the way modern society does. From a traditional African outlook the community in all its dimensions is a reflection of its religious life. There is no dichotomy. Religion is the essence or nature of traditional African community (John Mbiti 1990:2). By ignoring or not giving serious consideration to its religious nature, it would be difficult to understand an African community or its culture meaningfully. Mbiti (:1) warns, "To ignore these traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices can only lead to a lack of understanding of African behaviour and problem."

African religion can best be described as the total way of life in traditional community. For a modern Western mind which is accustomed to thinking of religion as just a spiritual aspect of

life separate from the social dimension, it is hard to comprehend the African view of religion. Too often African religion is described according to the framework of Western religious categories. Such attempts tend to focus on certain superficially visible cultural phenomena that may seem unusual or exotic to outsiders, like animal sacrifices, initiation rites, dances, taboos, and witchcraft. African religions are often presented as a caricature of superstition, myth, and magic or ancestor worship, while leaving out the other dimensions of community life (:10). It is often reduced to a religion consisting of rituals, fetishism and magic (Ray 1976:5, 14). According to Ray (:16), many scholars of African traditional religion have recognised that "African religions are part and parcel of the whole fabric of African cultural life." Mbiti (1990:1) reminds us over and again, "Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that is not easy or possible always to isolate it."

Thus, African culture should be understood as fully integrated religious life. There is no distinction between culture and religion. They are two sides of the same coin. Religion is the culture of the people (Kanyaro 2001:15). To know African culture is to know its religion and vice versa. Every aspect of a member's life in traditional African community, from birth to death, is correlated with religious dimension and meaning. It is not possible to separate culture from religion. Similarly, in traditional African worldview, the physical world of nature and the invisible world of spirit are often perceived as in constant interaction. Mbiti (1990:56) describes such encounters as "The physical and spiritual are but two dimensions of one and the same universe." In other words, the existential problem of life is experienced as spiritual reality. There is no line that separates the two. Every natural phenomenon is perceived through the religious lens. A sickness can be seen as both spiritual and natural phenomena. To some extent it is a valid point from a biblical perspective, because sin often affects both the spiritual and the physical dimension of life negatively. The spiritual and natural dimensions are deeply related with one another.

From this brief overview it is clear that traditional African community is comprehensively religious in nature. It is not a religious community in the Western sense where religious life can be conceived separately as one of the aspects of community life: in traditional African community the whole of life is religiously dramatised. Such a distinction is essential in understanding the religious nature of the African community; otherwise one may fail to appreciate the holistic nature of African community life.

The religious nature of African communal life must be understood in traditional African terms. The tradition of the ancestors dictates the social structure, moral and ethical guidelines with various taboos and sanctions, and views of the cosmos. There is no written or oral creed or set of beliefs that direct people's lives. African people know their religion from the moment of birth (:107). Religion is lived, not only believed. It is their culture, their way of life. Community provides the context in which religion is lived in anamnesis. Ray (1976:17) points out that "in the traditional context religion cannot be a purely personal affair; the relation to the sacred is, first of all, a communal one."

3.2.1.1   Ancestral anamnesis as a communal hermeneutic

What sets traditional African community apart from the various Western views of community is the central role of **anamnesis of ancestral tradition** in African community life and perception. Community in the African symbolic world[42] is more than just living and doing activities together as a social group or relating interpersonally or sharing some common beliefs and traditions; there is an ontological sense which is connected to the ancestors and with one another "…based on a common ancestor who founded the community of the clan or tribe" (Bujo 1998:15). In this respect, the anamnesis of ancestral tradition permeates the interpretation of every aspect of community life. It provides the basis for African religion. In fact, it is the religious life of an African community. According to Benezet Bujo (:11, 15),

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[42] The concept of symbolic world is discussed by Wuthnow (1987:37). Various terms *symbolic universes* (Bergman & Luckman 1966) and *overarching worldviews* (Geerzt 1973) describe this idea.

who has written extensively on African ethics, such anamnetic thinking "still influences the African down to his very roots".   Since anamnetic thinking influences all aspects of the African view of the world, thoughts, values and behaviours, it is important to examine the community through the hermeneutical lens of the ancestral anamnesis.

Before the study explores different elements of traditional African community, it is necessary to describe what "anamnesis" means and how the author of this research understands it. The word "anamnesis" simply means remembrance. Benezet Bujo (1998), in *The Ethical Dimension of Community,* applies the concept of anamnesis to African cultural reality. He was inspired by the writings of two German theologians, Johann Baptist Metz and Helmut Peukert, who advocated the importance of remembering the history involved in forming theology, in order to exercise solidarity with "the victims of history" (:139-140). Bujo (ibid) agrees with their views, saying, "[they] have sharpened our awareness that our theology should not be *amnestic*, but *anamnestic* [italics in text]." By correlating theology in parallel to cultural roots he emphasises the need to focus on the cultural dimension; "God can only be experienced as a liberating God if he penetrates deep into the cultural roots of the people" (:141). In the African context, Bujo (:11-15) understands anamnesis as the historical cultural values and thoughts deeply rooted in the ancestral tradition. For instance, speaking of African ethics in the context of anamnesis, Bujo (2001:57), in another book, *Foundations of an African Ethics,* states, "…the ethical behaviour in the Black African context always involves re-establishing the presence of one's ancestors".   It may be done consciously or unconsciously. Thus, the anamnesis in African community is simply a symbolic-expressive dimension of social structure, thoughts and behaviours informed by the ancestral tradition in the context of community life.

It should be emphasised that anamnesis in the African cultural context is not merely a historical remembrance of one's heritage or great events as many people in the West remember the historical contribution of founding fathers or reflect on the significance of the

French Revolution on modern-day democracy. It involves conscious or unconscious participation of all members in the clan community who experience their ontological solidarity with their ancestors. The community, through its praxis of the established tradition, "remembers" its ancestors. In the praxis of community life with its myths and rituals, the ancestors are believed to be symbolically present among them. In other words, the members of the community, by following the established ways and customs of their ancestors, realise anamnetic solidarity with them. Bujo (:57) refers to the remembrance of ancestors in praxis as "to actualize anew 'the protological foundational act' which first called the clan fellowship into life".

The importance of anamnesis is seen in the way life is expressed in traditional African community as a drama that is played out in remembrance of the ancestors as if the ancestors were saying "Do this in remembrance of me" (Bujo 2001:59). All outward behaviours, customs, rituals and taboos, which may seem like cultural phenomena, are in fact a reflective expression of remembrance of the ancestors and their established tradition. In such dramaturgic remembrance, the community affirms its ongoing identity in solidarity with its ancestors.

As stated above, one of the distinctions that set African community apart from the Western concept of community is the place and the role of ancestors along with their established tradition in the life of the community. The African community includes not only the living members, but also the departed ones and those yet to be born (Mbiti 1990:102). This inclusion of the "living-dead" as reality in African community introduces a unique social dimension to the African understanding of community. Although the ancestors have departed into *zamani*, the past period of time, their presence is still felt as reality in *sasa*, the present period of time. In an African community, the living members are acutely aware of the presence of their ancestors, and their thoughts and behaviours (action and feelings) are greatly

influenced by interaction with the invisible members in anamnesis. The ancestors are viewed not just as passive members of the community, but are included in the community of communication. According to Bujo (1998:55), "[t]he dialogue with the dead takes place through anamnesis, which enables the deceased to take part in communicative actions". The living tradition of the ancestors is lived out in all aspects of community life. It is seen in many symbolic expressions of community life.

Belief in the ancestors is one of most common characteristics of almost all traditional African religions (O' Donovan 1996:4). Even God is acknowledged as "The Great Ancestor (uNkulunkulu)" (Magesa 1997:81). The ancestors are perceived as the vital link between the community and God in the African worldview. They occupy a prominent position in the spiritual hierarchy that begins at the top with God. Below Him are divinities and spirits, followed by the ancestors, the living-dead (Mbiti 1990:201). Their significant presence is very well incorporated in the web of community life. Magesa (1997:47) explains their significant position in the living community as follows: "If we compare the interaction of vital forces in the universe to a spider's web, then in day to day life the ancestors form the principal strand without which the fabric collapses." In that sense, the ancestors are seen as the force that holds together the religious and social structure of the community.

In the community, the ancestors are perceived as playing a vital role as intermediaries between the living members and God. In normal circumstances of life, God is regarded as too great and far above to be approached directly. The social principle of hierarchy dictates that a person of lower rank must approach the person of higher rank through an intermediary (Idowu 1962:141). Even when prayer is offered directly to God, it is often addressed through intermediaries of the spirits or the living-dead (Mbiti 1990:63). Prayer is one of the most common forms of interacting with the living-dead. African people pray more often to the ancestors than to God, however, in their minds they understand the role of the ancestors as

agents who bring their requests before God in a favourable manner (Bujo 1998:17). To outsiders this may seem like worshipping the ancestors.[43] However, in many cases this may not be true. By virtue of their position, the ancestors are believed to be closer to God. Therefore, it is reasonable to pray to them. Naturally, it is expected that the community would usually address most of the spiritual transactions through the ancestors.

Since the role of ancestors is perceived as intermediary, they are often seen as the custodians of the tradition that came from God, "the Great Ancestor, the first Founder and Progenitor, the Giver of life, the Power behind everything that is" (Magesa 1997:35). Their role is divinely sanctioned to make sure that the community lives according to the sacred tradition. They are to be taken seriously for the individual or community to live in peace and harmony. This determines the religious and moral goal of the community as to maintain good terms with the ancestors. For instance, the community would make sure the deceased is given a proper funeral; otherwise some misfortune due to the offended ancestor may result. The ancestors do not passively observe the conduct of the community and receive their devotion. They are perceived to be actively involved in the life of the community, giving blessing for fulfilling its duty or punishment for violating any taboo. In response to the demands and expectations of the ancestors, the community orders its social structure and culture in conformity to the tradition, in order to appease them. In this respect, the dead ancestors invisibly preside over the life of the living community. They are described as "the living-dead" to acknowledge their invisible presence in the community (Mbiti 1990: 25).

The ancestors are believed to play an active role in the community as long as they are remembered by the living relatives. This is the eschatological hope of every living person: "everyone wants to 'be remembered', to be won over to the side of human *sasa*, to be kept

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[43] Mbiti (1990:61, 64)) understands prayer in the African context as worship—"It is the commonest act of worship" although most of the prayers are utilitarian in nature, requesting material welfare, e.g. health, protection from danger, prosperity and even riches.

alive even if the body and spirit have separated" (:157). After three or four generations, their memory gradually fades into the "zamani" time zone.[44] Mbiti (:83) explains the eventual destiny of ancestors:

> Attention is paid to the living-dead of up to four or five generations, by which time only a few, if any, immediate members of their families would still be alive. When the last person who knew a particular living-dead also dies, then in effect the process of death is now complete as far as that particular living-dead is concerned. He is now no longer remembered by name, no longer a 'human being', but a spirit, a thing, an IT. He has now sunk beyond the visible horizon of the Zamani. It is no more necessary to pay close attention to him in the family obligation of making food offerings and libation.

In traditional African community people perceive the presence of their departed ancestors as very real (Magesa 1997:78). The act of remembrance means more than to think of them in one's memory, but takes the form of mystical communion with one's departed kin. It is shown in the various symbolic acts of pouring out libation or offering food or speaking to them in prayer. These acts symbolise "communion, fellowship and remembrance" (Mbiti 1990:25). Through such rituals, the individual or the community anamnetically maintains a sense of kinship with their living-dead. Magesa (:49-50) tells of a scenario that gives a glimpse of reality in how an African relates his feeling to his ancestors in the ordinary context of life:

> On account of the relationship that exists between ancestors and descendants, any capriciousness is not taken kindly by the living, just as it would not be acceptable from any elder in society….Whenever the living feel that the ancestors are acting irrationally or unjustly, the usual questions put to the ancestors as part of a ritual would be: "Why are you doing this to us? What have we done? What have we not given you that was our duty to give?" One such scolding remonstration was recorded

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[44] Mbiti (1990:22)) presents the African concept of time as "potential time" referred to as *Sasa,* and "actual time" or Z*amani*. Sasa is explained by Mbiti as: "Events (which compose time) in the Sasa dimension must be either about to occur, or in the process of realization, or recently experienced. Sasa is the most meaningful period for the individual, because he has a personal recollection of the events or phenomena of this period, or he is about to experience them. Sasa is really an experiential extension of the Now-moment. . . stretched into the short future and into the unlimited past (or Zamani)."
Zamani is explained by Mbiti (ibid) as: ""Zamani is not limited to what in English is called the past. It also has its own 'past' and 'future', but on a wider scale. We might call it the *Macro-Time* (Big Time). Zamani overlaps with Sasa and the two are not separable. Sasa feeds or disappears into Zamani. But before events become incorporated into the Zamani, they have to become realized or actualized within the Sasa dimension. When this has taken place, then the events "move" backwards from the Sasa into the Zamani. So Zamani becomes the period beyond which nothing can go. Zamani is the graveyard of time…the final storehouse for all phenomena and events, the ocean of time in which everything becomes absorbed into a reality that is neither after nor before."

among the Thonga of South Africa. The scenario is that of a sick child. The elders of the family are offering a sacrifice to the ancestors for the child's recovery, during which they address the ancestors in the following normal way: "You, our gods, you—so and so …   here our offering. Bless this child and make him live and grow. Make him rich, so that when we visit him, he may be able to kill an ox for us." But soon follows the scolding, as if to shame the ancestors for being negligent in their responsibilities: "You are useless, you gods! You only give us trouble! For although we give offerings you do not listen to us! We are deprived of everything! You, so and so . . . you are full of hatred! You do not enrich us! All who succeed do so by the help of their gods." Finally, there is a petition in the hope that the ancestors will rectify the situation: 'Now we have made you this gift. Call your ancestors—so and so; call also the gods of the sick boy's father, because his father's people did not steal his mother. These people, of such and such a clan, came in the daylight.... So come…Eat and distribute among yourselves our ox…according to your wisdom.

Magesa (:50) makes it clear that, although people may complain to God or the ancestors, they seldom accuse them of moral wrongdoing. Eventually people would accept the fact that they are responsible for any moral transgression.   According to the principle of hierarchy, a person of higher status or rank is seldom accused of committing an offence against a person of lower status (Mbiti 1990:203).

From the above discussion, it is clear that the belief in ancestors is deeply rooted in many African traditional communities. The community derives its existential meaning through its ancestral anamnesis in all aspects of its life. Individuals in the community experience a meaningful solidarity with other members through their vital connection with their ancestors. To deny or ignore the place of ancestors and its related traditions is to ignore the main essence of community life.   How has the church responded to the dilemma of beliefs, rituals, and practices related to ancestors that often put Christians in conflict with their Christian faith? According to Mbiti (:230), when "*missionary Christianity"*, a Christianity deeply rooted in the Western tradition and culture, was introduced in Africa, great effort was made to separate new converts from their traditional culture rather than "redeem them within it". In his view, "[t]his form of Christianity made no positive attempt 'to incorporate ancestors and witches, song and dance, into the Christian scheme …in terms of conversion of a people, the Church

has failed, at least, because it has largely been unable to present to Africa more than a western image of its faith'" (Welbourn and Ogot, quoted in Mbiti 1990:230).

The role of ancestors as intercessors between God and the people often introduces a theological challenge to Christian faith that insists Christ is the only mediator, but for an African Christian, community life is so integrated in relation to ancestor spirits that it is difficult for him to separate himself from his community's cultural life without denying his identity with the community. In the last number of decades, various African theologians have given different answers to this problem. According to Ghanaian theologian John Pobee (1979:48), the ancestors in the Akan community are highly venerated, almost next to God, "the ancestors, like the Supreme Being, are always held in reverence or even worship". He calls the church to follow the approach of dialogue between the Christian faith and African cultural issues in order to seek common ground. Other African theologians, like Nyamiti, Magesa, Dickson and Mbiti have advocated similar views. In order to understand Christology from an African traditional perspective, Pobee (:94) proposes that, with the divinity of Jesus involving his authority and power to judge human deeds, Akan society similarly regards God and the ancestors as ones who "provide the sanctions for the good life and punish evil". The ancestors should be regarded as ministers who are acting on behalf of God. In that sense Pobee (ibid) argues:

> Our approach would be to look on Jesus as the Great and Greatest Ancestor—in Akan language *Nana* … he is superior to the other ancestors by virtue of being closest to God and as God. As *Nana* he has authority over not only the world of men but also of all spirit beings, namely the cosmic powers of the ancestors.

Pobee claims that interpreting Christian faith to the Akan in their language and according to the form of their religious thinking would be a better way of presenting the Gospel culturally and in meaningful terms. "African religions affirm the kindness and providence of God" (:75). Therefore, many positive aspects of cultural values associated with a belief in the

ancestors can be incorporated in Christian faith while allowing Christian values to filter out negative elements in the culture. Although this approach of a dialogue between the Gospel and the culture may sound simple, theologians like Pobee are aware of the fact it is not without serious theological problems. Pobee (:42) admits, "We have opted for 'dialogue' …. We [shall] do well to bear in mind the possibilities of error, distortion, and confusion that often go with dialogue".

Joseph Osei-Bonsu, a theologian from the Roman Catholic tradition, proposes a view that explains the role of ancestors similar to the idea of Christian saints. According to Osie-Bonsu (1990:352), in African traditional religions, not everyone who dies reaches the status of ancestor but only those who "led good lives and after their death are believed to be in a place of bliss". Since the ancestors are greatly respected, he argues that "this belief in the ancestors is fertile ground for teaching our people about the saints. Like the ancestors, the saints led good lives. Like the ancestors, the saints are not worshipped, but venerated" (:354). This approach provides a solution to the thorny theological problem of admitting the ancestors as intermediaries while preserving their place of respect in the community. Thinking missiologically, Osei-Bonsu (ibid) believes that, "In instructing African traditional religionists who become Christians, the traditional ideas of the ancestors can serve as the point of departure in talking about the saints and the doctrine of the communion of saints".

In contrast to theologians who are trying to find common ground between traditional devotion to ancestors and Christian faith, Byang Kato, a conservative theologian from Nigeria, strongly advocates another approach that demands the culture to submit to traditional teachings of the church. He states, "Express Christianity in a truly African context, allowing it to judge the African culture and never to take precedence over Christianity. To do otherwise would isolate African Christianity from historical Christianity, Biblically based" (Kato 1975:182). Kato argues that Christians are called to reject their religious devotion to their ancestors because it

is incompatible with Biblical teaching. In his view, there is no scriptural basis for "direct communication with the deceased" (:180). In agreement with Kato, Richard Gehman, in his recent book *Who are the Living-Dead?* (1999:85), argues that African people are motivated by fear more than true love in expressing their devotion to their ancestors. He states, "If we define worship in the strict Christian sense as praise, reverence, love and devotion, then we can say that Africans have not worshipped their ancestors. The attitude of adoration is not present. Rather they have served the ancestors out of fear, seeking to appease the spirits" (ibid). Mbiti agrees with Gehman's assessment to some degree when he points out African people's ambiguous reaction in feelings of love and hate towards the ancestors. On one hand they approach the ancestors to help them in their needs and "[e]ven if the living-dead may not do miracles or extraordinary things to remedy the need, men experience a sense of psychological relief when they pour their hearts' troubles before their seniors who have a foot in both worlds" (Mbiti 1990:82). On the other hand, they find them bothersome:

> When the living-dead return and appear to their relatives, this experience is not received with great enthusiasm by men; if it becomes too frequent, people resent it….The living-dead are wanted and yet not wanted. If they have been improperly buried or were offended before they died, it is feared by the relatives or the offenders that the living-dead would take revenge…in the form of misfortune, especially illness, or disturbing frequent appearances…. (:83)

It seems that fear of misfortune or sickness or loss of blessing tends to dominate people's response to ancestors. Like Kato, Gehman does not provide a practical solution to this knotty theological issue of reconciling the place of ancestors with the Christian context, apart from the call to seek Jesus Christ whole-heartedly and to turn away from their religious devotion to ancestors.

Without the central role of ancestors, traditional community would not remain the same, but would take on a radically new definition, and may undertake a long journey to find its new identity. Many such communities now appear to be in that liminal stage on the margin of

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modern society and universal religions, like Christianity and Islam, trying to find their place in ever-changing modern world. African urban youth could be seen in similar predicament, seeking their place of identity, a place or community where they can belong meaningfully. According to the empirical survey (Chapter 5), most youth in Nairobi expressed diminishing interest in ancestors. Belief in ancestors has little relevancy to their lives in the urban setting. At the same time, many of them have not found a meaningful symbolic social connection with the church. However, it is possible for the church to provide that connection by being and functioning as community rather than as an institution. In the life of the early church, one could see that various individuals and groups in their transition to faith in Christ did find a 'home' to belong to in the church community (Chapter 4).

3.2.1.2   God and other spirits

GOD: Although traditional African religion is basically anthropocentric, God is implicitly believed in as the basis of life and foundation of human society (Mbiti 1990:90; Bujo 1998:25). According to many African scholars, there is no clear statement of belief or doctrine about God in African religious thought. However, the belief in one supreme deity has been a norm. Mbiti reports that he examined several concepts of God in his study of more than 300 groups of people. He found that numerous "proverbs, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories and religious ceremonies" express different notions about God (Mbiti 1990:29). Belief in God as the creator and sustainer of life in the universe has been the common belief (:33). Mbiti (ibid) explains how God is viewed as "simultaneously transcendent and immanent". His transcendence is commonly understood by associating him with the sky, a metaphor of immensity and incomprehensible. His immanence is often experienced by associating his creative power with natural objects and phenomena. For instance, lightning and thunderstorm may be interpreted as his anger. Mbiti (ibid) makes it very clear that African people do not hold pantheistic views, considering "God to be everything and everything to be God". He informs that, among the people of East Africa, God is definitely believed as one (:36). In his critique of Mbiti's premise of common belief in

One Supreme Being by many African tribal groups, Ray (1976:15) contends that "Mbiti extracts supreme gods from the various socio-religious systems to which they belong and constructs a composite, larger-than-life picture which goes far beyond the scope of any single African divinity". Ray (ibid) finds that Mbiti is projecting his theological category of one supreme God of Judeo-Christian tradition into African traditional societies rather than discerning the concept of god anthropologically. This might be true, because belief in one God does not seem to play a major role in African religious thought.

According to the results of his research, Mbiti has not found any evidence of God presented in visual terms: he is perceived as spirit. Mbiti (:34) explains:

> It is commonly believed that God is Spirit, even if in thinking or talking about Him African peoples may often use anthropomorphic images. As far as it is known, there are no images or physical representations of God by African peoples: this being one clear indication that they consider Him to be a Spiritual Being. The fact that He is invisible also leads many to visualize Him as spiritual rather than physical.

Another well-known scholar from West Africa, Bolaji Idowu (1962:36), agrees with Mbiti and presents a similar assessment in the defence of belief in one Supreme Being among the Yoruba. It is clear that belief in one supreme God is prevalent among most of the African traditional communities. Africans are deeply aware of God's existence and their dependence on him through their experience of life in the created world of nature that witnesses to its creator's power and wisdom (O'Donovan 1996:42). This explains the lack of temple or physical figures dedicated to one supreme God for worship in traditional African communities.

The question of how African people relate to God in traditional society in the absence of formalised worship of God often arises. To an outside observer, the supreme deity, God, seems to be remote from the personal experience of Africans, especially where the veneration of divinities and ancestors is strong. Idowu (1962:141) gives three reasons to show that it is not true. First, speaking of the phenomena of the Yoruba cult of divinities, he explains:

> These so predominate the scene that it is difficult for the casual observer to notice that under them, there is one vital cultic basis. There is pantheon, but it is possible to search through it without meeting Oludumare [the Supreme Being]. The reason for that, of course, is not that He does not exist, that He is *incertus* or *remotus*, but He [is] just not of the rank and the file of the orisa and therefore is not to be found as one of them.

His second explanation draws attention to the fact that the Yoruba do not erect temples and build images of Olodumare because "they are only being true to their concept of Him…. The Yoruba cannot conceive in what form the Deity of such attributes could be represented in images" (ibid). Thirdly, he explains that the conception of the position of the deity is a reflection of their social and cultural pattern. In Yoruba society, a young person does not approach an elder directly when he wants a favour. Idowu (ibid) points out, "Even a son may not go directly to his father to beg for a great favour or apologise for an offence. The young person must approach the elder on such occasions through an intermediary, a friend or a peer of the one who is being approached." Idowu's explanations provide deeper understanding of the need to approach God through the role of intermediaries, like ancestors. By virtue of having a mediating role, the ancestors often seem to represent God symbolically.

Ontologically, religion that gives form to traditional African community is rooted in the belief of one Supreme Being. According to his theory of 'vital force' in *Bantu Philosophy*, Placid Tempels (1959:61) stresses the ontological necessity of God in traditional African perception of the universe:

> Above all force is God, Spirit and Creator, the *mwine bukomo bwandi*. It is he who has force, power, in himself. He gives existence, power of survival and of increase, to other forces….After him come the first fathers of men, founders of the different clans. These archipatriarchs were the first to whom God communicated his vital force, with the power of exercising their influences on all posterity.

In anamnesis of ancestral tradition, African people implicitly, if not explicitly, acknowledge God, the giver of life through their ancestors. It is God who gives the ancestors power and

authority over the community. In agreement with the explanation by Tempels, Bujo (1998:16) makes a similar statement concerning African people's awareness of their dependency on one Supreme Being, "[a]ccordingly, natural forces can influence men and women ontologically and vice versa. All this can be traced to the highest invisible being, who created everything: God!". God is perceived as the source of life and moral authority. In this respect the community understands that its moral authority flows from God through its ancestors. The community does not see itself as an independent entity that shapes the life of its members by "consensually constructed moral order" (Wuthnow 1987:52).[45] Magesa (1997:81) clearly states this understanding; God is "the ultimate foundation of the vital force, solidarity, and harmony" from which the ancestors derived their moral legitimacy and authority".

Even though Africans are deeply religious people and are aware of the presence of one great Supreme Deity, it has been observed that they as community seldom seek God for His own sake (Mbiti 1990:96). This is a significant aspect in understanding the community's perception and its relation with God in existential terms. Mbiti's explanation is helpful. African approach to God is basically utilitarian; people are yearning for the lost paradise in the *Zamani* period, looking to the distant past rather than to God himself (ibid). "When individuals and communities get satisfactory amounts of food, children, rain, health and prosperity, they have approached something of the original state" (ibid). This is an African version of 'paradise'. Mbiti (ibid) clarifies it further: "At such times they do not generally turn to God in the utilitarian acts of worship as much as they do when these items are at stake." Such an attitude clearly affirms that African ontology is basically anthropocentric: man is at the very centre of existence, it is expected that all beings, including God, exist for

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[45] Wuthnow points out this view of some of the proponents of the post-structural approach like Habermas, who advocates legitimising moral authority based on consensus through communication. God is not considered as the ultimate ground of moral authority.

the sake of man (Mbiti 1990:90; Bujo 1998:25). This utilitarian view of God tends to be reflected in much of the community's attitude in responding to One Supreme Being.

In Mbiti's (:97) view, since God is not sought after for His own sake but for the sake of man, traditional African religion tends to remain tribalistic and nationalistic. It lacks universal appeal. It does not offer hope or "a way of 'escape', a message of redemption…. Such redemption involves rescue from the monster of death, regaining immortality and attaining the gift of the resurrection" (ibid). Although there are great values and sensitivity to the existential needs of people, traditional African religion lacks a soteriological dimension; it does not have an answer or solution for the redemptive need of people before God (ibid).

THE SPIRIT WORLD: One can hardly get a grasp on the cultural beliefs and practices of traditional African society while ignoring the world of spirits and invisible forces and their effect on individual and community behaviour. In the words of Mbiti (1990:74), "The spiritual world of African peoples is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits and the living-dead". The reality of spiritual powers and forces is one of the basic assumptions of life in traditional community. The African mind seldom separates its effect from the physical reality. Physical and spiritual world intermingle to the extent that it is difficult to draw a distinction or separate them (ibid). For instance, sickness is seen as caused by natural forces as well as spiritual forces. Shorter (1978:64) explains that the term 'medicine' in African terminology includes both "magical medicine and medicine with therapeutic or toxic qualities". There is no distinction between the two.

Mbiti (1990:74) presents two categories of spirits according to their origin. The first category of spirits includes those that are created originally as spirits, such as divinities and ordinary spirits. The second category includes those who were once human beings, like the living-dead. Most people tend to believe that the final destiny of human beings after death is in the

form of spirits. They are no longer remembered in the memory of the earthly human community. "They have no family or personal ties with human beings, and are no longer the living-dead. As such, people fear them, although intrinsically the spirits are neither evil nor good" (:78). As the names of the living-dead fade completely from the memories of people, they become a thing, a spirit and are not human any more. There is no relationship of anamnesis with them anymore.

However, the reality of their presence is felt in the life of the community in many different ways. Some spirits are good and some are bad, depending on how the community understands them in its social context (Shorter 1998:64). According to Ray (1976:150), "[t]he suffering or misfortune caused by ancestors or gods are not evils. They are punishments aimed at correcting immoral behavior." Likewise, some magic is considered useful. It cures, protects or benefits people and things. Bad magic, sorcery, on the other hand, harms, hinders or destroys. Like magic, spirits are manipulated for one's benefit or protection through various rituals, charms and witchcraft. Many of the underlying attitudes of people towards sickness, death, social conflict and misfortune are influenced by belief in witchcraft or the mystical power of spirits.

Diviners or traditional doctors are often involved in the community in exorcising the spirits that are known to be causing restlessness and disturbance to people. When a community is threatened with sickness, misfortune or unusual phenomena, a ritual or formal ceremony with some form of sacrifice is performed by community elders or priests to cast away such notorious spirits from the community or village, in order to restore the balance.

Individually, people fear various forms of witchcraft that can be associated with sickness or misfortune. Witchcraft is seen as an effect of the malevolent spirits that are manipulated by individuals who are intending to bring harm on others. Benjamin Ray (ibid) points out that the evil of witchcraft lies in perverted people: "The image of the witch or sorcerer is the image of

an inverted or reversed human being." In order to counteract the effect of witchcraft, people in different societies have developed various preventive and curative approaches with the help of diviners and traditional healers. Some people wear, carry or keep charms, amulets and a variety of other objects on their bodies, in their homes and fields. The negative side of this is that it adds an economic burden to the family and adds anxiety to people's lives, not knowing when they will be victimised by witchcraft. Witchcraft is a negative aspect of African traditional society and no one escapes from its social and psychological impact.

It is deeply entrenched in the cultural fabric of African society. Even in urban areas, belief in magic and witchcraft expressed in modern forms is evident during exams, football games, love, business, health and so on (Shorter 1998:64). In urban areas like Nairobi, traditional healers frequently advertise their services in the newspaper and in marketplaces. It shows that belief in magic, witchcraft and the mystical power of spirits remains a dominant feature of the African worldview. To ignore this aspect of African life is to deny its cultural reality, especially for the church, which is called to proclaim the message of salvation. One should note that it took several centuries, with the help of the Enlightenment, to overcome the deeply held belief in witchcraft of the European psyche (:69). It has not completely disappeared from modern Western thinking, but has taken different forms like the belief in astrology and in various forms of New Age Movement activity.

Spirit possession is a common phenomenon in every African society (Mbiti 1990:80). It may exhibit different forms and expressions. In some societies it is desirable to be possessed and possession is induced through dancing and drumming until one collapses. Sometimes the one who is possessed becomes a medium through whom the spirit speaks. Mbiti (ibid) points out that individuals can experience harmful effects when they are possessed without their consent: "They may cause severe torment on the possessed; the spirit may drive him away from his home so that he lives in the forest; it may cause him to jump into the fire and get

himself burnt, to torture his body with sharp instruments, or even to do harm to other people."
In comparison to men, women are generally more susceptible to spirit possession (:81).

There seems to be many explanations for the persistent presence of witchcraft in African societies. One common explanation, according to Kombo (2003:78), is that it acts as a social control mechanism. Kombo says (ibid), "[f]rom African perspective, witchcraft has positive attributes given that fear of possible usage of mystical power by witches, sorcerers and diviners force the people to behave in socially accepted ways. These ordinary people do not want to attract the attention of witches by going out of the ordinary." It forces the people to conform to the established social customs of their ancestors.

3.2.2 Individuals in the Community

Although the community takes precedence over an individual in traditional African society, it does not disregard the individuality of its members. Individuals are regarded as important members in traditional African community. Without individuals it would be hard to conceive a community. However, individuals find their significance only in relation to the community as a whole, not apart from it. The concept of individualism in the Cartesian sense is very foreign to traditional African thinking. Individualism conceives of a person who can exist in his own right, apart from any reference to others, an autonomous rational being. A person who grows up in modern Western society or in a similar kind of social environment often perceives himself or herself as an autonomous person—'I' versus 'them'. In contrast, an individual with a traditional African perspective would find it very difficult to conceive of existence apart from the community (Mbiti 1990:72). Bujo (1998:74) puts it this way: "[E]ven in the so-called private spheres, the African person thinks in terms of the community, since one knows that one's whole life consists in mutual give and take, or receive it." Because an individual finds his/her identity as a person so intricately wrapped up in the web of relationships with others in the community, he/she finds it hard to think of existence without the reference to community. "He owes his existence to other people, including those

of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole" (Mbiti 1990:72). In that respect it is difficult to talk about African ethics from an individualistic perspective (Bujo 1998:54).

In African thinking and against the African value system the community takes priority over the individual. It is seen in the overarching concept of *UBUNTU* that is enshrined in the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, i.e. "persons depend on persons to be persons" (Shutte 2001:3). Human beings realise their existence as persons by belonging to the community. "At the beginning of one's life one is only potentially a person. One's life, if all goes well, is a continual becoming more of a person through one's interaction with others" (:9). Through the structure of various relationships in the community, a person's identity is collectively formed and defined. Therefore, an individual can describe his personhood as, "I am, because we are. We are therefore I am" (Mbiti 1990:106).

The community that is closest to an individual is his kinship group or the web of extended family relationships. To this group he is deeply attached and he is dependent on them for his self-existence. The kinship group as community not only provides social support but also shapes the individual's identity as a person. "The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group" (ibid). Kinship plays a significant role in defining one's identity. Because an individual's identity is forged by others in the community, he or she acquires the identity of a corporate person. A traditional African person therefore always understands himself in relation to the group of his origination. That is why he is *muntu*, the one who realises his existence as a living being only by sharing vital force with other beings (Tempels 1959:47). Tempels (:104) underscores this significance of interdependent relationship in philosophic terms, "The human being, apart from the ontological hierarchy and the interaction of forces, has no existence in the conceptions of the Bantu." This is a very significant point in understanding the African

philosophical view of human life in contrast to the modern Western perspective of individualism.

It has been pointed out clearly that an individual in African society derives his identity in solidarity with his community. This concept is enshrined in the word *UBUNTU*. However, some clarification is needed. An individual's identity does not merely rest on relationship with others in the community, but *with* the community as a corporate whole. It is the community that organically connects him to the ancestors to whom he owes life, receiving the vital force from God through them. Bujo (1998:16) explains the mutual relationship between the ancestors and the individual that binds together with the community, "The relationship between those living on earth and the ancestors is very close, since the living owe their existence to the ancestors from whom they receive everything necessary for life. On the other hand, the living-dead can 'enjoy' being ancestors only through the living community of the clan." This sense of anamnesis with one's ancestors, in fact, gives the person a meaningful relationship with others in the community because there is a sense of common sharing of the life force through the common ancestors. This influences a deeper relationship of interdependence with one another and one's ethical behaviour and moral responsibilities towards one another in the community (ibid). This anamnetic nature of community gives an individual a true sense of being a person with corporate identity, meaning and security.

Although the African is a communal person in traditional sense, his individuality is not being subdued or neglected. Community gives a person a sense of belonging, identity and security. Within the boundaries of communal life, one finds freedom to enjoy life. Individuality is always expressed within the confinement of community life. Kanyaro (2002:66) points out, "one's dreams only become visions when set within a community; the community helps to envision those dreams and to implement them." Community sets the parameters of what one can do and cannot do in accordance with the tradition. The interest of the community always overshadows the interest of an individual when there is a conflict of interests. This is evident

in the communal nature of property ownership. Magesa (1999:277) writes, "In African religious thought, the right of personal ownership is situated within the context of joint or public right of access to the basic resources necessary for life." In other words, an individual is given a right to enjoy the material goods as long as it does not interfere with communal harmony. This principle can even apply to social relationships as well. "Relatives and friends expect to share in one another's property" (:279).

Even though community takes precedence over an individual, the individual's place and identity nevertheless is fully recognised in traditional African community. It is evidenced in the way each person is given a unique name. Bujo (2001:24), by pointing out the importance of giving a name to an individual, argues that "…individuality in Africa is emphasised by the fact that each one has his own name, which is different from that of his parents". In traditional context, the name implies the person, not just a designation (Mbiti 1990:150). Besides each individual being recognised by his name, the community places "great importance to *intentionality* [italics in text] in the ethical conduct of the individual" (Bujo 2001:24). This, in traditional community, shows that a person's individuality is affirmed only in relation to his solidarity with his community, according to the principle of solidarity that states, "each one becomes a human being only in a fellowship of life with others" (ibid).

In the above discussion, the nature of traditional African community is examined in relation to God, spirits and ancestors. Every aspect of community life is found to be intricately interwoven with religious elements. The ancestral tradition seems to permeate almost all aspects of community life. By following the ways of the ancestors, the memory of ancestors is kept alive. The belief in God provides the moral basis for the existence of the universe and for the legitimate moral authority of the ancestors as keepers and intermediaries for the community. It was indicated that individuals are valued in the community as long as they function within the bounds of the community's interests. Since individuals find their identity in the community, they see the community as their own selves. Individualism is a foreign

concept in the eyes of traditional African people. In contrast, young people in the urban context may find some freedom as individuals, but in the absence of stable community they often face identity crisis as they lack a reference point to define themselves. Consequently they search for a group to belong. In this regard, perhaps the church can fill that void by being a community that youth can relate to without losing their individuality.

3.3   COMMUNITY AS FAMILY WITH CHARACTER AND VALUES

Whether it is a modern or traditional community, each community has its own set of values and goals which define its moral character and its priorities in shaping its members' identity through various forms of socialisation. The primary goal of traditional African community is to preserve life, which is best expressed in understanding the community as a family unit.[46] This ideal of being a family determines or shapes the moral and social structure of the community life (Magesa 1997:31-32). The basic idea of morality is understood simply as "the good that sustains life and the bad that destroys it" (:35). Anything that is detrimental to the peace and prosperity of the family is considered morally bad; anything that sustains and fosters the family life force is good. On the basis on such a moral understanding of the community's goal, the values and related praxis of the community are the expression of its primary goal—i.e. to preserve life as a family, its inner life-force. According to Magesa (:35), recognising the preservation of life as the primary guiding force in the life of traditional African community provides one of the key principles to understanding the meaning behind symbols and rituals. It also helps in the interpretation of all the moral and ethical actions. This helps in understanding the reason why the family is so important in African culture, even in the modern urban context.

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[46] Mbiti (1990:104-5) describes the African concept of family that includes all the living and departed relatives, as well as those who are yet to be born. The community is the family.

In light of the stated purpose of traditional African community, the study investigates some of the key values that elicit a commitment to sustaining the family: marriage, sex and children, the kinship relationship, sharing, interdependency, initiation rites and rituals, and formation of character and identity. These values are clustered into two groups because of their inter-relatedness. The concept and attitude towards marriage, sex and having children are discussed together in the first part. Then the idea and attitude towards relationship, kinship, interdependency, and a rite of passage are discussed in the second part. These values and their related practices express some of the essential features of traditional African culture. However, it is in the interest of this research to find out empirically to what extent these values are important to African urban youth in Nairobi at the present time as a part of their heritage.

3.3.1 Family in view of ancestral anamnesis

In traditional African community, family is always seen from the perspective of ancestral anamnesis. The issues of marriage, sex and bearing children are understood from that hermeneutic perspective. They are deeply related and hence cannot be studied as separate issues apart from the others. For example, one would fail to understand the issue of polygamy apart from the importance of having more children. All these values are interconnected and should be understood when they are viewed against the background of symbolic significance to the religious meaning of being remembered.

The African community is often described as a three-dimensional community: the living-dead, the living and the ones yet to be born. In this respect, bearing children is seen as very important goal in life. Besides having biological, economic and social value, it has a religious dimension to it. When a child is conceived, it is an occasion for rejoicing because the child symbolically strengthens the flow of life from one generation to another and assures the survival of the community as well as serving as "the way of insuring that a person is not cut

off from personal immortality" (Mbiti 1990:25). To be remembered by one's descendants has deep eschatological value. Children are seen as a fulfilment of this longing. According to Mulandi (2003:61)[47] the conception of life often takes religious significance. It involves the cooperation of the parents with the ancestors and God. Thus, having children has religious meaning and experience for traditional African family. To husband and wife, the first pregnancy symbolises "the final seal of marriage, the sign of complete integration of the woman into her husband's family and kinship circle" (Mbiti 1990:107). It is a moment of great joy. The birth of a child also helps in stabilising the relationship between the husband and the wife (Getui 1990:72).

In addition to the yearning to be 'remembered', the goal of the marriage is to bear offspring for the survival of the community. Failing to bear children undermines the continuity of community life. Considered from the perspective of anamnesis and survival, children are a very valuable asset to the community as a whole. For this reason when a child is born, the whole community therefore takes responsibility for the survival and nurturing of the child, because the child belongs to the community—"a child cannot be exclusively 'my child' but only 'our child'" (Mbiti 1990:107). The child is socialised from birth to become "a corporate person" (ibid). The community welcomes the newborn with prayer and rituals, including animal sacrifice, to protect the child from harmful spirits (:111).

The naming of the child is regarded as a very important ritual. Names are chosen for significant reasons. Often the name of departed ancestors or grandparents is given in the belief that the life of the ancestor (certain characteristics or physical distinctions) will continue through the child, as if the ancestor is "partially 're-incarnated' in the child" (:115). It is not uncommon for the child to take on the characteristics of the person whose name is

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[47] Sr. Joyce Mulandi, a member of Our Lady of Charity has written an article on the subject of religious formation from the perspective of African tradition, in part as a response to inculturation of Christian faith in African culture. Her article "Religious formation from the African perspective" appeared in *African Ecclesiastical Review*, 45 (1) March 2003.

given. The community treats the child in the manner in which it would treat the person he or she is named after. In this process, the child adopts the characteristics of the ancestor whose name he or she bears. Kanyaro (2002:66), the author of *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*, describes her own experience when she wanted to name her son 'Immanuel'. Her father-in-law intervened and gave his grandson his own name because he wanted his name to live on in his grandson's life, so he would be remembered. After giving the name, he uttered the words, "should death come his way, he was ready to go, because he has been born and will continue to live." Kanyaro was given the status of the mother of the old man because her son inherited the name. This shows that each name in African society carries significant religious and social meaning. It provides symbolic continuity from one generation to another.

Traditional African view of marriage must be understood and interpreted within the framework of ancestral anamnesis, otherwise one may get a distorted view of it. African marriage is a communal and religious affair. It embraces "the entire fellowship: the living, the dead, and the unborn" (Bujo, 2001:58). Marriage is not an affair between two committed individuals, as it is understood in the Western cultural framework. The African concept of marriage is difficult to understand apart from the involvement of the community. Bujo (ibid) explains marriage as "one of the fundamental elements which strengthen and re-establish the community; it signifies an anamnetic solidarity with one's ancestors. … begetting and giving birth re-establish the legacy of the ancestors."

Marriage is not complete until the union of man and woman produces a child. Bujo (ibid) stresses the grave consequences for the marriage that fails to produce a child in explaining that "so much weight is attached to the birth of a child, it follows that the worst death is to die childless". In this respect, the primary goal of marriage is procreation. It is a religious duty. The society expects its members to be married and to bear children in the interest of corporate

and individual survival (Mbiti 1990:116). Having children not only insures the continuity of the community, but also "keeps alive the memory of the ancestors and makes it present" (ibid). Although having children is viewed as the highest purpose in the interest of the community, this expectation sometimes causes great pain and agony for women who fail to bear children. Her value (self-worth) depends on her capacity to bear a child; otherwise, she is condemned as dead person. Mbiti (107) describes her fate in strong words when he states that "her failure to bear children is worse than committing genocide; she has become the dead end of human life, not only for the genealogical line but also for herself." In response to female critics who have spoken out against some of the oppressive aspects of traditional attitude towards women that is revealed in such cases, Bujo (1998:128-131) seems to support the thinking that portrays polygamy and female circumcision as negative elements, but he remains silent about the dignity of a woman who fails to bear children. Letty Russell (2006:46), referring to Mercy Oduyoye (Oduyoye, 1999), writes:

> …in a country where motherhood is as sacred as it was in Israel, she managed to mother many, but bore no children of her own. Married into a patriarchal Yoruba group in western Nigeria, Mercy, nevertheless, has chosen to live in her own matrilineal Akan context in Ghana, and to share an international marriage with Modupe Oduyoye across nations. Into the cracks of colonial theology she has poured creative understandings of the church and mission, and become the mother of African women's theology.

If traditional African society fails to affirm the barren or single woman's humanity as a person, then the church must not fail in lifting up the dignity of women like Mercy in the family of God.

In traditional African community, marriage is not an option. Bujo (2001:57) states, "One who refuses to play his part will be reproached by the entire community, since this negative attitude is understood as a contempt which contradicts the good law of the ancestors." Magesa (1997:116) similarly stresses the value of marriage to the community: "the survival of kinship in the social structure of Africa depends on marriage." To refuse to get married is

tantamount to rejecting the society. Mbiti (1990:103) points out that such people are considered a curse to the community. They undermine the life of the community, therefore, the community's moral expectation of marriage demands that the couple must bear children in order to realise the basic intention of marriage.

This instrumental aspect of marriage dictates why traditional African marriage ought to be considered as a dynamic process in contrast to the Western view that understands marriage as a contract concluded at a point in time. According to Bujo's (1998:94) description, marriage in Africa is conducted in stages. Each stage is followed by symbolic acts to assure the success of marriage (i.e. to bear children). The ancestors are approached through prayers and offerings to ensure their blessings. Sexual intercourse is only a part of the process. "Man and woman become marriage partners properly only after the birth of their first child" (:95). In African marriage, fatherhood and motherhood take priority over being husband and wife because the primary purpose of marriage is having children. Children are seen as establishing the presence of ancestral anamnesis.

Marriage provides a link that connects the present with the past, Sasa with Zamani. The ancestors expect the marriage to produce children so that their lives can find continuity through their descendants and they may be 'remembered'. Since marriage is regarded as a religious affair, all preparations are to be done according to the established tradition with its rituals and taboos (Magesa 1997:121). The living head of the family or clan, an elder, who represents God and the ancestors, oversees the process of marriage at different stages and he blesses and sanctions the marriage in the name of the ancestors (:123).

Traditional African marriage is more than an affair between a man and a woman or even between the two families, but involves the whole community. It often also binds two

communities together (:119). Mbiti (1990:130) says that "[m]arriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator." Young people are prepared right from birth, through the process of various initiation rites, to become responsible and mature adults who will continue to carry on the cycle of life through marriage and procreation. Mbiti (:132) sees initiation as "ritual sanctification and preparation for marriage, and only when it is over may young people get married." Therefore, marriage is considered a sacred rite that binds the community and sustains its life through procreation.

As stated previously, marriage is not a personal affair between two individuals but of the community. In most African societies, a man who wants to marry someone usually approaches the matter through parents or relatives. They take responsibility for marriage negotiations and its arrangement. Usually it involves the giving of some form of gift of value, like cattle or goats, to the bride's family. It does not imply buying a bride. Mbiti (1990:137) points out that it is misleading to call such a gift to the bride's family a 'bride price'; "it is a token of gratitude on the part of the bridegroom's people to those of the bride, for their care [of] her and for allowing her to become his wife". He sees this practice as "the most concrete symbol of the marriage contract" (ibid). Magesa (1997:128) calls the gift as "the bride-wealth". In his view, 'the bride-wealth' promotes social unity and "cements and expresses kinship ties" (:129). It is a valuable cultural practice that knits the community together.

Other forms of marriage also play a significant role in traditional African community. They are also undergirded by the ancestral anamnesis. The practice of polygamy does make good sense when it is seen against the social and religious structure of traditional African society. It is not only morally right in the eyes of the community but it is "almost universally preferential" (:136). It enhances the chances of attaining 'immortality' by having many descendants who will remember him after his death (Mbiti 1990:139). "Such a man has the attitude that 'the more *we are*, the bigger *I am*' [italics in text]. Children are the glory of

marriage, and the more there are of them the greater the glory" (ibid). This attitude simply affirms that the primary purpose of the community is to celebrate life, and a large family is a sign of abundant life.

In light of sustaining the concept of family as abundant life, other forms of marriage are also sanctioned by the African society. In some communities, for instance among the Luo of Kenya, the brother of a man who dies becomes obliged to take care of the widow (Magesa, 1997:140-141). The children who are born to the brother or relative belong to the deceased. The widow also remains the wife of the dead man. Magesa (ibid) points out that such a "leviratic union is not a proper "marriage" in the African point of view" but the society provides a way of sustaining the marriage of the deceased brother through temporary substitution. In a similar vein, a sororatic marriage allows the woman who cannot bear children to "ask a sister to be a co-wife with her so that the latter can have children for the man's clan and remove the shame of childlessness that would otherwise fall on her family and clan" (ibid). Whatever the form of marriage that the community may sanction according to the norms of its tradition, the moral and religious purpose remains the preservation and transmission of the life of the community through bearing of children and to signify "an anamnetic solidarity with one's ancestors" (Bujo 2001:57).

In view of the family as a sign of abundant life, marriage is a visible expression of human sexuality. "The goal of sexuality is to keep together the community entrusted to us by our ancestors and to bestow ever new life on this community" (Bujo 2001:59). This goal guides the underlying religious value of how sexuality is practiced in different communities. The act of sex is viewed as sacred in most African communities because sexual intercourse is understood as the transmission of life, the origin of which is granted by God (Mulandi 2003:62). This religious dimension of sex affects various attitudes in procreation and social relationships (Mbiti 1990:143). Its sacredness is maintained by the application of rituals and

taboos to prevent its abuse. Premarital sex is forbidden in many societies. Purity and virginity are virtues highly celebrated by the respected families and their communities (Mulandi 2003:62). A girl who is not a virgin at the time of marriage is a disgrace to her family, the sponsor, community, and even to her future children. According to Mulandi (2003:63), women who are not virgins or conceived before marriage lose their value and lose respect. They are married off to elderly men or widowers as second-hand wives with very little bride price.

Some tribal groups, like the Azande, according to Evan-Prichard, permit their unmarried young men and women who have been initiated to engage in premarital sexual relationships (Magesa 1997:142). It is not for self-indulgence but to ensure that the man is sexually virile to produce children and the woman is fertile to bear children (ibid). In Magesa's (:143) view, the power of human sexuality is celebrated for procreation—"it is indeed the cornerstone of life and happiness in the African community."

In traditional society, sexual freedom is often restrained by means of various prohibitions and taboos to ensure harmony in the life of the community. Sexuality finds legitimacy and fulfilment in serving the common good of the life of the community rather than "the individualistic-personalistic pleasure principle" (Bujo 2001:60). The strong desire to be remembered by the living members of the family, for example, placed high value on having children. The function of marriage and sex was primarily defined by this goal. However, this value does not have the same significance in the urban context as in traditional society, especially among the youth. Empirical data indicate that nearly twenty-eight percent of the urban youth do not care about naming their children with traditional names and twelve percent are not sure whether this tradition has any value. However, close to 60 percent still see some value in naming their children to maintain their family or clan identity. This indicates that the majority of the youth still view the family as very important. The question

that needs to be asked relates to what symbolic meaning the naming of children holds for the urban young. In the urban society increasing numbers of young people are crossing tribal boundaries in marriage; the meaning and practice of keeping traditional names may find a different significance. Most people would not feel the need to name their children for the same reasons as people in traditional society do. But they may do that for a different symbolic reason, such as to maintain some solidarity with their extended family or clan because kinship is still given high value among the urban youth.

In traditional community, the value of marriage lies in bearing children for the symbolic purpose of being remembered and to sustain the life the community. In the urban context, traditional concept of marriage has experienced major modification as its purpose is redefined. Urban youth were asked, in the survey questionnaire, whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "For me the most important reason for getting married is to maintain our family roots by having children." Only 37 percent responded positively to this statement. Nearly 53 percent of the respondents expressed their disagreement and ten percent of the respondents were not sure. Most youth do not hold traditional view of marriage according to which the primary reason for having children is for the continuity of family. In the urban context, people get married for other reasons as well, like companionship, sexual fulfilment and security. This shift in value has many social implications for young people in the urban context. It may allow women who cannot bear children to feel accepted in the society with some dignity. Some young people who may not want to get married at an early age might be able resist pressure from relatives to get married soon in order to bear children.

Some of the views and values regarding marriage and sex in traditional African community may differ from Christian views and practices. Some values may find common ground with the biblical norms and some could be questionable. Some of the African values have been

judged and criticised in the past according to the ethical norms based on Western thought and values, which were historically accepted as biblical norms or even as universal and which are now debatable. Bujo (1998:106), for example, challenges the teachings of the Western Church that are based on Natural Law. He argues, "It is hardly too much to state that the entire Christian, or at least Catholic, teaching on marriage is based on Western philosophy, which claims to be of universal validity. Yet the question was never asked how to deal with those who do not argue on the basis of natural law to find and substantiate their norms" (ibid). On the issue of marriage, he points out: "Marriage as observed in the West grew out of a certain historical and cultural context. It should not be universalized too quickly" (:107). He rightfully states: "Christianity has never critically asked itself how marriage in the non-Christian and non-Western cultures can be defined" (ibid).

The value of ancestral memory as a culturally sensitive hermeneutics for a community-based discipleship approach to themes related to the family unit, particularly those which affect the youth, needs to be continually explored. There seems to be a need for continual dialogue between traditional teachings of the Church and the traditional values. Some of the moral teachings of the Church concerning marriage and sexuality may need to be re-evaluated from a traditional African hermeneutical perspective without compromising the integrity of the Scripture. For instance, the African communal understanding of marriage has something worthwhile to contribute in order to bring balance to the view of marriage in an age of unchecked individualism where the sacred institution of marriage seems to be of not accountable to anyone, not even to a Christian community. There is much that is positive in traditional African values that can be integrated with the church's teaching in the youth discipleship community, like clear guidance and responsible sexual behaviour. In traditional society, it was the responsibility of the community to educate the youth through initiation rites. The church can facilitate such dialogue in urban setting where youth feel free to ask

questions and find guidance through interaction with others in the context of community that is open and affirming.

3.3.2   Ancestral anamnesis sustaining cultural and social solidarity

Community in traditional African society is all about human relationship. Relationship at all levels, from tribal, clan, kinship, extended family to one-on-one, is defined and guided by the ancestral tradition in order to foster solidarity with the community.   These relationships affect all aspects of an individual's life in relation to others—behaviour, thinking, attitude, and moral character (Mbiti 1990:102). This section will focus on the value of the kinship relationship, mutual sharing, interdependency, and the rite of passage that often expresses cultural and social solidarity.

SELF WITH OTHERS: The great significance of social relationship in the life of African people can only be appreciated when it is understood from the social and ethical framework of the African view of human *person* or *self,* which is expressed in the concept of *Ubuntu*—"a person is a person through persons" (Shutte 2001:23), or "I am because we are" (Mbiti 1990:106). In the Western concept, the person is often viewed as an autonomous self that exists apart from others and determines its own identity and character as it interacts in its social context. In contrast, the African view of the human self does not firstly exist itself and then enters into relationships with others. "It only exists in relation to its surroundings: these relationships are what it is. And the most important of these relationships we have with other persons" (Shutte 2001:23). Shutte (ibid) further explains, "Because the self exists only in relationships with others there are [as] many sides to the self as there are relationships. In each relationship I realize a different part of myself and show, as it were, a different face."

So, from an African perspective, a person or self can be defined as the sum total of relationships. Each relationship contributes to one's self. As a result, an individual perceives his or her identity in relationship to others. Therefore, in that respect, the community as a network of relationships plays a significant role in defining and shaping its individual members' self-identity. In like manner, an individual in the community sees the community "as *themselves* [italics in text] as one with them in character and identity" (:27). Shutte (:25) points out that this conception of community gives a distinct character to African community. Because the concept of self is deeply dependent on being connected with others, the relationship is highly valued in all aspects of life.

KINSHIP: The significance of relationship is strongly felt and demonstrated at kinship level as well. According to Mbiti's (1990:102) observation, kinship controls much of the social relationships between people in a given community. It governs marital customs and regulations. It determines the behaviour of one individual towards another, even the idea of "moral evil pertains to what man does against his fellow man" (:207). The sense of kinship not only binds together the entire life of the community but is extended to include animals, plants and artefacts through the 'totemic' system (:102). The significant influence of kinship is evident in the way it permeates through a vast network of relationship stretching horizontally in every direction (ibid). It embraces everyone in a given community or clan. Each relationship is defined through some sort of relatedness as a brother or sister, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather, cousin or brother-in-law, aunt or uncle or something else. That means everybody is related to everybody in the community. There are many kinship terms that describe each relationship between two people precisely. Often when individuals are concerned, they would refer to each other by the kinship terms of *brother, nephew, aunt, uncle, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother* and others, with or without proper names. This way of address often confuses Westerners who are puzzled to learn that Africans have so many mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

Even in the modern urban context the importance of kinship relationship has not been diminished among the contemporary youth. According to the research findings (5.7.2.1), nearly 85 percent of the urban youth responded positively when they were questioned about the importance of being with the members of the extended family. This confirms that relationship remains highly valued among urbanised youth because it provides a sense of identity to one's being. This fact needs to be taken into consideration seriously if the church wants to provide a viable and relevant ministry of discipleship to urban youth. Relationship matters greatly to young people. The church can be the place where young people can feel connected with one another and with the church as a whole.

INTER-DEPENDENCY: The importance of relationship in terms of contributing to African self-identity is shown above; another important feature of relationship is demonstrated in the way it provides social and economic care through the network of interdependency. In traditional African community, one is highly dependent on the network of relationship for economic survival, especially the network of kinship or extended family. Gakuru (2001:47) explains the importance of the family as the institution for economic and social survival in traditional African society:

> The traditional social structure, compromising the institutions of the family, age groups, a system of norms and values, was aimed at sustaining human survival by ensuring adequate supplies of food, shelter and clothing, among other social priorities such as provision of health care and education. The family was the primary institution within which the provision of basic needs for individuals was organized.

The economic survival in traditional society necessitates the value of interdependency. Because of that, the need for human relationship takes on great significance in its value system. Interdependency promotes a sense of social solidarity. Whenever there is a need, it is not unusual for an individual to call for help from his or her clan members or relatives with an expectation to be helped (Mbiti 1990:104). In the African urban context, as is often observed,

members of the clan or extended family contribute their resources, whether money, food or time, to make sure that the needs are met when there is a funeral or wedding that requires considerable financial help. In Kenya, such community solidarity is often expressed in the symbolic Swahili term *Harambe,* which means 'to pull together'. In many instances, friends and relatives come together to offer assistance whether for a community project like building a school or a dispensary, or individual needs like payment for the hospital bill, school fees or an airplane ticket to go overseas for higher education. The spirit of *Harambe* is deeply rooted in the strong traditional African value of community solidarity. In fund raising, the ritual of *Harambe* often reinforces relationships among individuals who come to participate in the event. By contributing some money to the funds, individuals symbolically affirm their social solidarity with the community and their mutual dependency.

The findings of the survey show that this value remains strong, even among the urban youth (see **5.8.2.2**). When the young respondents were asked whether they expected their extended family members to help meet their economic or material needs, nearly fifty seven percent responded positively. However, it was surprising to note that thirty two percent did not expect to receive help from their relatives. In a traditional community, it would be very normal to expect help from a relative because of strong mutual obligation. But it seems that almost one third of the youth in urban society no longer regard their relatives as a source of economic and material help. This appears to be a new growing trend toward self-dependency that is due to urbanisation. The realities of urban living force people to rely more on themselves. Relatives in the city are less inclined to help than in rural areas because of the high cost of urban living and weakening social ties. In urban environment the relationships with the extended family tend to lose its social strength. Sometimes family ties disintegrate and families are reduced to smaller nuclear family units consisting of parents and children. Because of the negative impact of urbanisation on family relationships, Getui (1990:76) says,

"With the disintegration of the extended family, comes lessened involvement of relatives in individual family affairs".

The above finding shows that urbanisation has definitely affected kinship relationships. Besides, the trend of expecting less help from their urban relatives, there is also a trend among the youth to feel less obliged to help their relatives when they come to them for help. The survey questionnaire asked the youth whether they felt obliged to assist their relatives when they came to their place seeking help. The majority, close to 67 percent, agreed that they felt under obligation to help them; however, 21 percent did not feel any obligation to help. The remaining 12 percent of the respondents were not sure of what to do, which indicates that they probably experience some conflict between the expected traditional norm and the urban reality. Combining the responses of those who are not open to help their relatives and those who are not sure, indicates that nearly one third (33 percent) of the urban youth no longer seem to share the traditional value of helping one another. It is another sign of how urbanisation has been slowly and gradually eroding traditional values like sharing, which bind people together in solidarity.

On the bright side, nearly 67 percent of the youth still felt strongly that they ought to help relatives because relationship is still important to them. This reflects the importance of family as an African cultural value in the lives of urban youth. The family provides a bonding that involves giving and receiving and affirming each person as human person. This is the longing of many urban youth because their cultural roots are imbedded in the historical ancestral community of anamnesis that still nourishes its roots, even though it is not visible.

A RITE OF PASSAGE: In traditional African community the initiation rite plays a very significant role in the social transformation of its young people. According to Magesa (1997:95), the initiation does not only affirm physical maturity but social maturity as well. In Mbiti's (1990:119) view, it introduces youth into adult life with full rights and responsibilities for the preservation of the community. The initiation serves as preparation of young people for marriage and family life, which includes one's obligation to the ancestors as well as those yet to be born (:132). In that respect, young people are formally trained and given the responsibility to carry on the anamnetic tradition of the ancestors. It reinforces their self-identity as integral members of the community in the spirit of Ubuntu. Hence, it strengthens one's bonding with the community.

Since the practice of initiation is mingled with religious rites and symbols, the question often arises of how those symbolic meanings and practices of initiation are compatible with the teaching of the Gospel, and whether African Christians should practice it or not? From the Christian perspective, O'Donovan (1996:233) argues that the initiation rituals present serious spiritual problems for a young Christian and his family on religious ground. "First, the initiation practice is associated with traditional religious meaning. Participation in initiation implies an acceptance of or belief in non-Christian elements of traditional community. Second, many of the values taught and practices followed during initiation are contrary to the teaching of the Bible" (ibid).

Since initiation is one of the most significant events in the life of the person and of the community, an individual who refuses to participate may cause many problems. Sometimes it may bring rejection by the community. According to O'Donovan (ibid), there is no easy "solution to the problem of initiation …unless it provides an acceptable substitute for the issue of acceptance by the clan". He proposes that parents and church leaders develop a programme of moral and ethical teachings from the Bible along with a major event that

celebrates the acceptance of the young people into the adult community of Christian believers (:238). O'Donovan's suggestion may be helpful in the urban context; however, he seems to be ignoring its significant value in relation to the ancestral anamnesis that holds the community together. Initiation is more than a passage of life from childhood to adulthood. Primarily, it assures the community that the anamnetic quality of communal life will be carried forward by the next generation. The identity and the future survival of the community are at stake. The main purpose of the initiation rite is not the graduation of the individual candidates but to sustain the life of the community. The candidates are seen as links in the unbroken chain between the children yet to be born and the ancestors.

In urban contexts the initiation rite may not serve the same purpose as it does in traditional community. However, the churches in Nairobi and elsewhere need to incorporate a kind of rite of passage in Christian discipleship, preparing the young generation for responsible membership in the Christian community, as well as a witness of Christ in the world. The rite of passage fulfils a significant social and emotional need in the transitional period of young people's lives. The churches need to find a Christian expression of such a significant symbolic point of transition in young people's lives. The churches cannot afford to ignore this significant need which is loaded with symbolic meaning. In the absence of any definite rite of passage, most urban youth are at a loss, not knowing their status as young adults. An adapted Christian version of the rite of passage may enrich the life of many Christian youth because it affirms the individual's value and dignity as a significant member of a human family.

In conclusion, it is unfortunate that the Christianity introduced by the Western missions has either ignored much of Africa's symbolic cultural expressions or condemned it as primitive without seeking to understand its significance to people (Mulandi 2003:67). The failure of

inculturation of the gospel in the African context has affected the youth. In the words of Mulandi (ibid), "This has left those who adopted the Western Christian culture faltering and in confusion as they try to find their identity in the new culture." However, she finds a great hope, because, "[i]n spite of all the difficulties and hardships endured in Africa, African values are still there and can be put to good use in formation programmes" (:68). A discipleship community by taking cues from the ancestral traditional values can create a condition in which some of positive community values can be affirmed in the lives of young people, like identity formation, social solidarity, the family values of sharing and inter-dependency, symbolic rites of passage and other. These are the values of ancestral tradition that can truly enrich the quest for belonging among the urban youth by engendering in community setting.

3.4 TRADITIONAL AFRICAN COMMUNITY VALUES IN THE MODERN URBAN CONTEXT

The timeless values that have defined and shaped traditional African community have now increasingly come into conflict with the values of modern urban society. Modern society operates on the values associated with individualism and self-determinism. It cherishes freedom and autonomy, which greatly negate traditional communal pattern of life. As urbanisation increases with rising rural to urban migration, the resultant impact of modernity is increasingly felt in all areas of life. This modernity is a powerful cultural force that tends to override traditional ways of life with its technological and economic power. According George Kinoti (1994:55), urbanisation, along with other forces of modernity like colonialism and including Christianity, has greatly eroded the moral capital of Africa. In the African context, it has negatively impacted in the area of personal identity, especially among the youth in urban areas who have migrated from their rural homes. By moving into the city, they left behind their familiar surroundings, relational network and the way of life and allowed the forces of urbanisation to alter their thoughts, values and old familiar way of life. In the urban environment the issue of personal identity looms as significant quest for many

youth. Some are greatly confused regarding their self-identification and self-worth during these transitions. The young people often feel torn between the two contrasting cultural forces of traditional and modern. The urban world by its nature is a fragmented society. It pulls the person away from the primary community towards many sub-communities, where the individual self-identity is sub-divided into several fragmented identities. On the other hand, traditional community pulls the person towards its centre and gives the person a holistic identity. Many youth are caught in between these forces. There are different ways in which youth can respond to these changes. One way is to abandon traditional values and lifestyle and make an effort to integrate oneself into an urban lifestyle as much as possible. The second way is to find a compromise and learn to live in both worlds at the same time. The third way is to hold on to the traditional values and its way of life and resist assimilation into an urban way of living and thinking as much as possible.

The first way: Some youth are eager to make the city their home. They come to terms with modernity and decide to turn their back on traditional values. They adapt to an urban way of living and seek to accept the city as their home. In the process they become emotionally detached from their rural roots of origin. For example, in conversation with young people in Nairobi, it has been observed that during the school holidays, many youth do not wish to visit their relatives in rural areas because, according to them, they find little in common to share with their rural folks in terms of values and ideas. In response to the survey questionnaire, over 40 percent of the youth, when asked whether they preferred a community lifestyle over an independent living, chose an independent living as their preference versus 46 percent who chose a community lifestyle (see **5.8.2.13**). The remaining 14 percent of the respondents were not sure which way to go, which is quite substantial. Nearly two young people out of five clearly expressed their preference to adapt to an independent urban lifestyle. This indicates that these young people prefer modernity over traditional values in increasing numbers. This seems to be a dominant trend. It shows that many young people are determined to make the city their home. They are eager to adapt to the urbanised modern

lifestyle that promises them a future with some hope with prosperity. Urbanisation often brings a deep identity crisis to many. In the process of assimilation in the urban lifestyle many search for ways to define their identity in the urban world. Urbanisation can lead to social isolation and alienation as is happening in the Western world (Rasmussen 1993:21).

The second way: There are other youth who seem to cherish African communal values which give them some sense of continuity with their cultural heritage, while at the same time wanting to live in the city. They seem to want the security of the rural world in the uncertain urban context. However, in the absence of a stable and familiar community in the urban context, they are at a loss. They want to hold on to the values which are important to them but they find themselves in conflict with urbanisation. According to the survey response, nearly 14 percent of the youth were unsure when they were asked to indicate their preference with regard to a community lifestyle over an independent living. They could not decide which one was preferable. Most likely, they would have preferred both. Being unsure, they face the dilemma of living with two sets of contradicting values in order to cope with individualised urban living and traditional communal living. According to Shorter (1991:26), it is like living in "two semi-encapsulated worlds" at the same time. As a result they are more likely to experience continuous cultural disorientation.

The third way: The third group of youth could be categorised as traditional. This group of youth wanted to hold on to traditional values which gave them some sense of self-identity while living in the urban setting. The majority of the youth are found in this category. When they were asked about their preference, more than 46 percent chose community living over independent living. Their response indicates that they tolerate the modernising effect of urbanisation but do not want to give up their African heritage in the process. This attitude corresponds clearly with the response to the question "Where do you consider home?". More than 52 percent indicated the rural area as their home (**5.8.1.3 iv**). This response also seemed to indicate that the majority of the youth in Nairobi are from rural areas, and have migrated to

the city for jobs and education. They maintain strong emotional ties with their place of origin.

Most African youth come from a culture that is deeply rooted in traditional community values. By living in the city, the youth experience the negative effect of urbanisation with its modern and secular values which encourage social fragmentation and increase alienation. If Mbiti (1990:1) is right in asserting that African people are deeply religious, then this alienation could be expected to impact young people's religious sensibility as well. Traditionally Africans do not separate the religious aspect of life from the social. However, in the urban context religion is increasingly compartmentalised. Religion is seen as a private and personal affair rather than a corporate way of life. This adds to the confusion experienced by the youth. Consequently, the youth would come to church expecting to have the religious need met and would look elsewhere for his social need. This is where the church has great potential to serve the youth by providing a meaningful place to belong where religious life is fused with the social dimension rather than offering a few religious programmes that mainly cater to the need to believe. It is hardly satisfying.

Another issue that the youth face is unpredictable change. Urbanisation implies constant change. This aspect of modern urban lifestyle often clashes with traditional values. The traditional way of life resists change. It seeks stability. The young African person in urban areas is caught between the two opposing values. Culturally he is rooted in the values of traditional society while he, at same time, is a part of the modern urban world that deeply undermines his cultural roots by demanding constant social and cultural change with the introduction of new technologies, job changes, new ideas and attitudes towards marriage, family and others.

Besides coping with constant change and an unstable social identity, many young people in modern urban society fail to find a clear moral road map or a cohesive value system to

determine the right way living and their role in society. Many young people are very confused in the absence of a stable moral community. There, for example, is no clear moral transition marker that defines transition from one stage of life to the next and specifies the role of the young person as a fully responsible adult, like a rite of passage in traditional society which clearly defines one's status in the society. Most of the urban youth face a deep sense of identity crisis for not knowing where they belong and who they are. Nobody seems to guide them. In addition to that, many do not even know their status as an adult in the urban society. Some youths may go on for a long time without being taken seriously as responsible adults. Even in church many youths complain that they are not taken seriously. Their status as responsible young person is not affirmed nor is their role clearly defined. They are desperately searching for moral guidance.

Urban life offers many choices with little moral guidance. The church provides some moral guidelines but often lacks credible Christian models to follow. Without a cohesive community, it is difficult to demonstrate a value system based on biblical teachings in real life situations. Most young people in the church are expecting the church to provide them with a moral compass to guide them. Unfortunately many urban churches are not sure of their own role in the society and do not seem to be paying attention to the needs of their youth. In one prominent Nairobi church that the author attended, he observed that parents were also at loss, not knowing how to guide their sons and daughters. They were crying out for help. In interviews, many young people mentioned the need for moral guidance which they did not seem to find in their churches. Here the church has a great potential to fill the void which traditional African community had fulfilled in the past.

Most Africans living in urban areas do not mean to give up their cultural roots. A close bond between urban and rural does remain, even the most elite urban minority cannot evade it (Shorter 1991:7). When African people move into the city, they bring their traditional culture with them. However, some of the practices are modified to adapt to the city environment

(:38). It is not uncommon to find traditional diviners in many African towns. Some even advertise their lucrative business.

To some extent urbanisation has greatly affected African traditional cultural values and practices. Traditional culture has, however, proved its resiliency by adapting to the social reality of urbanisation. Shorter (:26) writes that "…[u]rbanisation does not substitute a new modern culture for the old traditional one. What it does is to modify traditional culture of town dwellers and to a lesser extent, that of rural dwellers." It is insightful to know that urban Africans may not be able to integrate the modern lifestyle with traditional customs and values completely but they can learn to live in "two semi-incapsulated worlds at the same time" (:26) in response to cultural disorientation. At the level of commerce, technology and leisure they may accept foreign and Western ideas, while they remain true to their traditional values and worldview at the domestic level (ibid). Similarly, they may accept Christian beliefs and practices at one level while following their cultural ideals and practices at another level, thus living a fragmented life that is seldom satisfying. However, as it has been said before, it is possible to integrate faith and culture in the context of a community that can be both African and Christian. The early church demonstrated it by being a community of faith in the historical and cultural context of its time.

3.5 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter has presented the cultural context as a background against which not only to understand the nature of the problem faced by African youth in the urban context, especially in the church youth ministry, but also to discern a possible solution to the dilemma of the youth's quest for belonging that the church could address through community structure, in order to overcome social alienation and the identity crisis experienced by many of its youth. In traditional African society, the community is understood as the heart of the culture. All of its values, behaviour and the code of ethics are bound by the network of relationship one experiences in the community. The values which traditional African community cherish,

such as family, interdependency, sharing, solidarity, celebration of life and others can help to provide common ground for the inculturation of the gospel in urban context. The fourth chapter will explore and examine how the early Christians incorporated these values in its community life in the process of discipleship.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSPECTIVES ON DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three, the study investigated traditional African community from the cultural hermeneutical lens of the anamnesis of ancestors. It found that the ancestral tradition as the basis of cultural life was interpreted and negotiated in the contextual framework of community. The community was the focus of life that sustained and gave meaning to people in traditional society. Without a doubt, the culture of African society was communal in nature. In this chapter, the study explores and examines how the early church from its very beginning understood itself as the community of believers, both theologically and sociologically, and sought to train and shape its members' identities and characters as disciples of Jesus in the context of its community life. The importance of community was clearly evident in the calling of Jesus to all individual believers as his disciples to bear witness of him in solidarity with his community rather than merely as individuals. Hence, it is important to understand the role of community in discipleship in the life and mission of the early church. This understanding would help in discerning the biblical praxis in order to establish theological ground for the main thesis of this study, which proposes a community approach to discipleship as a missional response to youth ministry in urban Africa.

The chapter is divided into two parts or sections. The first section examines the self-understanding of the church as community from the theological and missiological perspective. It also looks at the social structure of the early church to see how it reflects its communal nature in its form and function as faith community. Following this, the second section of the chapter examines how the early church as community fulfilled its mission of discipleship, which involved not only attracting new recruits but also shaping its members' identities in Christ and characters in conformity to the teaching of Jesus. The study approaches the concept of discipleship comprehensively. It looks at the praxis of discipleship

in the early church from the three dimensions of mission (spiritual, social and missional) which were stated in the thesis (**1.5**):

1)   Praxis of believing—connecting to God through Jesus Christ: This involves the members of the group to support and nurture one another's commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and its related values through worship, prayer and hearing of the Word of God. (Missional dimension of worship)

2)   Praxis of belonging—connecting with one another: This involves the members of the group to meet social, emotional and material needs of one another as well as hold one another mutually accountable in love and admonishment. (Missional dimension of fellowship)

3)   Praxis of giving and receiving—connecting with the world around: This calls for the group to witness to the gospel and the reign of God through the ministry of words and deeds to others in the wider community. In the ministry of giving and receiving the group is challenged and enriched by others in the widening of its missional calling. (Intentional dimension of mission)

In this study, the discussion on the early church will be limited to the Christian communities from beginning of the first century to the end of the third century, the church before the Constantine era. These churches were spread widely across the Roman Empire among many culturally diverse groups. The focus will be on the common elements shared by these communities in spite of social, cultural and geographical differences. For the source of materials the study heavily relies on the works of scholars of the New Testament literature, early church history and social studies. It also relies on various New Testament writings, which provide a window to the social world and daily experiences of the first-century Christians (Hays 1996:9). The way the early church understood itself as community can help in dialogue with the way the present day church in urban Africa understands itself in its praxis of youth ministry, which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

4.2   THE EARLY CHURCH'S SELF-UNDERSTANDING AS A DISPLESHIP

COMMUNITY

In the first section of this chapter, the study seeks to answer some of the following questions: how did the early church understand itself theologically and missiologically? In light of their commitment to Christ and his purpose, how did those individuals who professed faith in Christ organise and identify themselves socially and morally in the broader society in order to express their distinct character as God's people?

4.2.1   Theological Foundation

The early church did not only exist as a gathered group of individuals who simply professed common faith in Christ, but became a community with its own distinct identity in the context of the broader society. How did the Christians understand themselves as the community or the people of God? Theologically, the early church perceived itself as the people of God in continuity with the calling of Israel with the eschatological promise of God's kingdom (Lohfink 1985:35). According Paul Hanson (1986:10), the ancient Hebrew people, both historically and theologically, identified their beginning as a people of God in the experience of exodus from Egypt, from slavery to freedom. It was a momentous event, a defining moment in the history of Israel as God's people. The Exodus experience is the hermeneutical key to interpret the self-identity and the resultant worldview and culture of Israel as God's covenant people.[48] The Exodus event defined and shaped the character of Israel as God's people. In the event of exodus from Egypt, the helpless and hopeless Hebrew slaves encountered the God, Yahweh, who delivered them from slavery in Egypt as an act of grace (:11). It was the most profound experience that brought Israel into a covenant relationship with a redeemer God who not only saved them but also promised *shalom*, the reign of God

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[48] Hanson (1986:12) argues that the Israel interprets its whole theology and history through the hermeneutical lens of the Exodus experience: "The shape of the development of Israel's earliest oral and literary traditions was determined through and through by the confession of the God Yahweh who delivered Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. The laws and social structures of earliest Israel were imbued so thoroughly by this same confession as to set them apart—in spite of many formal and thematic similarities—from the laws and social structures of contemporaneous neighboring cultures."

with peace and justice (:5). The confession in Exodus 20:2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" has been the central point of defining Israel's theological and sociological identity as a unique group (:11). When Israel entered into this fellowship with God, it acquired a unique sense of community with a destiny that is centred on the worship of Yahweh and obedience to his law, the Torah. It was the relationship founded on the initiative of Yahweh that gave Israel an identity as the people of God. Consequently its entire social and cultural life was shaped and ordered by this relationship after the event of Exodus. The salvation the early Hebrews experienced was not only a deliverance *from* the bondage of slavery but *to* a new way of life. The story of Exodus contains this symbolic meaning. The relationship with such a Saviour God became the hermeneutical standpoint for Israel to understand its theological foundation as the community of God in relation to God's promised reign.

The account and experience of Exodus correspond to believers' understanding of Jesus: his life, death and resurrection with the promise of God's reign. The early Christians found their identity in the Saviour God of the Exodus manifested in Christ Jesus who delivered them from their sin and invited them into a covenant relationship and a new way of life in the Spirit when they put their faith in him (:430). Hanson (:383) states, "Although Jesus himself did not establish the early church…his life and teaching had a decisive impact on the thinking of those who gradually began to define the character of a Jewish community centred around the confession that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ—that is, the Messiah sent by God to redeem the world." It was the same God of Israel of Exodus who now redeems not only the people of Israel but the whole world and invites everyone to enter into His kingdom through Jesus Christ. The Exodus symbolises salvation–from slavery to freedom, from death to life. On this theological ground and confession the early church understood itself as the redeemed people of God, a distinct community of faith. It was the salvation experienced through faith in the risen Messiah that gave a common bond to the early Christian community, its definition and identity.

With that theological understanding, the church as a community was seen in the beginning as the people of "the Way", a part of the broader Jewish community but a distinct sect (Acts 9:2). Later it acquired its identity as *Christian* in Antioch as a distinct religious group in contrast to Judaism (Acts 11:26). The church, as a distinct community with its unique identity and moral values, intentionally contrasted itself with the wider culture because of its theological understanding of itself and missiological outlook (Lohfink 1985:122). Theologically, the early church perceived itself as a fellowship of "baptized believers who are joined together in their common relation to God and Jesus Christ" (Schnelle 2005:59).

The Christian church as faith community rooted in salvation in Jesus Christ expressed itself in the theological concept of *koinonia* (a Greek term) or *communion,* in Latin. It is understood as "the essential nature of the church" (Tillard 2002:646). It is the fellowship of believers who are fully committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and to one another (ibid). It is a gift from God as stated in the document of the World Council of Churches–WWC (Best 1995: 4):

> Beyond our expectation, God has given us that koinonia as we all, together, being "buried with Christ by baptism into death", are raised with him day after day" by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). That koinonia has been given to us in the common life of the believing community, which is empowered with many gifts by the Holy Spirit, which eats and drinks the "holy communion" of Christ, and which shows forth a foretaste of the communion of the whole creation with God, a foretaste of all peoples reconciled to God and to each other through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This commitment is both volitional and relational in dimension. In the relational term, the word *bonded* better expresses the nature of the commitment. It is a covenanted relationship that encompasses both spiritual and social dimensions. Schnelle (2005:559) explains, in reference to Paul's understanding of church as community: "For him, being a Christian is identical with being in the church."[49] In its spiritual dimension, the faith in Christ provides the common ground or base upon which the church as community finds its reason for existence and its members are united with him to form one body. In its social dimension,

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[49] Similarly, Bosch (1990:166) also argues that Pauline theology does not entertain the idea of isolated individual believer. Paul always speaks for individuals in reference to Christian community.

members are united with one another as community by virtue of their common relationship with Jesus Christ, in whom they share salvation and a foretaste of God's kingdom.

This concept of *koinonia* has been expressed in other related terms like "in Christ", "the body of Christ" and "the people of God" (Schnelle 2005:562).[50] In reference to "in Christ" Schnelle (ibid) emphasises both vertical and horizontal dimensions: "Being included in the sphere of Christ not only means communion with Christ but also makes possible a new fellowship of believers with each other." In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the metaphor of the body of Christ clearly describes how a diverse group of people are now united into one body by the Spirit: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (NIV). By calling the church the people of God, Paul acknowledges the church as the covenanted community in keeping with "the unity of God's acts in history and the continuity of the people of God in salvation history" (ibid). All three metaphors that describe the church as community of faith clearly express both the spiritual and the social dimension together according to the concept of *koinonia*.

Spiritual in Nature

In the theological concept of *koinonia*, a community is understood as one with both spiritual and social dimensions. There is no separation. It is not regarded as a religious association in the modern sense that one chooses to join. Those who profess faith in Christ, by default become the members of the *koinonia* community. According to Tillard (2002:648), in *Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement,* the word *koinonia* "is never explicitly used as a synonym of ecclesia" in the gospel accounts. Joining a local church may lead an individual to a process of believing in Christ, who places an individual into his spiritual community, which Banks (1994:41) describes as "the heavenly church". In metaphorical sense, the heavenly

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[50] Schnelle presents Paul's understanding of the church, characterised by these three foundational metaphors.

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church refers to believers who are in constant fellowship with Christ by virtue of their faith in Christ. This sense of fellowship in Christ places Christians in the spiritual communion with Christ that is reflected in the fellowship of the local church (Matthew 18:20). Speaking from Pauline's view of the church as heavenly reality, Banks points out numerous references in Paul's writings, like in Colossians 1:18 (NIV), where "he is the head of the body, the church" and in 1:24 (NIV) "for the sake of his body, which is the church" allude to "the heavenly church" rather than universal church. In Banks's view (:40), "it is not an earthly phenomenon that is being talked about here, but a supernatural one." Even the language in Ephesians 2:5-6, "made us alive with Christ…and raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" and the prayer in Ephesians 1:23, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessings in Christ" explicitly point "to the idea of a nonlocal church of whom Christ is the head" (ibid). In similar manner, Schnelle (2005:561) argues that Paul's usage of *ekklesia* in combination with various terms like "the saints" and "the elect" refers to the eschatological people of God. For Paul, "saints" are Christians *in Christ*, "not on the basis of a special ethical quality but as those who have been incorporated by baptism into God's saving act in Jesus Christ. They belong to God, the Spirit of God dwells in them… and their body is holy because it is temple of God" (:561). Schnelle (ibid) points out that "the observable form of the church however, provides no evidence of God's call, positive or negative, for election".

Therefore, the *koinonia* has this heavenly connotation. However, this heavenly quality cannot be separated from its earthly existence. On earth, this *koinonia* community must express itself through the local *ekklesia* as concrete reality. As Schnelle (:563) maintains, the exalted Christ is only manifest through his body, the church—"the corporeality of the believer".

Guder (1998:13) would argue that the language of "the heavenly church" or "the church of the saints" follows the traditional language of the "visible" and "invisible" church. It leads to

a "dichotomy between a supposedly invisible church—an idealized church composed of all true believers … known to the mind of God—and the visible church—the actual tangible human institutions called churches made up of people who ostensibly profess faith in Jesus Christ" (ibid). Guder insists that one church is to be affirmed as real, tangible human communities that are more than an institution. Since it is God's creation, it possesses the mark of divine workmanship, "an incarnate expression of the life of God" similar to Christ's incarnation of divinity in human flesh (ibid).

Whichever way this divine-human tension is resolved, the implication of believing in Christ is life-changing. It is expressed in various theological words and metaphors in the Bible and Christian traditions: repentance, saved, conversion, new life, eternal life, citizen in heaven, born again, elect, saint and so on. Therefore, collectively a local church or congregation may reflect the heavenly essence of *koinonia*, but the local congregation should not be understood as the same as *koinonia* in the theological sense. In relation to local the church, Banks (1994:42) is correct in putting it this way:, "each of the various local churches is a tangible expression of the heavenly church, a manifestation in time and space of that which is essentially eternal and infinite in character".

It is important to note that *koinonia* is the community initiated by God, called by God. It belongs to God. Banks (:31) describes the church as a gathering community as "belonging not to the people who constitute (as with Thessalonians) nor to the district who constitute it (as with the Galatians) but rather to the one who brought it into existence (that is God) or to the one through whom it came into existence (that is Christ)." It is a spiritual community because its author is God. At this point, both Banks and Guder agree that the church as a community finds its origin in divine initiative rather than in human initiative, even though it may appear as "a fully human, thoroughly sociological organism" (Guder 1998:12).

In conclusion, the church as *koinonia* community, with all of its earthly form and imperfection, is a reflection of God's kingdom. It is not the kingdom of God, as was believed

in Christendom and of which Guder (1998:98) warns in: "The church has presumed that the reign of God is within the church. The two have been regarded as synonyms." Although God manifests his works in the life of the church community, his works are not limited to the community. The community exists to glorify God by living in obedience to Christ in discipleship. That obedience reflects God's glory when the church, as community, becomes involved in the world by exercising its God-given authority and fulfilling its mission of being light and salt to the world. The kingdom of God is more visible in the aspect of doing of the will of God collectively in the life of the community than in the individual life of a Christian (:105, 115). While maintaining its witness to the reign of God as spiritual community in fellowship with Christ, the early church also mediated its witness in its earthly form with the flaws and weaknesses of its humanity.

Earthly Nature

Although spiritual in nature, such fellowship operates in the idiom of its local culture. David Banks (1994:14) in *Paul's Idea of Community* stresses the point that the early Christian church as community was not completely distinctive from the main society but reflected many of the social and cultural patterns of the surrounding society. Longenecker (2002:76) makes a similar point, namely "that church order has Jewish roots and that the earliest believers in Jesus organized their worship and communal lives in ways congenial to their Jewish experiences." Being a uniquely spiritual community, the church did not reject its human culture but expresses its spiritual nature through the medium of its cultural form. The church as a distinct community in human society mediated the gospel in a way that was understood by the dominant culture. Newbigin (1989:223) calls such praxis the "hermeneutic of the gospel" in the society.[51] Jewish and Greek influences were evident in the style of worship borrowed from the synagogue and the Greek custom of gathering in the house for

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[51] Newbigin (1989:227) clearly understood this praxis when he calls the church in the Western society to witness the gospel as hermeneutic community. He points out that Jesus did not leave any book, but formed a community that would continue to interpret the gospel through its life and deeds that would be understood by the earthly human society.

worship and fellowship. Theologically, the Christian community was rooted in Christ and its members were united with one another in their common faith in Christ while retaining the broad cultural identity of the society of its origin—a spiritual community but not totally alien in the world.

The church, as a faith community, reflects not only vertical dimension, but horizontal dimension as well. The church is called to be the light and the salt in the human society (Matthew 5:13-14). People in the society can read and hear the gospel only when they see the incarnated church living in their midst, in their neighbourhood, speaking their language, sharing in their pain and sorrow, identified with them in their human frailty and anxiety and joined with them in their journey to meaning in life (Newbigin 1989:227-233). In reference to Matthew 28:19 injunction to make disciples of all nations, Lohfink (1985:136) attributes the early church community's impressive missionary expansion and influence over the base religious society to the concrete social aspects of its life more than to its preaching and teaching efforts.

In contrast to the early church's witness to the world as a credible community in a concrete social and cultural world, the church in our time and under the influence of the philosophical paradigm of modern dichotomy between private and public, secular and sacred, and spiritual and natural, has fallen into a delusion by defining itself through emphasising the vertical dimension of its life at the expense of its horizontal dimension—separating social and cultural aspects with the spiritual dimension.   Because of this imbalance view, the collective witness of the church has been greatly compromised in the modern society (Gibbs 2000:55).   In contrast, as Lohfink (1985:135) points out, the early church community always included the public and the social dimension as it was commonly expressed in the ritual holiness of the Old Testament and in Judaism the idea of holiness. He warns that "[we] must be extremely careful about reducing the requirement of holiness to the *purely moral* [italics in text]" (ibid). It must always be linked to the social reality of life.

When the church pushes away the social and cultural sphere of human life from its witness, then it is seen as a mere religious institution to worship God and to meet one's psycho-religious needs. In reference to American society, Guder (1998:84) comments, "Both members and those outside the church expect the church to be *a vendor of religious services and goods* [italics in text]." Such a dichotomised view of Christian faith is theologically and missiologically misleading. The church, by its missional nature, is called to be a dynamic community of Christ in engagement with the culture and the society. When that happens, the church fulfils its true missionary calling. To fulfil that calling, the church must learn to translate its spiritual life into the reality of earthly life:

> The church always lives in and among a culture or group of cultures. The vast majority of the church's particular communities share with their neighbors a primary culture or cultures, which include their language, food, perhaps styles of dress, and other customs. But they are called to point beyond that culture to the culture of God's new community. (Guder 1998:114)

This horizontal dimension needs to be clearly expressed in ecclesiology in the way the early church demonstrated its cultural context by being in the world but not of the world (John 17:18)) and acting as salt and light in the broader society (Matthews 5:13-14).

4.2.2   Missiological orientation

For the church, being a community of Christ means being a missional community—a community that clearly understands its self-identity as God's sent people rooted in the context of God's mission revealed through Jesus Christ in historical continuity with the Old Testament (Bosch 1990:20).[52]   Guder (1998:6) states that much of the present day understanding and praxis of mission in the church is shaped by Christendom promoting the idea of mission as something the church does. In contrast to the present-day church, the early church understood its vocation as missionary community as reflected in the missionary nature

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[52] Bosch (1990:20), drawing from the accounts in Matthew's gospel, points out that Jesus unambiguously rooted his mission in the historical and theological perspectives of the Old Testament vision of God's mission. Jesus had no intention of establishing an idealistic universal religion for all humankind.

of the four gospels and the letters of Paul (Bosch 1990:54). The missional church that is faithful to the gospel tradition is expressed in the ancient Nicene Creed "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" (:254). Truly, only by being a community, can the church faithfully carry out its missional witness in being one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

Missiologically, the community of believers in Christ is not restricted to any specific group of people (like Israel), tribe, nation, race, gender, language, location or class. It is open to the entire humanity (Revelation 7:9, Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15). It is catholic in nature. "The catholicity of the church is demonstrated in all the ways that the church at every level witnesses to the one gospel that draws all people to unto Christ" (:257).

It is apostolic in nature. Just as God in *missio Dei* sent Christ on a mission to save humanity and to form the church through his death and resurrection, Christ sends his church to call all men and women to believe in him and to be a part of his new community (John 17:18). "The apostolicity of the church is expressed by its witness to the gospel, its obedience to the mandate to go out as Christ's ambassadors" (:256). The second Vatican Council clearly acknowledges the primary reason for the church's existence as to fulfil its apostolic duty by being a missionary church (Bosch 1991:391).

Along with being catholic and apostolic in nature, the church is also called to be holy, to be the sanctifying community (1 Peter 1:15). "The community sanctifies, by God's empowering Spirit, when it serves God and God's children as the continuing incarnation of Christ's love and invites others to join in this calling. In particular, its holiness must be translated into concrete service to those who are poor, discriminated against, and subjects of injustice" (Guder 1998:25). Holiness implies the involvement of Christian community in the sanctifying work of discipleship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It does not mean a call to isolate the church from the world but to affirm its identity as not of the world. According to Lohfink (1985:131), the term *holy* was clearly understood as *saints*, the

community of sanctified people, the "contrast-society". "The church understood itself to be the sacred people of God's possession, a people with a pattern for life which differed from that of the world" (ibid).

The church as catholic, apostolic, and sanctifying missional community, carries out its witness to the gospel through unity. In the New Testament unity does not mean uniformity in the form of worship nor in organisation or in spiritual piousness which the church has often emphasised. Guder (1998:25) is right in explaining unity as a visible expression of the gospel when members in the community are actively engaged in each other's life. In so doing it tangibly bears witness to the gospel. Newbigin (1989:228) echoes a similar view when he calls the Christian community to be engaged in the concerns of its broader society. The goal of unity must reflect the missionary dimension about which Guder (1998:264) comments:

> Evangelical unity is a way of living out the gospel in community, a way of incarnating the love of God in Christ. It is not defined biblically in organizational terms at all…. It is also far more than a spiritual feeling or a pious idea. It functions concretely as communities practice accountability toward each other and submit to each other's guidance and admonition.

To be missional as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, requires the church to function as an organic community rather than an organisation of individuals with various official titles or an association of like-minded individuals, as it is understood in the modern context. The early church, as a community of faith as expressed by Matthew, demonstrated its understanding of missional character by being one, holy, catholic and apostolic in the manner of being faithful to the praxis of the reign of God taught and patterned after the example of Jesus and his disciples (Lohfink 1985:137). As Christ's disciples, the church is called to bear witness to the world with credibility by loving one another (John 13:35), mutually submitting to one another and serving others.

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4.2.3 The Origin and Purpose of the Community

In the previous discussion it has been pointed out that the nature of the church, theologically and missiologically, basically is community in form and structure. Based on that understanding, the study investigates its origin and purpose, as well as its social and moral structure as a community.

4.2.3.1 Origin of the community

The church as a Christian community did not come into existence on the day of Pentecost, as it is widely believed and presented by many church historians, like Bull (1967), Cairns (1981) and others.   On the day of Pentecost, the unusual event drew the attention of the public to an already existing community. After the sermon preached by Peter, more than three thousand people were added to the already existing community (Acts 2:41). As a result, the community of Jesus became prominently known in Jerusalem and beyond. It should be noted that the community originated some time earlier, during the three years of Jesus' ministry, as a small group in the matrix of the larger Jewish community, with Jesus as the primary leader and his handful of chosen disciples. As his group slowly increased in number, he chose twelve men as a core of leaders for his growing community and trained them as his disciples. The twelve disciples were chosen primarily to represent the twelve tribes of Israel symbolically (Lohfink 1985:10). According to Lohfink (:31-32), there were two categories of disciples in Jesus' community. There were those who believed in Jesus' message but remained in their village or town, to await the promised kingdom of God. Men like Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea and Zacchaeus, with their household, were the best examples of "sedentary" disciples (ibid). Then there were those who literally left their jobs and families behind and followed Jesus. They travelled with him wherever he went. There were few but were a firmly a fixed group (ibid). In the early stages, Jesus' community did not have distinct identity as a separate Christian community, but retained its Jewish identity (Saldarini 1994:2).   It was an emerging

community within the wider Jewish society.[53] Publicly it appeared to be a small deviant group led by a popular rabbi with a band of Jewish followers (:196-7). In the social and cultural world of that time, it was not unusual for a rabbi to have a group of disciples or followers. It was a common practice in Judaism. Various rabbis had their followers. Paul was a disciple of a well-known Rabbi, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). However, the purpose of Jesus' group was distinctly different from other rabbinical groups of disciples. His disciples were called to be more than a group of learners. They were to represent the whole of Israel as the eschatological people of God (Lohfink 1985:35).

In conclusion, Jesus had established his community well before his death and resurrection. It was not limited to the twelve chosen disciples, who acted as leaders in the community. It was a community consist of a large number of followers. In 1 Corinthians 15:5-6, Paul mentions the fact that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred brothers at the same time, not mentioning women and children. At the time of Pentecost, the community already existed, waiting to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and to be made known publicly.

4.2.3.2   The purpose of Jesus' community

The early church understood itself as a religious community with a divine purpose rooted in the reign of God. This awareness of its divine purpose defined its community life and order. It was not a community of "human arrangement to keep social order but derive[d] its authority and legitimation from God through Jesus" (Saldarini 1994:121). As the early Christians understood themselves as the eschatological community of God, the members were bonded together in their common faith and devotion to their Lord. Their primary unity was grounded in their belief in Jesus and his teachings regarding God's reign. This relationship became the basis for spiritual, moral and social interpretation of life in the community and its

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[53] Bosch (1990:56-62) sees in Matthew a tension among the emerging Jewish Christian community that was experiencing an identity crisis in the face of increasing hostility and rejection by the wider Jewish community. Matthew's intention was to encourage the Christian community to find its identity in Christ, not merely in the Jewish community while pressing them forward to its missional calling beyond the Jewish world.

relationship to those who were not believers. Even though Christian communities, as in the Roman Empire, reflected a great diversity of ethnic and racial groups, nationalities and languages, even differences among the Jews in Jerusalem, their common spiritual faith tied them together while they retained their cultural identity. This theological unity of the early church community is clearly expressed in Galatians 3:26-29, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus….There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

One could say that diverse groups of people were united together in the Roman Empire by their common devotion to Caesar as well. However, the main difference was that it was a political unity in the guise of emperor worship. The unity of Rome was enforced by its political and military power. In contrast, the unity of the community of Christ was primarily spiritual. It was expressed through its religious freedom and love for one another. In the oppressive and divided world of the first century, this was a radical idea. It drew the attention of the people in the society wherever the church put down roots as a witnessing community.

The primary purpose of Jesus' community was to bear witness of the dawning of the new eschatological age coming with the Messiah, the dawning of the promised kingdom of God on earth (Lohfink 1985:35). This purpose would continue with much clarity in the post-resurrection apostolic community. The reign of God would be manifested through the divine work of the Holy Spirit in declaring Jesus Lord of creation. To this end, the community would be called to participate in bearing witness of him. Thus, the New Testament apostolic community, later identified as the church, from the beginning understood its role as a witnessing community, first in the context of the Jewish cultural and religious framework and later expanding its scope to include people from the Gentile world (Acts 1:8). Because of its witnessing mandate, the total life of the community was lived out (in all its dimensions) as an expression of being a witness for him. This purpose defined its reason for existence. The

Christian community in Thessalonica, although young in faith and coming from a pagan background, exemplified their commitment to bear witness to Jesus and his gospel so well that Paul commended them highly: "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere" (1 Thessalonians 1:8 NIV).

The term 'witness' simply means one who bears testimony about a person, place or event (Moreau 2000:1020). In the legal sense, it is used of someone who is testifying to explain what has happened due to personal experience of an event or issues related to an event being investigated. The purpose of such testimony is to establish truth so that appropriate judgment can be determined. In a non-legal sense, Moreau explains the use of the term with theological meaning. He cites the example of John the Baptist bearing testimony about Jesus: "He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe" (John 1:7 NIV). In Acts 1:8, Jesus emphatically commands his disciples by saying, "you will be my witness" to mean that his disciples were to bear a verbal and lifestyle testimony about him before the world in the hope of persuading them to believe in the gospel (ibid). For that purpose, the Holy Spirit was promised to be empowered, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8). Moreau (ibid) points out that the manifestation of this power was clearly evident, fulfilling its primary purpose, in the lives of the apostles, as told in Acts 4:33 "With great power the apostles continued to testify the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ…."

Conceptually, the early church, as apostolic community, understood its origin as in Jesus Christ, who was the promised Jewish messiah identified by Moses and the prophets, and understood its primary role as a community for the mission to testify persuasively to his name before the unbelieving world, so that many would embrace his gospel (ibid). Speaking of witnessing, Bria, in *Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement* identifies a very important point. In witnessing, the believers in the early church presented Jesus Christ to the world as "the

unique and decisive witness of God" by pointing to his resurrection (Bria 2002:1207). As a witnessing community of Jesus Christ, they were the sign testifying to God's presence in their midst, the sign of God's kingdom in the world.

In accordance with its commitment as witnessing community to the world, the early church maintained an active engagement with the broader society. In many ways, in spite of all of its weaknesses and human frailty, the church as witnessing community stood above the many contemporary religious groups as a model to be emulated. The rise of the Christian faith is attributed to its distinct corporate witness of love and devotion to Christ and fellow human beings (Stark 1996:86). For example, during the epidemic of plagues in the second century, many Christian communities responded from a charitable heart and extended their loving care even to their non-Christian neighbours (:83). It was a foreign idea among the people who had other religious persuasions and did not operate from the basis of showing love to others, especially to those who were outsiders (:80). Expressing love to a neighbour in tangible ways was a radical witness in the context of the time.

What was so unique about the early Christian communities was that they understood themselves as a local community with a divine and cosmic perspective, to be an expression of God's kingdom on earth. Although its origin was supernatural, the community did not lose its place in the earthly society. The reign of God expressed its presence in tangible and visible form (Lohfink 1985:35). People could experience it. Numerous mystery cults existed in ancient times; they were seeking after exotic religious experience to escape the painful reality of this world. Their members primarily focused on individualistic experience for themselves rather than the welfare of others (Banks 1994:44). They had no reason to care for others. Although the Stoic thinkers entertained ideas involving universal terms, their philosophical ideals were more individualistic than communal, like the individualistic Cynics (ibid). The Christian view provided a balanced perspective involving both cosmic and earthly dimensions: universal fraternity with a sense of intimacy and belonging that greatly appealed

to the minds of educated Greeks and Romans and devout Jewish leaders (:43). In addition to its reasonable teachings, tangible expression of Christian love in community life was one of the important factors that contributed to the success of the Christian faith. Its influence as the light and the salt in the broader society was very noticeable. Therefore, the early church as a community of contrast-society constantly drew the attention of the world (Lohfink 1985:66).

4.2.4   The social structure of the community

In conformity to its theological and missional identity, as well as the context in which it existed, the social structure of the early church reflected the way it understood its identity as community. Its communal character was seen in various aspects of its social structure: for instance, in the way new members were admitted; by the various terms the church was characterised; in the kind of place the church met for fellowship, in the manner members related to one another socially, and in the way it was governed. The following six features that delineate the social structure of the early church as community are briefly discussed here:

 1.   Joining the church

2.   The *Ekklesia*

3.   The *body*: a model of interdependency

4.   House: a place of gathering

5.   Family: a model of inter-personal relationship

6.   Leadership

Joining the church

In the early period, believers bonded together with one another and with God through Jesus Christ and organised themselves into a community wherever the Gospel was preached and received, Believing in the gospel implied joining the community—"To embrace the gospel, then, is to enter into community" (Banks 1994:27). Believing and joining went together. Church was not seen as an association or an institution that one chose to join. Membership was assumed on the confession of one's faith and baptism. Perceiving the church as an

association of individuals voluntarily coming together for a religious purpose, which now seems so normal to us was a foreign concept in the early period of Christianity.

It was noted in Chapter Two that most of the youth in Nairobi come to a local church with very little sense of being connected to the body of believers. They fail to experience a sense of belonging. However, the early church was perceived as the community of Christ where believing and belonging elements went together. To belong to Christ means also to belong to his church. There was no dichotomy between one's personal faith and social identification with the group of believers; believing and belonging were two sides of the same coin. It was inconceivable in the perspective of early Christians to believe in Christ and not to belong to his community.

The *Ekklesia*

Since every community must have some kind of structure, the early church as community developed its own form and structure by incorporating the existing social pattern of the society and conforming to the unique demands of the gospel as well. Since it adopted some of the existing social structures, it did not appear as a distinctly foreign community. It identified itself by a very common term *ekklesia,* which simply meant an assembly in common Greek language; referring to citizens in Greek cities came together for a meeting. The term carries a community connotation. However, the word acquired a distinct Christian meaning, identifying closely with local Christian community in the New Testament writings. By adding the phrase "in God the Father" and "in the Lord" to *ekklesia*, Paul gave the term a distinct Christian meaning. It distinguished a Christian gathering from regular political council and synagogue meetings (Banks 1994:29). Schnelle (2005:560) points out that, by identifying the Christian community as *ekklesia* rather than synagogue, the early church differentiated itself from Judaism.

Banks (1994:29) noted that the term "is applied only to *an actual gathering of people* [italics in text] or to the group that gathers as *a regularly constituted meeting* [italics in text] and not, as in today's usage, to a number of local assemblies conceived as part of a larger unit". In other words, *ekklesia* referred to a local Christian gathering or a congregation. It simply was a local Christian community where people interacted face to face, not an abstract concept, like universal church or a structure like denomination. The reference "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints" did not mean one large gathering of Christians in one place but Christians who were scattered in various small groups throughout the city (:34). In Paul's writings it appears that each local gathering was recognised as a distinct community (ibid). According to Schnelle (2005:561), there was "no hierarchical structure that [connected] local congregations and the whole church, but each part or manifestation of the church [could] in turn stand for the whole. The whole church [was] present in the local congregation, and the local congregation [was] a part of the whole church." This understanding implies that early Christians normally used the term *ekklesia* to mean the local gathering of Christians or the local Christian community rather than an abstract religious body. In summary, the *ekklesia* referred to a tangible visible gathering of Christian believers.

The *Body*: a model of inter-dependency

The term *body* is another commonly used metaphor used in the early church to describe the Christian community in New Testament writings, especially in Pauline texts. The body expresses an ideal model of a functional community in which members are interdependent for survival. It views the church as an organism rather than an organisation or an institution. As a body, the community is fully dependent on Christ for sustenance, unity and growth, as well as on individual members (Colossians 2:19). As individual members of the body, all are completely interdependent for meaningful social and spiritual life and growth (1 Corinthians 12:12-30). This metaphor provides a model or structure for the church requiring active participation among its members in order to function as a dynamic community. As an ideal model, it directed the life and conduct of the early Christian community to a greater extent to

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attain unity and to provide loving care and service to one another in the use of their spiritual gifts (Schnelle 2005:564). Even where they failed to express such unity and care for one another adequately, Christians had a concrete framework to shape their community life.

The body metaphor provides a better description of the nature of the church. It stresses the importance of mutual relationship between the members of the community better than the terminology of *ekklesia* that focuses more on gathering (Banks 1994:59). In reality, the gathering of believers is important for the body to function effectively. Hence, the terms are complementary. The use of *ekklesia* or *body* depends on what aspect of the church life one wants to emphasise.

Another important aspect of the nature of the church illumined by the body metaphor is the recognition of the local Christian community as "*the* body of Christ" rather than a "body of Christ", along with other nuances. Banks (1994:59) asserts that "whenever Christians are in relationship there is the body of Christ in its entirety, for Christ is truly and wholly present there through his Spirit [1 Corinthians] (12:13)." This places a high regard on the church as local Christian community. Christ is present where his people have come together in his name and relate to one another in love and unity (Matthew 18:20). Christ is manifested through the collective witness of his community.

The body metaphor clearly places a high value on each member's unique contribution of service to the overall welfare and growth of the local church, whether highly recognised or less visible. Each member is given a gift of ministry that is needed by others and is important for the total functioning of the community. Diversity of ministry is essential for the healthy growth of the body, rather than a uniform way of operating. "The community contains a diversity of ministries, and it is precisely in the differences of function that the wholeness and unity of the body resides" (Banks 1994:60). Diversity implies that the individual members' contributions may not be the same but they are all of same value because of their

interconnectedness (Schnelle 1985:564). According to 1 Corinthians 12:14-21, each church community is uniquely designed by God by equipping each member with a unique gift to complement one another. In so doing, "each member has a unique role to play yet is also dependent upon everyone else" (Banks 1994:60).

Rodney Starks (1996:161), in *The Rise of Christianity,* describes how the Christian community, through its superior social networks and loving care, was able to make an impact in the Greco-Roman cities by demonstrating new models of social relationship, care for orphans and widows, newcomers and strangers and so forth. It could do that through the inner strength that could only come from strong community structures based on the principles of the life of the body taught in the New Testament; otherwise it could not have made much difference in the hostile and brutal world.

House: a place of gathering

Evidence from the writings of Paul and the accounts of Luke in the book of Acts indicates that the early church often met in homes. Lohfink (1985:107) writes: "In each city where Christians lived one or more families made their homes available for the assembly of the community." Even in the gospels of Mark, Mathew and Luke the house appears to be a dominant place for Jesus to conduct his ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing (Trainor 2001:6). Frequent use in New Testament writings of the terms *oikos* (house) and *oikia* (household) in relation to gatherings suggest the size and structure of the community. It indicates that the early church communities were small enough for "Christian brotherhood [to] be realized concretely" (Lohfink 1985:107). Banks (1994:35) estimates that average membership could have been around 30 to 35 people because a room in a modest Greek or Roman house could not hold more than forty people. A gathering of this size has greater potential for stronger social bonding. This factor could have contributed to a sense of family in an informal social structure.

Michael Trainor (2001), in *The Quest for Home,* has insightfully presented the family-like bond existing in the first century church community, as it is evident in the common usage of the metaphor of *"house"* or *"household"* by the author of the Gospel of Mark. Trainor (:20-34) mentions five styles of houses, ranging from a simple single house to a large mansion in the Mediterranean world designed for social interaction and gathering. "Each of the house structures shows us how people interacted with each other and what was important for their living together" (:34). The close relationship in the Christian community was important for security and comfort in the time of social and economic upheaval (ibid). The city dwellers often "gathered in apartments or the larger houses to celebrate their communion with Jesus in the Lord's Supper and remembered the stories of his teaching, preaching, and healings" (ibid).

The house as a place of gathering fulfils many purposes besides meeting for religious teaching and worship. Metaphorically, it provides a warm and friendly place for human bonding over a meal, a place for casual conversation, a place to find comfort and care of the needy, a place to be known and recognised, a place for mutual accountability, and a place to feel at home (:184-187). Contrary to the cultural discrimination against women in Greek, Roman and Jewish society, meeting in the house provided a greater degree of freedom to women to participate in community life (Osiek 2006:9). According to Osiek and Macdonald (ibid), "women participated in all the activities of the house church in the first generation of the Christian era and … the house church was the center for worship, hospitality, patronage, education, communication, social services, evangelization and mission". Coming together in the house provided one of the most ideal ways of realising a sense of community in contrast to present-day church buildings which symbolise the church as an organised, formal institution that tends to relegate women and the youth to lower social status with designated participation.

Family: a model of inter-personal relationship

In New Testament writings, the church is often described with the metaphor of a loving family, which points out its informal nature and structure in contrast to the present-day description of the church as a formal religious institution with different levels of official positions of bishops, pastors, elders, and deacons. It is because the early church understood itself as God's family rather than as religious institution. Because of that, the teaching of Jesus "to love one another" acquired a deeper meaning with high priority among the members of the Christian community (Lohfink 1985:110). Loving one's neighbour was more or less understood as loving one's fellow believer (:112).

The interconnectedness of relationships among the believers is also emphasised in other images in the New Testaments. When Paul describes the church by using images of building (temple and stones), horticulture (vine and olive tree), and human body (head and parts), he never emphasises the personal relationship between God and the people, and among people in abstract, formal terms (Banks 1994: 48). However, because the church was primarily understood as a fellowship of God's children who were united in Christ, it assumed the informal structure of family relationship. The metaphor of family shaped its social structure as well. First there was a sense of equality before God. Every member was seen as a child of God and fellow heir in Christ regardless of class, gender and race (Romans 8:16-17). Even Paul never placed himself above the members of the community by emphasising his rank as an apostle (Banks 1994:50). He described his relationship with them in informal family terms like "brethren"; Onesimus (a slave) was called his "child"; Timothy (a young subordinate) was "a son"; certain women were "Apphia our sister" and "our sister Phoebe" (:51). Even those who served with Paul, were often called "my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier" (Philippians 2:25). In many ways this dimension of relationship in the early church resembles more closely to family relationships in traditional African community than to institutional relationships in the present-day church. There was no formal hierarchy with official positions, as it is evident in our churches today.

Leadership

A family-oriented structure does not negate the need for leaders. In the early church, there were prominent people who exercised influence over others. The evidence suggests that leadership was understood more from the perspective of serving the community on the basis of one's gift as a leader rather than from the perspective of institutional position, as it is practiced in the church today (Banks 1994:149). Even the positions of pastors and teachers were gifts given by the Spirit to be exercised for the benefit of the church community rather than to enjoy as titles indicating status. Banks argues that using even the term *episkopos* (elders) as a position may be questionable. In his view, the term simply applies to "men and women overseeing various activities or other people…. However, the term never refers to any precise function. The positions held are always of a minor kind. Biblical Greek uses the word freely but knows no clearly defined office bearing that title" (:147). In this matter, the present understanding of biblical leadership has been more biased towards men. Even today, women in African churches do not have full recognition as leaders, especially among the female youth.

In the early church, leaders were recognised by their service to the community on the basis of their spiritual gifts and their calling rather than on the basis of official titles or positions (Schnelle 2005:570). This ethical view of leadership in which the leader is seen as being the servant of the community of Christ was explicitly taught and demonstrated by Jesus (Matthew 20:25-28). The early church community exemplified the teaching of Jesus in its praxis. In most preset-day urban churches, leadership is reserved for the older men. Hence, the youth are not recognised as leaders, even when they show signs of giftedness and calling, as it has been pointed out in Chapter Two.

Acts 14:21-23 records how Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each of the churches to lead and guide them. They did not appoint one person, but several of them. The leadership was collectively exercised. When Paul and Barnabas selected these men to be elders, they

were already recognised as leaders in the church community, by their gifts and service. They

were not given new positions; their leadership was acknowledged in correspondence to social

and ethical criteria that Paul communicated to Timothy for the appointment of elders and

deacons (1Timothy 3).

4.2.5   The Church as community of character

Individuals of high moral character can be found in many communities. It is not unusual.

The Greek and Roman society produced many people who portrayed high moral and ethical

values. The names of many of their sages and philosophers are known to us. However, the

pagan Greco-Roman society was not known for a high moral reputation. According to

Rodney Stark (1996:86), it was not because they lacked high moral teaching, but their

religious beliefs had no moral basis to support them. Stark writes (ibid):

> There was nothing new in the idea that the supernatural makes behavioral demands
> upon humans—the gods have always wanted sacrifices and worship. Nor was there
> anything new in the notion that the supernatural will respond to offerings—that the
> gods can be induced to exchange services for sacrifices. What was new was the
> notion that more than self-interested exchange relations were possible between
> humans and the supernatural. The Christian teaching that God loves those who love
> him was alien to pagan beliefs….Equally alien to paganism was the notion that
> because God loves humanity, Christians cannot please God unless they *love one
> another*. Indeed, as God demonstrates his love through sacrifice, humans must
> demonstrate their love through sacrifice on behalf of *one another*. Moreover, such
> responsibilities were to be extended beyond the bonds of family and tribe, indeed to
> "all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2).
> These were revolutionary ideas.

In contrast to base religious society, the early church community had a distinct reputation for

its moral quality. It was evident in the manner they related with one another in brotherly love

and for helping even those who did not belong to their groups. Their moral actions based on

the ethics of love are evident in the words of Tertullian: "It is our care of the helpless, our

practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Only look,'

they say, 'look how they love one another'" (Quoted in Stark 1996:87). The quality of their

moral response was keenly noticed and felt by their pagan neighbours when the deadly

epidemic swept through many parts of the Roman world. According to Stark (:91-92), the

epidemic wreaked havoc among the pagans' social relations as they abandoned their helpless kin in contrast to Christian communities where their members received nursing care. As a result, the rate of survival among the Christians was much higher. Those pagans who came closer to Christians also received care. "The consequence of all this that pagan survivors faced greatly increased [the] odds of conversion because of their increased attachments to Christians" (:93). The church as a community had to be a morally vibrant to bear witness for winning the hearts of base religious people more than just preaching the gospel of love and hope. The gospel of love had to be demonstrated to people who lacked the vocabulary of love in their religious thought, as Stark described above.

Besides expressing love and kindness to one another and to their pagan neighbours, the high morality of the Christian community was distinctly noticed in the way women were treated. The church, being understood metaphorically as a family, treated its members as equal, regardless of age, class, race and gender. It would be appropriate to look into how the role and status of women in the Christian community were defined and practised in the context of the broader society where women had no rights and respect.

Contrary to modern popular opinion that portrays the early church community as sexist and patriarchal, especially with reference to Paul's attitude towards women, the early church treated them as full members as far as their status was concerned (Banks 1994:119). According to Lohfink (1985:91) Jesus set an example by including women in the circle of disciples. Women were allowed to play an important role in Jesus' ministry, in contrast to the expectations and norms of Jewish society. In areas where women were restricted from performing certain tasks, it mainly concerned functional matters related to social and cultural appropriateness. However, in the social context of that period, women enjoyed higher status in the Christian community than in any other religious group in the Roman Empire (Stark 1996:95). Because of this, the church was attractive to women (ibid).

Paul showed high regard for women as well, contrary to the opinions of modern critiques (Lohfink 1985:96). He often included women in the church when he wrote his letters. It was customary for Paul to address his letters to all members in the community; he did not restrict his readers to men only, but included women (Banks 1994:118). For instance, by using the terms "all" (1 Corinthians 10:17), "anyone" (1 Corinthians 11:29), and "each one" (1 Corinthians 11:21), Paul included both men and women. Even when he used the term "the brethren", he meant both men and women (:119). Although the language may appear sexist, women were always regarded as equal members in the Christian community, at least on theological grounds (Galatians 3:28).

Women were also involved in prominent church ministries. Paul mentions the names of several women who shared in his missionary work: Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3), several names of women in his personal greetings Romans 16: 3-15) and Nympha who hosted the church in her house (Colossians 4:15). Paul acknowledged women involved in the ministry of prophesy and praying in the church like the men. But he called on them to perform such tasks in a culturally acceptable way by covering their heads (1 Corinthians 11:21). In Bank's (1994:119) view it is significant that the early church allowed women to prophesy as the ministry of prophesy was the most important activity in Paul's view (1 Corinthians 14:1-5,20-25, 30-31,39-40). Considering the cultural context of the time, women had much freedom in being involved in ministry. Lohfink (1985:97) points out that some women even worked side by side with their husbands—Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:3-5), Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7) and Peter and his wife (1 Corinthians 9:5).

Rodney Stark (1996:105) attributes this to the high moral standards reflected in the Christian community which brought success to its mission. He says that, socially, women in the Christian community enjoyed a greater degree of security, marital stability and equality in comparison to those in the pagan communities. He states that the Christian view of marital fidelity and condemnation of sexual immorality, divorce, incest and polygamy contributed to

a favourable social environment for women to enjoy respect and good treatment in the Christian community. In contrast, women in the Greek, Roman and Jewish society were treated as second-class citizens with no rights. The teachings of Paul and others recorded in the scriptures regarding equal status and humane treatment of women were revolutionary ideas in the formative years of the early Christian communities.

In the area of the social and moral dimension the church shone its moral and ethical light collectively as community. In doing so, it expressed the eschatological glimpse of the working of God's kingdom on earth (Guder 1998:108). It is a challenge for today's church corporately to demonstrate the ethical and moral dimensions of God's reign again, so it may be known as the community of character rather than highlighting the good works of a few individual Christians here and there. The church must learn to bear witness corporately as well as individually by functioning as a community, as the early Christian church did.

4.3   THE EARLY CHURCH AS A DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY

In the previous section, it was shown that the early church understood itself primarily as the community of Christian believers, rather than as an institution or association. It built its social and ethical structure around community more so than on individuals. This section of the chapter examines the role of the church as community in building disciples. It focuses on two major tasks of discipleship: 1) Forming an identity and 2) shaping a Christian character as Christ's follower. These two tasks are not to be seen as two separate entities of discipleship but as a deeply interrelated process. For clarity, however, it will be investigated as two major aspects of the same phenomenon. Discipleship will be viewed and analysed according to the three dimensions mentioned above: Connected with God, Connected with one another, and Connected with broader society.

4.3.1   Discipleship as formation of Christian identity

In the early days of Christianity, when an adherent of another religion became convinced of the truth of the Christian gospel and ready to accept its truth, he began a long process of initiation in order to be incorporated into Christian community.   It was not a matter of walking into a church and applying to become a member.   To become a Christian meant becoming a new person, acquiring a new identity, both socially and spiritually.   It was not enough for individuals to profess their faith in Christ personally, but they needed to be incorporated into the community.   It was the task of the community to shape the new believer's identity and character as a Christian, a disciple of Christ.   The community played an important role in affirming and defining an individual's Christian identity and character.   In another words, disciples were made in the community, unlike today when disciples are left alone to grow up and find their own Christian identity and character.

Before the reign of Constantine, Christians often met in homes, and often kept their gathering low profile in urban areas because of antagonism and occasional persecution.   A prospective convert was usually invited and brought into the gathering by a Christian friend or a relative.   It was through the network of relationships that new converts were recruited, more than through public preaching as it is done today.   Normally, the whole community participated in one way or another to initiate and assimilate a new believer into the community, as it is evident in the concrete practice of *agape*, the mutual love for one another (Lohfink 1985:109).   Discipleship in the early church was understood as a community task rather than a lone journey of spiritual self-discipline.

The community can shape the identity of its members in many ways.   This study will limit its investigation to a couple of important symbolic themes or domains that the early church used in shaping and reinforcing an individual member's identity and character as 'Christian' and the corporate identity and character as 'Christian community': 1) Baptism and 2) Eucharist.   Before embarking on these topics, it would be helpful to examine a brief historical overview

of the transition of the church's self identity as an exclusive Messianic Jewish community to an inclusive universal Christian community. This overview will provide an essential backdrop for understanding the nature of Christian discipleship as rooted in the Judaist view of life and moral code.

4.3.1.1   Transition from Jewish to Christian identity

How did the early church go about acquiring its new Christian identity (pastoral and missional) as the people of God and its converts?

The first Christian community was comprised of Jewish believers. They saw themselves as the chosen people of God in keeping with the thinking of traditional Judaism (Lohfink 1985:34). Within Judaism, however, the community was seen as another sect. The community of Jesus' disciples did not see itself as a sect but as symbolically representing Israel as a whole, as the eschatological people of God (:35). Henry Chadwick (1967:13), a well-known historian of the early Christian church, points out that there were several sects within Judaism, like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The early Christian group tended to resemble the Essenes more closely (ibid). Because of their identity as the chosen people of God rooted in the history of Israel, they retained their communal Jewish character even when Gentiles were admitted. They did not compromise their distinct Jewish way of life with the Gentile society. Norman Bull (1967:63), in *The Rise of the Church,* describes the reason for the exclusive attitude of Jews in following way:

> For centuries the Jews had preserved their pure faith in the one God, and their high moral standards, only by keeping strictly separate from Gentiles. Gentiles had many gods; their religions had nothing to do with their daily lives; their worship was usually immoral, accompanied by drunkenness, and every kind of sexual license; they ate food that had been offered to their idols as sacrifices. It was not easy for Jews, with their strict food laws, to sit down at the table with Gentiles in the common meal of the Christian brotherhood.

Chadwick (1967:10), in *The Early Church,* made a similar comment concerning Jewish prejudice towards the Gentile society, saying: "They refused to participate in the imperial

cult, though they offered daily sacrifice on behalf of the emperor in the temples of Jerusalem and were ready to dedicate synagogues 'to God in honour of the emperor'. They were socially distinctive, marked out by circumcision and notorious for their abstinence from pork and other unclean food." In relation to pagan Gentiles, the early Christian community understood itself to be the redeemed people of Israel in light of Moses and the prophets. Moral and ritual customs of the Jews separated them from association with the Gentiles. In relation to Jews, "the Church was deeply conscious of its solidarity with Israel and of the continuity of God's action in the past with his present activity in Jesus of Nazareth and his followers" (:12).

However, Jewish prejudice did not keep the Gentiles away from joining them. Many Gentiles were attracted to monotheism and the high morality demanded by the Jewish Holy Scriptures. The morality of the Jewish community stood out as highly desirable among God-seeking Gentiles. "Without being ascetic, except in some deviationist groups, Judaism stood for chastity and stable family life; and among themselves the Jews practiced works of charity, visiting the sick, caring for the dead, showing hospitality to strangers, giving alms for the poor" (:11). The God of Israel not only demanded exclusive worship but also demanded morally upright life from his worshippers. In contrast, pagan gods "made no moral demands" (Bull 1967:17). Both the belief in One Holy God and the high ethical demands of the Jewish faith greatly appealed to many ethical-minded Gentiles.

Not all the Jewish groups treated the Gentiles with disdain. The Hellenised Jews of the Dispersion were more open to admit devout Gentiles in their community without requiring them to go through the ritual of circumcision (a symbolic sign of acceptance of the Jewish way of life) than the Jews of stricter groups in Palestine. An act of baptism might suffice to declare their intent to join the community without the requirement of denying their cultural heritage. These devout Gentiles were the ripe fruit, for they had the advantage of being readily admitted in the community. "Among these Gentile groups the Christian missionaries

found their first converts outside not only of high moral education, but also of instruction in the Hebrew Scriptures" (Chadwick 1967:11). They acted as a bridge for the gospel to cross into the Gentile world. The conversion story of Cornelius and his entire household in Acts 10 provides a good evidence of the Gentiles' search for an ethical monotheistic faith.

The issue of circumcision was a critical issue with regard to Jewish identity. The Jews circumcised their males as a sign of the covenant as God's chosen people as well as a sign that set them apart from other groups. It was the badge of being a Jew. Since the early Christian community was comprised of Jews and part of the wider Jewish community, the sign of circumcision was taken for granted. However, the gospel of Jesus did not only "break the barrier between sinful man and his Creator but between one man and another" (:19). The community was given a mandate by Jesus to preach the gospel to all humanity. As a result, the Gentiles were joining the new community in increasing numbers. The Christian Jewish community was divided on the issue of whether to require Gentiles to undergo circumcision or not. The conservative group strongly felt that "Gentiles converts must not merely keep clear of food defiled by idolatrous associations but also accept circumcision as the covenant sign of admission to the people of God" while the other Jews who understood the gospel as for all humanity openly saw it as an hindrance to the gospel (ibid).

The issue was finally resolved by the council of Christian leaders, consisting of Apostles and elders (Acts 15:22) in Jerusalem. It was decided that circumcision was not required for Gentile converts for salvation and admission in the community of God's people. This implied that Gentiles were not joining the Jewish community but the inclusive new community of God, open to all cultural and racial groups, the New Israel. This was a radical departure from the early church's self-identity derived from historic Judaism. Now this new community was called to emphasise inner circumcision (faith and repentance) more than outward circumcision (Romans 4:10-12). On moral grounds, the Council stipulated that Gentile converts should "abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled

animals and from sexual immorality" (Acts 15:29 NIV), but these conditions had already been stipulated for resident aliens in Leviticus 17-18 (Schnelle 2005:125).

It should be noted that the decision was made collectively, as a community of faith, rather than dictated by a prominent apostle or a few top leaders, although James was the main spokesperson. This is evident from the statement in Acts 15:28 which reads: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…." By resolving this issue, the church removed the major stumbling block that divided the Gentile believers and the Jewish believers. Now they were one in Christ and became God's chosen people. It paved the way for a new identity of the Christian community emerging from a particular faith of a single racial group to a universal faith open to all groups. Anyone could join the group on the basis of faith in Christ, rather than by conforming to Jewish cultural practices. Baptism replaced circumcision as a sign for admission in the community, especially among the Gentile Christians (:128).

4.3.1.2   Baptism and Eucharist: A sign of Christian identity and solidarity

The early church made it clear through its Council in Jerusalem that Christian identity was not acquired by performing an outward ritual like circumcision, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ was the criterion, but it was expressed tangibly through the rite of baptism. Baptism was not only a sign of one's faith in Christ but also a declaration of one's identification with Christian community and its way of life, as well as a separation from the old allegiance and conduct. According to Lohfink (1985:41), Jesus' ethic of discipleship demanded Christians to place their loyalty with the new family of God, "Those who follow Jesus, who for the sake of the reign of God leave behind everything they have had, become a *new family* [italics in text], a family in which, paradoxically, there are again brothers, sisters, mothers and children". In a similar way Chadwick (1967:67) points out some of the social and cultural consequences of joining Christian community: "It divided families and disturbed traditional patterns of social behaviour". Through baptism, a believer is united with Christ as well as with his body, the church, the new family of God (1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism signifies a

new beginning in the life of a believer, not only in a spiritual sense but encompassing the entire social reality of life (1 Corinthian 5:17). In this regard, Chadwick is right in his remarks that baptism involves not only spiritual transformation but the whole person. "The early Christians shared with the Jews the conviction that 'religion' included an interpretation of the whole of life, and was very far from being limited to a matter of cultic acts and ceremonies" (Chadwick 1967:259). In the early church, the praxis of baptism was seen as a symbolic rite signifying entering into a whole new way of life ordered by the beliefs and practices of the early church in conformity with the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, rather than a superficial ritual of expressing one's personal faith in Christ, as it is so commonly understood in many of our modern-day churches.

Since baptism was regarded as significant initiation into the community's life, the early church took it very seriously and made a great effort in preparing the converts for the Christian way of living. "Preparation for baptism was long and thorough, Pagans, flocking into the Church as Christianity spread, needed instruction in both belief and morals" (Bull 1967:122). Before one was admitted to full membership or received into the community, he had to undergo a period of instruction and probation as a catechumen, and then was baptised. Until his baptism, he was not included in Christian worship in which the Eucharist was celebrated. The Eucharist was regarded as mystical union with Christ and his body, the church. It was reserved only for those who belong to Christ. The Christians were keenly aware of their identity as the chosen people of God, redeemed by Christ, and corporately the body of Christ (Welsford 1951:225). They maintained their separation from the world as distinct people of God in the context of immoral pagan culture. Lohfink (1985:122-123) calls the early church a "contrast-society" because the social order of Christian communities stood out in sharp contrast to those of pagan communities around them. In all things the early church strictly maintained and passionately guarded their corporate identity. They diligently made sure that anyone joining them was a genuine believer.

Catechism was not limited to classroom instruction in Christian faith only, but a long process of initiation which would eventually culminate in baptism and Eucharist. It prepared the candidate for being received as a full member of the community. During the catechism, the candidate would go through an exercise of exorcism. "The early church did not dismiss the pagan gods as unreal, but thought of them as demons, malicious and fallen spirits who delighted to deceive men into worshipping them" (Welsford 1951:230). During exorcism, an elder would put the sign of cross over the candidate's forehead and put some salt in his mouth, and then he would stretch his hand over him in prayer. This ritual of putting behind all that related to spiritual powers was a preparation for living a life of victory in the resurrected power of Jesus. This ritual is much needed in African churches where people often join the church through the ritual of baptism but find no deliverance from the fear of spiritual powers, like witchcraft and sorcery. When they face crises in their lives they often seek the help of traditional medicine men or women, familiarly known as "waganga" in Swahili. This problem often persists among African Christians because they do not seem to find much help from the fear of witchcraft in the church. Kombo (2003:80) writes; "This fear suggests that they are not sufficiently convinced that the protective power of the salvation wrought by Christ vanquishes the evil of witchcraft and its effects on believers." (Mbiti (1990:89) is correct in pointing out that the existence of the spirits is reality for African people regardless of any scientific evidence for or against the existence of the spirits. Therefore, the church in Africa needs to address this issue like the early church did, rather than just admonishing Christians to refrain from it.

According to Welsford (1951:231), baptism was often done during Easter. At that time, the candidate would receive instruction along with others. During Lent the names of the baptised would be presented to the community to clear them from any objection. The candidate had to pass through such scrutiny and this was repeated on several Sundays. When the candidates were ready for baptism, they would go through another preliminary ceremony called *Traditio Symboli*, known as "Opening of the Ears" (ibid). The candidates were officially given the

creed of the church, which was similar to "The Apostles' Creed", in front of the congregation. The creed contained a simple statement of belief in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and some important facts about the Lord Jesus Christ (ibid). Next, the candidates prepared themselves through prayer and fasting on the eve of the Easter Day, along with their sponsors. In urban areas the baptism was often conducted at a baptistery. In the country, the church would prefer to conduct baptism in a shallow running stream.

The ritual of baptism was performed by an official by pouring water over the head of the candidate three times, saying: "I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Welsford 1951:234). After the baptism, the candidate was given a white garment to wear. It symbolised purity, to signify that their sins were purified by the blood of Jesus.

It was a common custom for the bishop to confirm the baptised candidates immediately by anointing them with oil. The bishop would lay hands on them and pray for them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (ibid).

The early Christian community regarded Easter as a festival of great redemption. In that celebration, the baptism of the newly-converted was given a very important place. It was taken as a sign to strengthen the community's solidarity and identity. The new converts were ceremoniously and publicly incorporated in the community.

After the ritual of baptism, the new converts were considered full members. They had joined the community and the community had accepted them as one of their own. Now they could participate fully in the celebration of the Eucharist. Their first communion was a very special occasion. They were joining the Lord and his body through the sacramental bread and wine; thus celebrating the *anamnesis* of Christ's death and resurrection. Their first communion was made special by the provision of two other symbolic cups, one with water and the other with

milk and honey. The water symbolised their purification, the milk and honey signified their entry into the "promised land" (ibid). From the account it is evident that the baptism was a community affair. The focus was not on the baptised individual only but on the whole community. It was always an occasion for the community to define again and reinforce its corporate identity in Christ.

Chadwick (1967:259) writes: "Baptism and the Lord's Supper were two visible signs the early community celebrated in order to solidify its communal identity as well as its inner faith in Christ". The Eucharist, as a ritual of anamnesis, was practiced often in order to reinforce its communal identity in Christ. It was a common practice in the early church that only the baptised members—those who truly belonged to Christ—were admitted to the sacred meal or the Lord's Supper (:261).

Chadwick (:32) describes the significant role of the Eucharist in deepening the bond among the community members in the following terms:

> Each Sunday they met for their 'thanksgiving' in which the baptized ate bread and drank wine in a sacred meal which they spoke of as 'eating the body' and 'drinking the blood' of Christ. To share in this sacred meal was so deeply felt to be the essential expression of membership of the society that fragments of the broken bread were taken round to any who were absent through illness or imprisonment.

By participating regularly in the Eucharist on Sundays, the individuals would symbolically identify himself as a member of the community. It was very important for everyone to come together regularly for worship and fellowship. The writings of Justin Martyr indicate that "all Christians regarded [it] as an absolute obligation to be present each Sunday if it was in their power" (:262).

Apart from the Eucharist, the early church also celebrated an *Agape* or Love Feast. "It was sacramental, for it made and symbolized a binding relationship between those who shared food" (Bull 1967:123). Often it was done in private homes (Schnelle 2005:155). Similar to

the Lord's Supper in meaning, the meal was taken together to remember the last meal which the Lord and his disciples ate together. It was a joyful celebration as the members enjoyed the meal together. Socially it strengthened the unity of the community and knitted the community more tightly in love and care. Every member felt a strong sense of belonging to one another and to the Lord. Lohfink (1985) points out that the inner solidarity of Christian communities profoundly affected their witness to the world, "Its ultimate source was fraternal love, its ultimate location the Eucharist celebration of the communities assembled on the Lord's Day." Such solidarity of love was a moving testimony to people of other religious adherence who were yearning for meaningful relationship with eschatological hope.

The communal ritual of baptism and the Eucharist played a significant role in shaping the identity of Christian individuals as well as reinforcing the identity of the community as the distinct people of God. In those communal and sacramental practices, true discipleship was carried out. These rituals also served as a clear boundary to define the members' identity in relation to the outside world.

4.3.2   Discipleship as formation of Christian character

In human society, every community is known by its character whether it is negative or positive. The character is a reflection of values and moral life shared and practised by its members collectively and individually. The historical evidence strongly suggests that the early church was generally characterised as a community that demonstrated love in all three dimensions: love for God, love for one another, and love for others who did not belong to their community. In the historical context of the first three centuries it was not a "normal" community, but a radically different one—"God's contrast society" (Lohfink 1985:157). The early church truly was a community of Jesus who founded the community on the ethical principle of love. His followers faithfully carried on his teachings and tradition under the guidance of the Holy Spirit until the church no longer understood itself as God's contrast

society with an eschatological destiny at the dawn of new Christian era under the reign of Caesar Constantine (:182).

In contrast to our modern times, it was inconceivable in the early days of Christianity for anyone to be a Christian apart from the Christian community. In the previous discussion, it was pointed out clearly that to believe in Christ implied joining the community of Jesus. There was no place for private and personal Christian faith. The rite of baptism was an act of incorporating individuals in the community. To be a Christian meant not only acknowledging Jesus as the Lord but also being a part of his community and participating in the values and ethics of Christian community.

From the early days of Christianity, in spite of persecution, the church was growing in numbers. Many of its members coming from other religious backgrounds could not remain passive in the community for too long without undergoing transformation in terms of their obedience to the commandments of Christ—love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39). Therefore, discipleship in the early Christian community involved a commitment to serious devotion to the knowledge of Christ and growing in obedience to the great commands of Christ. The aspect of identity and obedience went together hand in hand.

The community expected conformity from its members in obeying the commands of Christ. Lohfink (1985:118) points out that conformity was not imposed through domination but through persuasion and a gentle spirit. For example, Paul seldom exercised his apostolic authority when he handled conflict. He approached the matter with "the character of self-sacrificing service" (ibid). Discipleship was understood as transformation of the whole person, both private and public. The early church did not recognise one's faith in Christ as a personal affair only, but also as a corporate affair.

Six major areas of Christian life where the influence of the church as community has been more evident in shaping the lives of its members as it sought to make disciples of Christ are described here. These areas will be examined under the following thematic headings:

1) The Ethics of Christian life

2) Social status

3) Moral purity

4) Hospitality

5) Political witness

6) Economic life and attitude

4.3.2.1   The ethics of Christian living

The ethics and moral life of the early church community was built on the foundation of the Jewish scriptures and practices as well as additional teaching by Jesus and his apostles. It did not comprise radically new principles of right conduct that the early Christian community developed apart from the established Old Testament ethics. Even the commandments of Jesus were rooted in the Jewish scriptures. Jesus himself declared that he came to build on what had already been established; he had said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). The Sermon on the Mount was primarily addressed to his circle of disciples, initially representing Israel and later coming to be recognised as the Christian church (Lohfink 1985:39). However, the fundamental difference between the Jewish community and the Christian community was not the ethical content but the motivational basis of obeying those ethical laws, which reflected God's holiness. For Jews, the basis for obedience was the Law: for Christians the basis was love. Jews viewed the keeping of the law as a means of attaining righteousness. Christians were motivated by the love of God (grace) to obey God's law. Righteousness was credited to them by faith on the basis of Christ's atonement. Therefore, "Christianity was founded on love for God and for man. Jesus taught his disciples that if they loved God as their Father they would love each other as brothers in God's family (Mark

12:29-31; Matthew 23:8; John 13:35)" (Bull 1967:114). Jesus said, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:40). From this theological basis the early Christian community interpreted and taught moral and ethical standards of behaviour for both individual and corporate life.

Through catechism, a convert was taught the ethics of Christian life and the basics of Christian faith. The convert who received instruction was a *catechumen*. Through participation in the community, the Christian would learn how to live a righteous life. Transformation of life according to gospel values was more evident in the daily ordinary lives of Christian believers, as "the expression of this new outlook in daily behaviour was a task of ordinary Christians in every walk of life" (Welsford 1951:311). Preparation for baptism was understood as learning to live according to the Christian way of life exemplified by the local Christian community. The ethical teaching of the 'Two Ways' was a popular form evidenced in early Christian writings (Bull 1967:122). Slaves were taught to be faithful to their masters and masters to be kind to their slaves. Husbands were commanded to love their wives and wives were told to respect and submit to their husbands. Unmarried men learnt to be pure, and no catechumen could earn his living by an occupation that was illegal or immoral.

4.3.2.2 Social status

Transformation of one's conduct was visibly evident in the social acceptance of different groups in the early church community. Socially both the ancient Greco-Roman and Judean societies were highly stratified. The aristocrats were the ruling class. They were followed by freemen consisting of artisans, traders and poor peasants. At the bottom of the society were slaves who did not have any rights. People from different classes hardly ever mixed. In each social class, women were considered as second-class. The Christian ethic of love created a radically different society where barriers between different social-economic classes and gender were overcome within its community. From the very inception of Christ's community "Jesus made clear through his word and even more through his concrete conduct that he did

not recognize religious-social exclusion and discrimination. The reign of God permitted no 'class'" (Lohfink 1985:89). Christianity did not abolish those classes but created a society where people could have fellowship together on the basis of common faith in spite of the different levels of status. Bull (1967:114) notes the effect of such unity in the Christian community:

> It was love which bound believers together in Christian societies; and it was the wonderful fellowship of these Christian groups which so astonished pagans. It was this which attracted them to the Church. In it would be found people who had nothing in common in secular society: Gentiles and Jews; slaves and freemen; educated and uneducated; rich and poor; men and women. (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11)

A typical Christian church or gathering in the urban areas of the Roman Empire would have included people of diverse social and economic status: some members of the local aristocracy, a large number of free citizens of lower standing, freedmen, some of them wealthy and some slaves (Welsford 1951:313). Stark (1997:46) claims that early converts were not "a mass of degraded outsiders but from early days had members, friends, and relatives in high places—often within the imperial family". Although the society was highly stratified, "within the Christian fellowship these social distinctions were ignored" (Welsford 1951:313).

From the evidence of Christian inscriptions in the catacombs, no mention is made of rank in the early church (ibid). "A slave or freedman might become a bishop—several of the early bishops of Rome came from one or other of these classes" (ibid). Although slavery was accepted as an institution, Christian ethics demanded that one must treat his slave humanely and if the slave was Christian, he had to be regarded as a brother in Christ according to Ephesians 6:9 and Philemon 16 (:314). In the context of that time it was a radical proposition. Such radical Christian discipleship could only be carried out when people were secure in their relationship with God and with the rest of the community. Chadwick (1967:60) summarises an essence of the social and ethical dimension of Christian discipleship concisely in his statement: "In the Church masters and slaves were brethren."

4.3.2.3 Moral purity

As indicated previously, the early Christian community, through its origin in Judaism and the Old Testament, inherited a faith that demands high moral standards in all walks of life. In that respect Christian discipleship required a high standard of fidelity in marriage and sexual purity. Consequently, one of the notable and visible features of the Christian community that stood out in the society of that time was the treatment of women, especially in the sanctity of marriage (Boer 1976:37). Women thereby enjoyed a higher degree of security and marital stability in comparison to women in other religious societies (Stark 1998:95, Chadwick 1967:59).

Besides demanding fidelity in marriage, the church expected its members to marry fellow believers. The church did not approve of believers marrying heathens as evident in 2 Corinthians 6:14 (Welsford 1951:331). When this occurred, though, the church would tolerate it (1 Corinthians 7). In such cases, the unbelieving spouse would not be considered a part of the community until the spouse confesses faith in Christ. Spiritual unity and harmony in marriage could not be enjoyed in such a marriage. Socially, the Christian spouse would be torn between the demands of the gospel and the worldly expectations of the unbelieving mate. Therefore, such marriages were not condemned but tolerated and given marginal status in the community life, with a view that the unbelieving spouse would become a believer through the testimony and witness of the believing spouse.

Since polygamy was a socially unacceptable norm, the church had to deal with the problem of single women and widows. Under certain circumstances, they were subject to great temptation. Celibacy was highly respected in Christian community. These women were expected to dedicate their lives in service of God according to Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 7:34. The early church had to deal with this issue from time to time when it faced scandal. No satisfactory solution was found until the fourth century, when a religious community of women was established (:333).

With regarding to sexual purity, the church existed in the midst of an immoral social world where sexual immorality was pervasive. Divorce was easy to obtain. Women had no rights. Girls were given in marriage at a very early age, even less than 12 (Stark 1996:106). Adultery was common. The church could maintain its moral purity only by strictly enforcing its values collectively in its community. Otherwise, an individual Christian apart from the community might easily give in to pressure from the surrounding society. For an individual to try to live up to the moral standards of the Bible on his own would be a losing battle. In spite of moral degradation around it, the church struggled admirably to maintain its witness as a moral community, especially in the area of the sexual conduct of its members (1 Corinthians 5:9). The high ethical demand of sexual purity was taught and practised in the community (1Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). The community expected its members to live by the biblical standard which differed greatly from the society's understanding of sexual mores. "The Christian sex ethic differed from the conventional standards of pagan [sic] society in that it regarded [unchaste behaviour] in a husband as no less serious a breach of loyalty and trust than unfaithfulness in a wife" (Chadwick 1967:58). Moral purity was a mark of Christian discipleship. The early church could maintain its moral witness only through mutual accountability through communal solidarity.

4.3.2.4 Hospitality: the value of sharing and caring

One of the distinct features of the early church was hospitality. Christians were known for their hospitality, even to strangers. Welsford (1951:333) writes, "Christians were hospitable. They welcomed brethren from distant churches, whether they knew them or not, and they helped them if they were in difficulties." They gave money for the needy poor, redeemed slaves, and visited prisoners. The discipleship of hospitality was rooted in the love for God and the love for neighbours. Jesus taught the importance of showing compassion and love to others vividly in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25).

According to Lohfink (1985:109-110), the early church community clearly understood that 'loving one's neighbour' primarily meant *"love for one's brother in the faith, love of Christians for one another"* and not love for all humanity in a universal sense as it is understood in modern times. Lohfink (:114) argues that out of fraternal love "which has its basic and permanent location in the people of God" Christian believers had to extend their love to anyone in need, but hospitality began in the household of faith, according to Paul's instruction in Galatians 6:10.

The spirit of hospitality was clearly demonstrated in the lives of individuals in the early church community. It is seen in Pauline and other epistles, where constant admonishment is given to the church community to practise the ministry of "one another" as a way of showing mutual love, for example in Romans 12:10: "Be devoted to one another"; Romans 12:16: "Live in harmony with one another"; Romans 15:7: "Accept one another"; 1 Corinthians 11:33: "wait for each other"; Galatians 5:13: "serve one another in love"; 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "encourage one another and build up each other"; 1 Peter 1:22: "love one another deeply" and in many other examples. By emphasising the value of serving and loving one another, those who made up the early church community were taught to consider the interests of others and the community above their own self-interest. As a result, various forms of hospitality became an essential praxis of discipleship. Without the sense of being a member of a moral community, one could hardly imagine the practice of hospitality extended to anyone beyond one's kin.

4.3.2.5 Political witness: The question of allegiance

Politically the Christians of the first three centuries were known for their courageous stand against the mighty Roman Empire. The church refused to bow to the political pressure to acknowledge the Caesar as the supreme lord, even though some of its members did compromise out of fear from time to time. They refused to accept a system of power that sanctions force to subject human will into subservience as they followed the pattern of

resistance set by Jesus. Theissen (2002:242) makes the following remarks about Jesus' non-violent defiance of the political forces of his time, "Jesus and his adherents did not espouse political quietism. They did not remain passive. They participated in the realization of the kingdom of God by an explicit renunciation of force, by political symbolic actions, and by an in-group exercise of human rulership." For three centuries, Christians did not shy away from martyrdom. They were willing to pay the price for their allegiance to their supreme lord, Jesus Christ. Part of the Christian discipleship could have been involved, through teaching and shared communal values, with the developing moral conviction that Jesus Christ and his kingdom came first in life. He was the supreme Lord and King. It is evident in the creedal statement "the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16). Faith in Christ not only meant forgiveness of sin but total allegiance to Jesus Christ as the Lord and King, as taught in the gospel of Matthew 28:18-19.   The early Christian community understood the political aspect of discipleship clearly.   It was evident in the way they challenged various earthly rulers of their time.

According to historians, the persecution was not constant but sporadic (Welsford 1951:201). Most of the persecution was carried out locally, rather than by Caesars, although a number of Caesars were directly involved in persecution, e.g. Nero, Domitian, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian. However, indirect persecution posed a constant threat to Christians until Christianity was declared *religio licita* by Constantine (Boer 1976:53).   According to Boer, indirect persecution took various forms.   Christians were discriminated against before the law. They were regarded as "haters of mankind, bad citizens, disloyal to the empire… . Besides these unfavorable attitudes, they had often to endure unfair administration of justice, discrimination in opportunities to work, and social inequality" (Boer 1076:53).

The Christian community from its very inception was a religiously moral community. Its members were given a strong moral identity with its founder Jesus Christ and learnt

commitment through teaching and modelling by the community itself. For three centuries, the Christian community across the empire not only survived persecution but thrived in numbers and influence. That was remarkable. Besides experiencing divine favour, one must acknowledge the community solidarity that derived its strength from the moral formation of its members. This is evident in the courageous way some of its members faced death during persecution.

Martyrs were venerated in the Christian community. To be buried near the tomb of a martyr was considered a great honour (Welsford 1951:211). Confessors, who suffered imprisonment and torture for their faith, were greatly respected by Christians (ibid). Welsford (ibid) gives us an account of how ordinary Christians were given training ahead of time to face political trials:

> To meet this danger, something not unlike a training for martyrdom was evolved by the early Church. Christians were instructed what answers they should give in court, and were schooled in their behaviour. They were encouraged to endure hardship and to look upon suffering as a privilege.

According to historical records, it appears that martyrdom was not an individual decision but was highly influenced by the expectation of the community (Stark 1996:180-183). This shows the important role that the Christian community played in forming the political aspects of Christian discipleship. The early church accepted its witnessing vocation seriously in light of its commitment to the kingdom of God as taught by Jesus, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

In contrast to the way the early Christian community understood its relationship with the state, the church in Africa, especially those churches who understand mission in terms of salvation of souls, tend to shy away from engaging in political dialogue with the state. The church has an obligation to care for the oppressed and the poor, to speak on their behalf, to

seek justice for them. In that matter, the church needs to discover and integrate the social dimension of the gospel with the spiritual dimension and reject the dichotomy.

4.3.2.6   Economic life and attitude

Another ethical transformation in the life a believer was quite evident in the way the Christian community shaped the attitude of its members towards money and sharing of material resources with others. In the gospel accounts, Jesus is portrayed as teaching more extensively on this subject than any other. In Acts 2:44-45, Luke provides some glimpse of economic sharing among the members of the earliest community, demonstrating the ethical teaching of Jesus in the life of the community. Such intimate sharing might not have continued for long but it set the pattern of caring for one another for later generations.

In the early period of Christianity, desiring to be a follower or a true disciple of Christ could also mean economic hardship or insecurity. In some cases, one could lose everything, his land and other possessions. In the face of persecution and antagonism one had to be willing to cast one's lot with the community for better or worse. For the Christian, apart from his trust in God, the source of security came from the support of the Christian community. In time of need the members of this community shared their resources with one another. In Acts 9:36, the story of Tabitha (Dorcas) is highlighted on account of her generous sharing with the needy. Sharing one's resources with others was not only expected as a moral obligation but that the members in the community could ultimately "feel greater security against bad times" (Stark 1996:188). The early church understood discipleship not as a lone journey but as a collective destiny, even in economic matters.

In the early church community, Christians were held accountable for dealing honestly. Those who were traders were expected to charge fair prices (Welsford 1967:346). Craftsmen and manual labour were respected. Christians were taught to work hard in order to be good

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witnesses for Christ. They were seen as hard and honest workers. Laziness was not acceptable in the Christian community (1 Thessalonians. 4:11, 2 Thessalonians. 3:11-13).

Christian ethics not only encouraged Christians to work hard, but also to share their material benefits with others. From the very beginning, the early church set an example (Acts 2:44-45). Jesus taught several principles of economic sharing as part of being his disciples: helping the needy (Matthew 6:1-4); the cost of being his disciple (Luke 14:33); giving generously (Luke 21:1-4); and others. The early Christian community was known for the way they took care of its own and helped others as well. Welsford commends the early Christians for their generosity. She (1951:333) writes, "Christians were liberal in giving alms, whether the money was needed for the poor, or for the needs of prisoners, or for redeeming slaves". Since many Christians lived a simple life and avoided the sinful lifestyle of pleasure, they might have had more money to share with others than many of their pagan counterparts (Stark 1996:189).

The community's collective value of sharing had a strong influence on its individual members in practicing the ethics of honest work and sharing the rewards with others. The early Christian community was therefore also known for its high ethical standard in economic matters, in comparison to pagan groups in the society. In spite of persecution and discrimination, the community prospered and attracted people of different persuasions to its way of life through its economic witness.

The integrated economic life and values of the early Christian community challenges the churches of Africa today that often seem to separate spiritual life from economic life. Discipleship involves all aspects of Christian living. The church needs to critically examine its praxis and find ways to bring economic life in accord with the gospel values. The Bible has much to say about material stewardship, and spirituality is expressed in the way one utilises one's earthly resources.

In summary, the early church clearly understood its identity as the community of Jesus Christ. It understood its missional purpose of bearing witness to Jesus as the lord and saviour of humankind. As a witnessing community, it presented itself as an eschatological sign of God's kingdom on earth to the world through words and conduct in the broader society. The church fulfilled its mandate of making disciples by being the incarnate body of Christ through obedience to the commands of its master.

4.4 SUMMARY

The primary intent of this chapter was to investigate hermeneutically how the early church understood itself as the *community* of Christ, both theologically and missiologically, specifically in order to incarnate the gospel in its discipleship by integrating all dimensions of its mission (in its relationship with God, with one another; and with others in the world around). Theologically, the idea of community was grounded on the concept of *koinonia*, which is defined as fellowship of individuals who are united by virtue of their common faith in Jesus Christ. Missiologically, the church originated, from its very inception as missionary community, as *a sent community* having to continue the mission of Christ into the world by witnessing to his name and the reign of God that was inaugurated by his death and resurrection. This eschatological purpose defined and shaped the community's identity, social structure and praxis. In that theological and missiological hermeneutic framework, the early church formed and reinforced the identity and character of its members and new recruits through the ritual of baptism and Eucharist in the context of community life. It continued uncompromisingly to define its boundaries as a distinct community in a wider cultural context while engaging the world around it with missionary intention as prophetic dialogue through its bold witness and proclamation.

Traditional African society and the early church share community as a common element, for both the community was the effective means for the formation of their members' identity and character, although the goal and purpose of these communities differed greatly. In traditional

African society, community is both the means and the end in the expression of its cultural life and values, whereas in the life of the early church community was the means of expressing its theological and missiological life and values. In order to address the problem of present-day youth ministry, the combination of the cultural and the theological dimension is seen critical in the formation of a discipleship community model in the urban context. This subject will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY RESEARCH

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the methodology and analysis of the quantitative field research. The purpose of the research is to determine the perception of traditional African values among the urban African youth. This information is important for the verification of the main thesis of the research that proposes community-based discipleship as relevant missiological approach in meeting the social and spiritual needs of African youth in urban areas. As discussed in Chapter Three, traditional African cultural life is deeply rooted in community. Therefore, empirical findings on the youth's perception of traditional community values are essential for a valid scientific basis for the argument of the thesis of this research.

The data for the research was collected through the quantitative research method, utilising a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to a sample population of 1428 respondents, representing youth from various church denominations and socio-economic strata in the Nairobi area.

5.2   Objective of the Quantitative Survey

The primary objective of the survey is to discover to what extent African urban youth, especially the ones who attend a church in Nairobi, embrace the values of traditional African community. This information is also important in understanding the impact of urbanisation and modernisation on the cultural values of urban African youth. Learning about the affinity for or the erosion of traditional community values in the perception of urban youth may help in determining the relevancy of the community approach to discipleship as stated in the thesis statement.

The secondary objective of the survey was to find out to what degree rural-oriented youth (living in the city) differ from urban-oriented youth in their perception of traditional community values because of their rural upbringing. This comparison is important for understanding the differences between the two groups. If there is a substantial difference, this information may help the church in determining how to approach each group in its discipleship ministry to the youth

5.3 The Conceptualisation of Traditional African Community

The concept of traditional African community is better defined by description of the various characteristics that constitute it. According to the African conceptual perspective a community is an integral part of traditional African view of life and cosmology. In traditional African worldview, all the components of the cosmos are interrelated like a spider web in balanced tension: the world of spirits, human society and the natural world are engaged in dynamic balanced interaction. Since traditional African worldview is anthropocentric, the community occupies the centre stage of dynamic interaction. The human community is comprised of the living members, the dead ancestors and those who are not yet born. The tradition of the ancestors is understood as the religion that provides a sense of order, direction and meaning to life in the cosmos. Traditional African values, which are rooted in the tradition of the ancestors, regulate all aspects of life of the community, including moral and ethical behaviour, whether one is consciously aware of them or not.

The community plays an important role in shaping an individual's personal identity. From traditional perspective, an African individual cannot conceive his personal identity apart from his community. The individual develops his personal identity through the web of relationships with other members of the community. By being in the community, the individual experiences a deep sense of belonging. This sense of belonging gives meaning to his existence in the cosmos. Apart from this socio-religious connection, life has no meaning or purpose. To express and to enhance such a dynamic inter-personal social relationship,

community provides a grid or framework for the realisation of it. The members cannot remain passive entities in the community but are expected to live as dynamic participants in all the community activities. Each person knows his/her role and status, responsibility and place in the community, along with privileges. Community provides its members security, stability, social and physical care. No one is left to face the problems of life alone. There is a deep sense of solidarity with one another. In solidarity with the community, each member finds existential meaning. In return, however each member is expected to fulfil his/her moral and social obligations according to the norms established by the ancestral traditions. Community interest is expected to supersede individual interest when there is a conflict of interests. Individual right has no meaning apart from the context of the community. Many of the values of modernism, such as individualism and personal rights, run counter to traditional African community values and mores.

Present-day African youth are caught in between the two worldviews, which are poles apart. African identity is still rooted in traditional African values, which have roots in the ancestral tradition whether one practices them or not. Modernisation is a recent phenomenon. In the urban context it has replaced or pushed away many traditional African values and practices, but it has not succeeded in erasing its memory (anamnesis). The presence of disorientation and lack of purpose and meaning among urban youth is a strong indication that African values are still there, submerged in the subconscious mind of the youth. However, these values need a proper form to express them in the face of unaccommodating attitude of modernisation.

5.4   Variables

The quantitative research questionnaire was designed to measure two kinds of variables: The affinity for community based on traditional African values and the orientation based on rural and urban upbringing of youth.

5.4.1   Affinity for community

The primary purpose of the research questionnaire was to measure the youth's affinity for community based on traditional African values. Traditional African values are communal in nature. In order to measure one's affinity for community, the questionnaire contained a set of thirteen questions that reflected certain aspects of traditional African community values, like respect for ancestors, dependence on the extended family, obligation to help relatives, participation in burial and wedding ceremonies, eating together, desire to be buried in ancestral land, giving traditional names to children, marriage for procreation and others. In the questionnaire, these values were given thirteen operational statements. The respondent was asked to indicate their importance by choosing one of the five levels of response following the pattern of the Likert Scale—*strongly agree, somewhat agree, not sure, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree*—in order to determine the affinity for community in their perception.

5.4.2   Orientation based on urban and rural upbringing

The survey divides the youth into two categories of orientation—urban and rural, based on the responses to the six questions that distinguish whether they are brought up in an urban or rural context.

The following five questions were presented to the respondents to determine his/her place of upbringing, whether it was rural or urban:

1. The place of birth.

2. The place where the respondent spent most of his first fifteen years of life.

3. The place where the respondent attended most of his primary school years.

4. The place where the respondent considers his home.

5. The place where the respondent received most of his religious instruction during the first fifteen years of his life.

The sixth question asked about the language that the respondent used often when speaking to his close friends. A choice of Swahili, English, Tribal and Sheng (mixture of English and Swahili slang) was given. In the opinion of local youth leaders and experts, most urbanised youth speak English or Sheng among themselves. Rural-oriented youth often speak the tribal language or Swahili among themselves.

1. **Youth with urban upbringing**: The youth who was born in the city, has grown up in the city in the formative years of his life, attended school in the city, and lived most of his life in the city, is more likely to have an urban orientation in his values and lifestyle and preference for an autonomous individualistic lifestyle. He is expected to be influenced and shaped by urbanisation to a greater degree. His affinity for traditional African values would be expected to be less than his rural counterpart.

2. **Youth with rural upbringing**: The youth who is born in the rural area, has grown up in the rural area and has attended school in the rural area is more likely to have been shaped and influenced by traditional African community values. In Nairobi, under the influence of urbanisation, he might experience some degree of change toward a modern outlook and lifestyle, but his traditional outlook might still be there in the background.

It is important to differentiate between the perception of the urban-oriented youth and the rural-oriented youth in relation to traditional African values in order to discover some significant trend among these two groups in response to urbanisation.

5.5   THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The instrument for measuring the data was developed in the form of a two-page survey questionnaire (see the Appendix A). The questionnaire has two parts. The first part (items 1-8) asks for some basic demographic information. The first item concerns gender: male or female. The second item asks about the age category. The respondent is asked to select from

the following age categories: 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, and 26 or over. The third to seventh items ask questions related to place of upbringing, whether rural or urban. The respondent is given a choice between three categories: city, town or rural. For the purpose of analysis, 'city' and 'town' are considered as the same in value. The choice of 'city' and 'town' is given to suit respondent's perception although both places are urban in nature.

The eighth item asks about the language preference of the respondent when speaking to close friends. The respondent is given a choice between four languages commonly spoken in Nairobi: Swahili, English, tribal mother tongue and Sheng.

The questions in items 3 to 8 asked for information that can be used to determine respondents' urban orientation or rural orientation, depending on their upbringing. On the basis of their responses, they were categorised into a rural-oriented group and an urban for comparison purposes.

The second part of the questionnaire comprised thirteen operational questions and one open-ended question (item #9). They were designed to measure affinity for community values. Some were behavioural in nature and others were related to beliefs and values. The 13 questions were formatted according to the Likert scale, with a numerical value of 1 as 'strongly agree' to the numerical value 5 as 'strongly disagree'. Item nine was an open-ended question that provided the respondent with a chance to add his/her opinion with regard to traditional beliefs and values that he/she thought could be useful to Christian life.

Before the survey was conducted, the questionnaire items and format were tested with the youth groups from two different churches and revised several times for clarity and effectiveness. The valuable feedback from the field test was sought and implemented. During the process it was discovered that it was impractical to administer the survey through personal interviews. Most young people do not have time to spare when they come to the

church youth meeting. Interviews would need too much time and limit the number of respondents. As a result the present format was adopted with input from Dr Grace Gathu, the head of the Research Department of the Daystar University, and Dr Sammy Linge of Nairobi International School of Theology, where he teaches Research Methods. Dr Gathu and Dr Linge provided valuable technical expertise in designing the survey instrument as well as advice on cultural sensitivity and nuances in formulating the wording of the questionnaire items from African cultural perspective.

5.6   THE POPULATION SAMPLE

The scope of the survey was limited to the youth population from Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in the Nairobi area. A concerted effort was made to assure that the sample of the population was adequately representative of the mainline mission-initiated churches in Nairobi. Since it was easier to conduct a survey through questionnaires in youth groups, various churches from different denominations and different locations were contacted. Three Anglican churches out of twenty were chosen on the basis of diverse locations and socio-economic strata. Often the churches were chosen upon the suggestions of a church leader who was better informed of the location of his denominational churches and their leaders. They helped in choosing diverse congregations and availability to participate in the research survey. The only criterion that the researcher stipulated that the church had to have an attendance of over a hundred people and was accessible.

Since the church is not the primary unit of analysis, but the youth of the church is, it was not necessary that the churches to be chosen randomly to represent the sample population accurately. It was more important for the research that the youth were widely represented. Therefore, the population sample comprised **1428 respondents** of mixed gender representing twenty churches from different denominations like Pentecostal groups, Baptist, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian as well as Roman Catholic. The churches from these denominations were located in various parts of Nairobi: north, south, east and west. Some

were in affluent communities and others were in low-income and slum areas. Some churches were large, having 5,000 or more members in attendance; others were small as two hundred or less.

The youth of the following churches were contacted for the survey:

St Francis ACK Karen (Anglican)

St John's ACK Pumwani (Anglican)

St Polycarp's ACK Juja Road (Anglican)

AIC Jericho (Baptist)

Komorock Methodist Church (Methodist)

Joy Christian Fellowship (Pentecostal)

Nairobi Mission Church (Pentecostal)

Gospel Recovery Church International City Center (Pentecostal)

Redeemed Gospel Church Huruma (Pentecostal)

Nairobi Pentecostal Church Karen (Pentecostal)

Deliverance Church Kangemi (Pentecostal)

Deliverance Church Langatta (Pentecostal)

Deliverance Church Ummoja (Pentecostal)

AIC Ziwani (African Inland Church)

PCEA Nairobi West (Presbyterian)

PCEA Eastleigh (Presbyterian)

PCEA Ruai (Presbyterian)

Shrine of Mary Help Christians-Don Bosco (Roman Catholic Parish Church)

Kariobangi (Roman Catholic Parish Church)

Nairobi University Life Ministry Fellowship

5.7   ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was distributed and administered to respondents at the church youth groups by the researcher personally with the help of some youth leaders. Arrangements to visit the youth groups were often made in advance through a youth leader or pastor. Usually the youth group would allow five to ten minutes of their programme time for the survey questionnaire to be distributed and filled in. The researcher briefly explained the purpose of the survey and gave directions for filling it in. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and were asked to give their honest opinions. It took five to seven minutes for a respondent to fill in the questionnaire. After the survey forms were filled in, they were quickly collected with the help of youth leaders. Most of the youth did not come to the meetings with pens or pencils, therefore the researcher supplied pencils to facilitate the filling in of the questionnaire.

Although it was an easier and efficient way to conduct the survey questionnaire in the youth group, the researcher found that it was time consuming to make an arrangement to visit each group in Nairobi. First, he had to set up an appointment with the youth pastor or senior pastor to visit the youth group in advance. During the appointment, he explained the nature of the research. When the pastor agreed, a time was arranged to visit the youth group. In most cases, the researcher was warmly received. The church leaders cooperated with the research project when they understood how the research could benefit the youth ministry.

Time is an important factor in conducting survey research among youth in Nairobi churches. Because of limited space, most churches do not have a separate room exclusively for youth meetings. Since many other groups use the same facilities, the youth have to compete for space and time. In many churches normally two or more worship services are conducted in one building on Sunday. When the youth are using the sanctuary in the morning, they must vacate it quickly for the next service. In some churches, the questionnaires were distributed outside the church building in a parking lot where youth assembled after the worship service.

Sometimes it seemed very chaotic. However, the researcher was able to carry out the task with the assistance of youth leaders.

When time permitted, the researcher would attend the youth meetings as a participant observer before or after the survey. In most cases an interview was conducted with the leaders of the youth groups after the meetings to learn more about the church's youth ministry.

5.8   FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The collected data were processed through the SPSS computer program at the Daystar University research facility. The findings from data analysis are presented under the following categories:

1) Demographic information

2) Youth's perception of traditional African community values

3) Comparative study of the youth's perception of traditional African community values based on rural and urban upbringing

5.8.1   Demographic Information

Demographic information provides a brief description of the population sample. A total of 1428 respondents were contacted and were given the survey questionnaire to fill out. Most of them were representative of a population sample of youth from diverse group of churches in Nairobi from different locations of the city and different socio-economic strata. The sample included both males and females ranging from age eleven to thirty.

5.8.1.1   Gender

Frequency of Responses According to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Female	648	45.4	46.4
Male	750	52.5	53.6

Total	1398	97.9	100
Missing	30	2.1	
Total	1428	100	

Among the youth both genders were given the opportunity to participate in the survey. Out of the total of 1428 respondents, 30 failed to identify their gender. That represented two percent of the total sample. In the remaining total sample of 1398, 45.4 percent of respondents were female and 53.6 percent were male. This indicates that male attendance on the average is higher than female in urban church youth groups.. This corresponds to the urban demographic reality that shows the percentage of males in the population to be higher in the city because more young men than young women come to the city in search of work and education. However, among the adult population, the percentage of women normally tends to be higher than that of men in most churches. The youth group in the city does not seem to reflect that pattern. The reason could be that single young men have more time, and they may find a church youth ministry a better place for satisfying socialisation needs.

5.8.1.2   Age group

Frequency of Responses According to Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
11-15	104	7.3	7.3
16-20	442	31.0	31.1
21-25	637	44.6	44.8
26 or over	239	16.7	16.8
Sub-total	1422	99.6	100
Missing	6	0.4	
Total	1428	100	

Generally the survey sought to obtain the sample population from youth in the age bracket of 15 to 30. In some youth groups, young people under the age of 15 or over the age 30 identified themselves as youth because of social affinity with the group. However, their

numbers are not significant. In the survey questionnaire, four age brackets were assigned to respondents to indicate their age: (11-15), (16-20), (21-25), and (26 or over). Only 0.4 percent (six) of the 1428 respondents failed to indicate their age. According to the data analysis, the youth in the twenty-one to twenty-five-year age bracket represent the greater majority (44.8 percent of the total respondents). Youth in the sixteen to twenty-year age group came next (31 percent). Together, the youth from the age of sixteen to twenty-five represented 76 percent of the total sample of youths surveyed in the twenty churches in Nairobi. The eleven to fifteen-year age group represented only 7.3 percent of the population. It is interesting to note that 16.8 percent of the church youth indicated their age as over twenty-six. This is an African urban phenomenon. There are many young people of both genders in this age bracket who perceive themselves as youth because they are not married, depended on parents, jobless or seeking education. In some churches, young people beyond the age of thirty would still consider themselves as part of the youth group. In contrast, most young people in the Western world tend to shy away from identifying themselves with youth group in the church after reaching the age twenty-one. They would prefer to identify themselves as young adults. In traditional African society, young people would know their status clearly after the initiation rite. But in churches in Nairobi the perception of youth is not only limited to age but to other social factors as well, which were discussed in Chapter Two.

5.8.1.3 Rural and urban orientation

The population sample of 1428 was divided into two categories of orientation, urban and rural, based on the place of upbringing. Five questions, items number 3 to 7 in the questionnaire, asked respondents to identify the place of their upbringing, whether it was rural or urban. One question, item number 8, was directed at determining the rural or urban orientation of respondents on the basis of the language usage. The following are the results tabulated from their responses to these questions.

5.8.1.3 (i)   The place of birth

Frequency of Responses According to Birthplace

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Urban area	868	60.8	61.3
Rural area	547	38.3	38.7
Sub-total	1415	99.1	100
Missing	13	0.9	
Total	1428	100	

The first question asked about the place of birth. Responses showed that 1415 of the 1428 respondents indicated their place of birth while 0.9 percent (thirteen) missed the item. From the valid figure of 1415, 61.3 percent (868) indicated that they were born in the urban area (city or town). In contrast, 38.7 percent (547) of respondents were born in the rural area and migrated to the city. This figure points to the present trend of urban population growth as more by birth than rural migration. Although rural migration is substantial and will continue, the greater percentage of growth will be through urban birth because the majority of the urban dwellers are young people. Many of them have chosen to stay and raise their family in the city. This means that a greater percentage of youth will be urbanised in their orientation in future.

5.8.1.3 (ii)   The place of childhood growth

Frequency of Responses According to the Place of Childhood Growth

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Urban area	870	60.9	61.5
Rural area	545	38.2	38.5
Sub-total	1415	99.1	100
Missing	13	0.9	
Total	1428	100	

The second question asked about the place where the respondent spent most of the first fifteen years of life. From the total of 1428 respondents, 1415 answered the question and 13 (0.9 percent) missed it. From the valid response of 1415, 60.9 percent (870) indicated that they spent most of their first fifteen years in the urban area and 38.5 percent (545) indicated that they spent most of their first fifteen years in the rural area. Theses figures were very similar to the responses to the first question. Both reflected very close relationship. It seems clear that those who were born in the urban area did not move to a rural area but remained in the city or town. Most of their upbringing took place in the urban setting. Based on the figures from question one and two, one can safely conclude that a higher percentage of the youth (61 percent) grew up in the urban context.

5.8.1.3 (iii)   The place of primary school attendance

Frequency of Responses According to the Place of Primary School Attendance

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Urban area	854	59.8	60.1
Rural area	568	39.8	39.9
Sub-total	1422	99.6	100
Missing	6	0.4	
Total	1428	100	

The third question asked respondents to indicate where they attended most of their primary school education. This question was designed to further confirm where most of their upbringing took place. Out of 1428, only six (0.4 percent) respondents did not answer this question. From the valid responses, 60.1 percent (854) indicated that they mostly attended primary school in the urban area and 39.9 percent (568) indicated the rural area. Again, this figure correlates very closely with the figures from first and second questions above. It indicates a strong correlation. Those who were born in the urban area have continued to live

in the urban area while growing up and attended primary school in urban area as well. On the average, 61 percent of the youth appears to have had urban upbringing.

5.8.1.3 (iv)   The perception of where the home is

Frequency of Responses According to Perception of where Home is

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Urban area	675	47.3	47.7
Rural area	741	51.9	52.3
Sub-total	1416	99.2	100
Missing	12	0.8	
Total	1428	100	

The fourth question asked the respondents where they consider their home to be. In the context of Kenyan society, most people perceive "home" not as a place of dwelling but a place of belonging. Traditionally, people would associate "home" with the place of the parental or ancestral village. This perception has continued to persist, even though people work and spend their entire life in the city (Shorter 1997:60). However, urbanisation has begun to change that perception, especially among the young. The question was put to 1428 youth and twelve (0.8 percent) did not respond to the question. Among the 1416 valid responses, 47.3 percent (675) indicated that they regarded the city as their home while 52.3 percent (741) indicated the rural area as their home. This figure shows that a high percentage of the youth has retained the rural connection. However, this trend is gradually changing as indicated by 47.3 percent of youth now considering the urban area as home. This indicates that more people are settling down in the city permanently, especially those who have financial means to buy a house or a flat. Their children are growing up in the urban environment and, as they are more urbanised than their parents, they would perceive the city as their home more than their ancestral village. This is happening increasingly as young people lose their connection with their historical past.

5.8.1.3 (v)   The place of early years of religious instruction

Frequency of Responses According to the Place of Religious Instruction

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Urban area	886	62.0	62.5
Rural area	531	37.2	37.5
Sub-total	1417	99.2	100
Missing	11	0.8	
Total	1428	100	

The fifth question asked the respondents where they received religious instruction during their first fifteen years. This question was designed to find out whether their upbringing was in rural or urban area. Out of 1428 respondents, eleven (0.8 percent) did not answer this question. From the remaining 1417 respondents, 62.5 percent (886) said that while they were growing up, they received most of their religious education in the urban area. However, 37.5 percent (531) indicated that they received most of their religious education in the rural area. These responses are consistently in alignment with the responses from questions one, two, and three, where 61% of the youth fall on the side of urban upbringing. The figure in this question further confirmed that 61 percent of the population sample can be categorised as having urban upbringing.

5.8.1.3 (vi)   The use of language among friends

Frequency of responses according to language usage among friends

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Swahili	564	39.5	39.8
English	286	20.0	20.2
Sheng	445	31.2	31.4
Tribal tongue	122	8.5	8.6
Sub-total	1417	99.2	100

Missing	11	0.8	
Total	1428	100	

The sixth question asked the respondents which language they use often when they speak with their close friends. This question was asked on the assumption that urban-oriented youth often speak English or Sheng (a mixture of Swahili and English) among themselves, and rural-oriented youth speak either Swahili or a tribal tongue among themselves. This assumption was based on the observations of several youth workers and Dr Gathu of the Daystar University.

From among the 1428 respondents, eleven (0.8 percent) missed the question. From the valid responses of 1417, 39.8 percent (564) indicated Swahili as their preferred language of conversation with friends. It was followed by 31.4 percent (445) who indicated speaking Sheng among friends. Only 20.2 percent (286) indicated that they speak English. A small minority of 8.6 percent (122) said that they used tribal language when speaking to close friends. The author expected that there would be a higher percentage of English among urban youth, but this was proved to be not true. It is surprising to note that nearly one third of urban youth prefer speaking Sheng. This is a new phenomenon. Sheng is a language of recent origin in urban youth culture in which Swahili expression are mixed with twisted English words. Sheng is very contextually based and changes from group to group. There is no standard Sheng.

According to the results of the survey, Swahili is a dominantly preferred language among youth. It is more so among rural-oriented youth. Since tribal languages can only be used with the people of one's tribe, its usage was expected to be limited. In the urban setting it is easier to use Swahili in communication with youth from different tribal backgrounds. Therefore, Swahili is preferred. Since Swahili can be spoken by both urban and rural-oriented youth, it is not a good criterion for distinguishing youth who speak Swahili as rural-oriented.

However, when English and Sheng speakers are combined, they represent 51 percent of the sample population. This can be used as a reliable criterion in judging youth's urban orientation to a fair degree.

In summary, the demographic findings from the survey analysis related to youth in the Nairobi churches indicate that concerning gender, the ratio of males is higher than females. This accurately reflects the proportional ratio of male to female in the general population of the city. In relation to age, the majority of the youth (75%) in the church are between the ages of 16 and 25. Nearly 17 percent of the youth in the church are above the age of 25. This is a uniquely urban phenomenon due to social factors like jobs and education. The survey also indicates that a higher percentage of the young people in the city is urbanised. The majority of them are born in the city and have spent their formative years in an urban setting. Close to 50 percent of them consider the city as their home.

5.8.2   Youth's perception of traditional African community values

This section presents the findings and analysis of the urban youth's perception of traditional African community values. In the Chapter three it was shown that some of these values are the bedrock of African culture. However, under the increasing influence of urbanisation, many of these values are gradually eroding or are displaced, especially among the urban youth. The purpose of the survey was to measure to what extent these values remain important in the perception of urban youth. Thirteen questions in the survey served as indicators of these values. The result of the response to each question is given in table form below, and a brief analysis is presented in relation to the youth's perception of that value. In the analysis positive responses of "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" are combined. In the same way the negative responses of "strongly disagree" and "somewhat disagree" are also combined.

Preceding the thirteen questions was an open-ended question (item #9) asking: "In your opinion, what are some of the traditional beliefs useful to Christian life?" This was included in order to provide an opportunity to respondents to add anything from traditional beliefs that they felt was important to Christian life and was not included in the questionnaire. Many of those who responded to the question did not offer any specific suggestion. Most of the answers reflected Christian beliefs and practices that did not quite relate to traditional values: for example, "believe in God", "obey God", "avoid sins", "pray", "attend church", "salvation", "follow Jesus", "love your neighbour", "be faithful to God", etc.

Among the responses that reflected some relation to traditional values, the following common suggestions were given:

* The words "respect" or "honour" were listed by many in relation to older people, elders, parents, ancestors and God.

* For worship, they often cited prayer, dancing, singing, traditional music.

* In relation to moral conduct many mentioned the importance of chastity and marital fidelity. Some expressed avoidance of incest, marrying a close relative and same sex marriage.

* In relation to children, naming them after their grandparents, parents or deceased relatives. Very few mentioned ancestors specifically.

* In terms of family values, many mentioned eating together, gathering for dinner and hospitality.

* Many mentioned male circumcision as a positive traditional value that can be incorporated in Christian life. A few said that the church should condemn female circumcision. It is viewed negatively by the urban youth.

* It was surprising to note that several of them mentioned the importance of dressing modestly. It is true that modesty and a conservative attitude are values of many traditional societies.

* A few of the respondents mentioned that they did not know any of traditional African beliefs.

The above provides a glimpse into young people's views and the priority of traditional values. Showing honour and respect to an older person seems to be one of the highest values among them. Sexual restraint also seems to be important to many, especially for girls to maintain their virginity. Naming children after their loved ones is expressed as important by many. Many expressed their view that the church should consider accepting the rite of boys' circumcision in Christian life. It is valid suggestion. It does not undermine the teaching of the gospel.

5.8.2.1 Question 1

Being with the members of my extended family gives me a sense of oneness with my people.

Frequency of Response to Question 1

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	797	55.8	57.6
Somewhat agree	370	25.9	26.7
Not sure	108	7.6	7.8
Somewhat disagree	63	4.4	4.6
Strongly disagree	46	3.2	3.3
Sub-total	1384	96.9	100.0
Missing	44	3.1	
Total	1428	100.0	

In traditional African community, social relationship with one another not only gives each member a sense of belonging but also contributes to the individual's identity as person. Since extended family forms the basic community, one's dependency on the extended family is a valuable indicator of one's need for community, especially in the urban context.

In the survey result, a very high percentage of respondents—84.3% (cumulative responses of "strongly agree and "somewhat agree")—expressed their preference for being with the members of extended family for their social needs. This indicates that being with one's

extended family is still a very significant social value among most urban youth. The relationship with extended family members provides a sense of being connected to a larger community beyond one's nuclear family. This traditional African value is perceived and retained positively by most of the urban youth.

Not all youth accept it as important to be with one's extended family for their social needs. Nearly eight percent (cumulative responses of "strong disagree" and "somewhat disagree) of respondents responded negatively to this value. Nearly another eight percent were not sure of its significance in their lives. This indicates that nearly 16 percent of youth were strongly affected by urbanisation in way one or another. They were either turning away from extended family or finding it less relevant to their needs.

5.8.2.2 Question 2

Apart from my parents, I expect my extended family members to help meet my economic or material needs.

Frequency of Response to Question 2

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	383	26.8	27.4
Somewhat agree	412	28.9	29.5
Not sure	140	9.8	10.0
Somewhat disagree	203	14.2	14.5
Strongly disagree	258	18.1	18.5
Sub-total	1396	97.8	100.0
Missing	32	2.2	
Total	1428	100.0	

In traditional African society, one is highly dependent on the network of relationship for economic survival. Interdependency also cements the relationships with one another, promoting solidarity. Therefore, this question assumes that one's feeling of dependency on extended family reflects an important indicator of one's view on the value of community.

In comparison to high regard for social dependency (81.7%) in question one, the expectation of being dependent on extended family for financial or economic assistance was lower among

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the urban youth although 55.7 percent responded positively (Strongly agree and somewhat agree) for seeking such assistance. Urbanisation has greatly affected the community value of economic interdependency. Nearly 32 percent of youth do not expect to be helped by their extended family. Close to 10 percent are not sure whether it is proper to ask for help from their extended family. The harsh reality of urban life forces one to rely on oneself more. Relatives in the city are less inclined to help than in rural areas. Although the value of economic interdependency is still high (56%), there seems to be a strong shift towards independency (32%). If this trend continues, it will further weaken the need for community in terms of economic assistance among urban youth because urbanisation encourages people to rely on themselves in order to be self-sufficient.

5.8.2.3   Question 3

Besides my parents, I often seek advice from my extended family for guidance in life.

Frequency of Response to Question 3

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	567	39.7	40.6
Somewhat agree	372	26.1	26.6
Not sure	95	6.7	6.8
Somewhat disagree	163	11.4	11.7
Strongly disagree	200	14.0	14.3
Sub-total	1397	97.8	100.0
Missing	31	2.2	
Total	1428	100.0	

In traditional African community, seeking advice implies social conformity. It is one of the strong social and ethical values. People often conform their behaviour to comply with what others in the community expect or see as correct. In this question, it is assumed that the value of seeking advice from extended family expresses one's affinity for community.

Seeking advice from the members of one's extended family appears to be easier than asking for financial help in the urban context. More than 67 percent (strongly agree and somewhat agree) indicated this as an important value for them. Nearly 40 percent felt very strongly

about asking for advice from their relatives. This preference for seeking advice correlates very positively with the desire to be with one's extended family for social oneness. Social relationship is considered as a very high value in traditional African community. Nearly two out of every three youth still hold on to this important value.

However, 25 percent of the respondents did not consider seeking advice from extended family as important. In present urban society, people live in several fragmented communities. Advice can be sought from professionals or experts other than relatives. Therefore, 14 percent (200 respondents out of 1397) expressed strong disagreement. Close to eight percent were not sure whether seeking advice from extended family was useful to their lives.

Even though the city provides several sources of advice other than relatives, dependence on extended family members will seem to continue for those who highly value relationship with kin for the sense of belonging.

5.8.2.4 Question 4

I must listen to the words of old people (like grandparents) who are traditionally regarded as wise.

Frequency of Response to Question 4

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	733	51.3	52.4
Somewhat agree	381	26.7	27.2
Not sure	97	6.8	6.9
Somewhat disagree	114	8.0	8.1
Strongly disagree	75	5.3	5.4
Sub-total	1400	98.0	100.0
Missing	28	2.0	
Total	1428	100.0	

The older people in traditional African community are regarded as wise, not only because of their life experience but also as the guardian of knowledge of the ancestral tradition that is passed on from one generation to another. They are seen as the source of community knowledge. They know the "right" way, the accepted ways of the community. One is

expected to listen to them. They are seen as the authority for moral guidance. Even those who move away from rural to urban areas are expected to respect older people but to a lesser degree.

The survey result shows that closer to 80% (strongly agree plus somewhat agree) of the urban youth still hold old people in high respect. They are willing to listen to their words of advice and opinions. They think that older people can offer something more to them from their life experience. This aspect of African value was very well acknowledged by the majority of the urban youth. However, 13.5% of the youth thought otherwise. To them the advice of the older generation is not relevant to their complex urban situation. The world has changed much in the last two generations. Many older people grew up in rural colonial context which the urban youth find it difficult to comprehend.   Even though there is a big generation gap, the African value of respect for older people remains strong among the urban youth. This is commendable.

5.8.2.5   Question 5

To me eating meals together signifies a sense of solidarity with others.

Frequency of Response to Question 5

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	826	57.8	59.6
Somewhat agree	302	21.1	21.8
Not sure	112	7.8	8.1
Somewhat disagree	81	5.7	5.8
Strongly disagree	64	4.5	4.6
Sub-total	1385	97.0	100.0
Missing	43	3.0	
Total	1428	100.0	

In traditional African community sharing a meal together signifies a sense of being together— a communal solidarity.   It binds people together socially. Eating alone is anti-social behaviour. In modern urban society, a person may eat for his own pleasure whether alone or

with others, a sense of social bonding could be absent. In traditional community, people share almost everything, even food because they have a communal mindset.

The result from the survey shows that the value of sharing is strongly present among the urban youth—81.4 percent (strongly agree + somewhat agree) of the respondents indicated that eating together is important for social solidarity. Only 10.2 percent express that it has no communal significance for them. Those who are not sure (8.1%) are more likely to lose the communal value of sharing because of the increasing impact of urbanisation. But for the majority of the youth in urban churches this African value of sharing is still operating strongly.

5.8.2.6   Question 6

Attending a funeral of my relatives or friends gives me a feeling of belonging to a community
.
Frequency of Response to Question 6

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	790	55.3	56.5
Somewhat agree	307	21.5	22.0
Not sure	130	9.1	9.3
Somewhat disagree	86	6.0	6.2
Strongly disagree	85	6.0	6.1
Sub-total	1398	97.9	100.0
Missing	30	2.1	
Total	1428	100.0	

A funeral in a traditional African community is more than a gathering to say farewell to the deceased. It is an important community ritual for reinforcing social solidarity. It binds people together with the community and deepens a sense of belonging to the wider community that includes ancestors. Its importance is shown in the way people are willing to travel great distances and spend their time and money to attend funerals.

According to the survey result, this value is still strong among the urban youth—78.5 percent indicate their response positively. However, 12.3 percent of the respondents no longer see it

as a significant community event and 9.3 percent were not sure about its significance in their lives. In the perception of 21.65 percent, attending a funeral did not have the feeling of being with one's community. Because of traditional customs, most of the funerals are conducted away from the city in the rural areas where the body is buried. In the urban context, funeral proceedings are brief and often do not involve full community participation. Many youth who grow up in the city hardly experience a funeral as a community event.

5.8.2.7   Question 7

For me the most important reason for getting married is to maintain our family roots by having children.

Frequency of Response to Question 5

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	242	16.9	17.4
Somewhat agree	278	19.5	20.0
Not sure	139	9.7	10.0
Somewhat disagree	249	17.4	18.0
Strongly disagree	479	33.5	34.5
Sub-total	1387	97.1	100.0
Missing	41	2.9	
Total	1428	100.0	

In traditional African community, one marries to have children in order to assure the continuity of the family roots and to preserve community life. It has strong social and religious implications. Marriage is not complete without the birth of child. In contrast, a modern view of marriage focuses more on mutual love and companionship than on just having children.

The survey indicates a sharp decline of the traditional view of marriage among urban youth— more than half (52.5%) no longer hold on to the traditional view. It seems that modernisation and Christian thinking have strongly altered the traditional view of marriage. The urban reality tends to promote a view of marriage as social partnership and to have children relies

more on the couple's decision than the pressure to meet the expectations of one's extended family.

There are still considerable numbers of youth, who favour the traditional view of marriage— 37.4 percent. However, their numbers seem to be declining. Realistically, the traditional view of marriage is difficult to sustain in a modern urban context where community is increasingly fragmented and having children is considered more as liability than an asset because of the economic factor.

5.8.2.8   Question 8

When a relative comes to my place, I feel under obligation to help the relative.

Frequency of Response to Question 8

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	545	38.2	39.5
Somewhat agree	378	26.5	27.4
Not sure	172	12.0	12.5
Somewhat disagree	118	8.3	8.5
Strongly disagree	168	11.8	12.2
Sub-total	1387	96.7	100.0
Missing	47	3.3	
Total	1428	100.0	

Helping the members of the extended family is a strong traditional value in African society. Relatives are part of one's social network. Since extended family is a basic community, everyone is interdependent on one another. As one receives help, he is also obliged to reciprocate. In contrast, the urban society promotes the value of self-reliance. Africans living in urban areas experience some degree of conflict between the two values.

The survey result shows that nearly 67 percent (strongly agree + somewhat agree) of the respondents consider the value of helping a relative to be an important value whether they like it or not. Nearly 40 percent indicated it as very important (strongly agree). They feel obliged to help them when they come. On the other hand, over 21 percent of the youth do not feel

any obligation to help their relatives when they show up. Close to 12.5 percent are not sure whether they should help or not. This indicates a conflict between the expected norm and urban reality. However, among the majority of the urban youth, the extended family still plays an important role. Therefore, the value of helping one another will remain important as long as one feels connected to kinship.

5.8.2.9   Question 9

Attending a wedding of my relatives or friends gives me a sense of being a part of the community.

Frequency of Response to Question 9

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	769	53.9	55.0
Somewhat agree	362	25.4	25.9
Not sure	111	7.8	7.9
Somewhat disagree	78	5.5	5.6
Strongly disagree	77	5.4	5.5
Sub-total	1397	97.8	100.0
Missing	31	2.2	
Total	1428	100.0	

This question is similar to Question 6. Like a funeral, a wedding in a traditional African society is a community affair. Everyone participates whether they are invited or not. It brings solidarity and reinforces community values. However, in an urban society, attending a wedding may take on a different meaning and function, depending on one's social relationship.

The response to the above survey question reflects a very similar pattern to that of Question 6—regarding one's feeling towards attending a funeral. Close to 81 percent feel a sense of belonging to the community when they attend a wedding; 79 percent expressed the similar response as for attending a funeral, while 11 percent expressed disagreement to the above question; similarly 11% disagree to the question relating to attending a funeral. The result shows that the majority of the urban youth value events like funerals and weddings that give them a sense of belonging to a community.

5.8.2.10   Question 10

When I die, I would like to be buried in the land or village of my ancestors.

Frequency of Response to Question 10

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	401	28.1	29.0
Somewhat agree	195	13.7	14.1
Not sure	340	23.8	24.6
Somewhat disagree	151	10.6	10.9
Strongly disagree	295	20.7	21.3
Sub-total	1382	96.8	100.0
Missing	46	3.2	
Total	1428	100.0	

According to most scholars of African culture, it is important for an African person to be buried in the ancestral land in order to be with one's community—both living and the dead. This desire is deeply rooted in social and religious value, which is grounded in the concept of a community that includes the living, the dead and the unborn. Often people go an extra mile to take the body of the deceased for burial in his village.

The response to this survey question shows a significant shift among the urban youth. Only 43 percent (strongly agree + somewhat agree) consider this value as important in their lives. 32.2 percent of the respondents considered it as not important to them and 24 percent were not sure whether it has any relevancy to their lives in a modern context. Collectively 57 , were either not sure or did not care to be buried in the ancestral land. This finding strongly suggests the impact of urbanisation and Christian teaching on eroding one's sense of a link with the ancestral community. Even among those who desire to be buried in ancestral land, their decision could rely more for social than religious reasons because it is socially expected from one to be buried among his/her own people in community solidarity. An interview with several young people who desired to be buried in their ancestral village failed to present any specific reason for their preference. They only said that it was a socially preferable thing to do. In the modern context, the desire to be with one's ancestors is not a prevalent idea, especially among the Christian youth. The survey finding simply confirms it.

5.8.2.11 Question 11

Honouring ancestors reflects a sense of solidarity with my clan or family

Frequency of Response to Question 11

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	326	22.8	23.5
Somewhat agree	229	16.0	16.5
Not sure	308	21.6	22.2
Somewhat disagree	152	10.6	11.0
Strongly disagree	373	26.1	26.9
Sub-total	1388	97.2	100.0
Missing	40	2.8	
Total	1428	100.0	

In traditional African community the ancestors are highly respected. They are believed to be the progenitors of the community as well as mediators between the Supreme Being and the living members of the community. Their role is both social and religious.

The result of the survey shows a declining interest among the urban youth in their ancestors—only 38.8 percent (strongly agree + somewhat agree) indicated that honouring ancestors is an important value to them. A substantial number (21.6%) of respondents are not sure about their attitude towards ancestors. Close to 38 percent did not find any value in honouring their ancestors. This indicates a significant change among the urban youth in their perception of the status and the role of ancestors in relation to their lives. They find it less relevant in the urban context. This also indicates that they are less in touch with traditional community where the role of ancestors is paramount. In the absence of traditional community and lack of parental interest in telling their children about their ancestors, the memory of ancestors may soon fade away from the perception of many urban young people.

5.8.2.12 Question 12

The custom of naming children with traditional names expresses my desire to maintain a closer relationship with my clan or family.

Frequency of Response to Question 12

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	471	33.0	33.7
Somewhat agree	359	25.1	25.7
Not sure	168	11.8	12.0
Somewhat disagree	148	10.4	10.6
Strongly disagree	250	17.5	17.9
Sub-total	1396	97.8	100.0
Missing	32	2.2	
Total	1428	100.0	

In traditional African community, giving a traditional name to a child has deep social and religious significance. This custom gives a person an identity within the community. The traditional names maintain a community's collective identity as well as the *anamnesis* of their ancestors. Therefore, it is expected that children be given traditional names.

This important function still appears to be significant among the majority of urban youth. But it might not carry the same meaning as it does in traditional society. More than half (58.1%) of the respondents indicated that they would prefer naming their children with traditional names in order to keep their link with their clan or family. This shows that they desire to be part of the community, at least socially if not for religious reasons. It does not seem to interfere with their urban lifestyle.

However, nearly 28 percent do not wish to maintain this custom, and nearly 12 percent are not sure whether it has any relevancy to their lives. Together, 40 percent of the urban youth find it less meaningful to maintain their ties with their traditional community. It may be because people in urban centres tend to have other relationships besides their clan or family.

5.8.2.13   Question 13

I prefer community lifestyle over independent living.

Frequency of Response to Question 13

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Strongly agree	388	27.2	27.8

Somewhat agree	255	17.9	18.3
Not sure	191	13.4	13.7
Somewhat disagree	194	13.6	13.9
Strongly disagree	366	25.6	26.3
Sub-total	1394	97.6	100.0
Missing	34	2.4	
Total	1428	100.0	

This question asks each respondent about their preference for community lifestyle over independent living. The assumption behind this question is that those who prefer community lifestyle still perceive traditional African community values as important. Those who prefer independent lifestyles are being influenced greatly by the values of modernisation and urbanisation.

According to the result, 46.1% favour community lifestyle in comparison to 40.2%. Nearly 14% are not sure.

The result points out that youth are divided between the two worlds—modern and traditional. Some are not sure which way is preferable. The majority of the young people still seem to be attracted to the community way of life because it offers a sense of belonging, stability and security. On the other hand, substantial numbers of youth find that an individual lifestyle characterised by independency is favourable because urban living tends to offer more choices and freedom to pursue what one wants.

Nearly 14 percent of the youth indicated that they were not sure of their preference. They might seem to want it both ways, or they might be expressing their state of confusion about values and self-identity.

5.8.2.14 Summary

In order to summarise the results of the above thirteen questions, the average result was determined by tabulating the valid percentage of all the positive responses (strongly agree +

somewhat agree) from thirteen questions, and then it was divided by thirteen to obtain the average. The average was found to be 63 percent. In the same way, the valid percentage of all the negative responses (somewhat disagree + strongly disagree) from thirteen questions is tabulated, and then it is divided by thirteen to obtain the average negative response. The average is found to be 25 percent. In the same way, the average for the "not sure" response was also determined. This was found to be 12 percent.

According to the summary result, the majority (63 percent) of the youth in the urban context have a high affinity for community. They regard many of the community values expressed in the questionnaire as important. By agreeing positively to many of the statements in the survey questionnaire, they have reflected the perceptions that reveal their strong affinity for community values.

Nearly a quarter of the sample population expressed negative agreement with the questionnaire statements that reflected community values. They represent a substantial number of urban young people. Their response indicated that they are strongly affected by various forces of urbanisation and modernisation, like the media, education, economic structure and others. These young people expressed their preference for the modern values of individual freedom and autonomy. It would be important to note their preference and orientation when designing any youth ministry based on community structure.

There is another group of young people, nearly 12 percent of the population sample, who were not sure whether the community values they have inherited have any significance for their lives in the urban context. They are caught between the two paradigms—community versus individualism. Sometimes they want to be a part of the community and at other times they want to be independent. They are unsure for most of the time. They can be pulled in either way depending on circumstances.

5.8.3 A comparative study of youth's perception of traditional African community values based on rural and urban upbringing

As it has been indicated previously, to do a comparative study of the youth's perception of traditional African community values on the basis of rural and urban upbringing has been the secondary purpose of the survey questionnaire. In this section, the findings are compared and discussed. This comparison is important for understanding the differences in the perceptions of community values on the basis of urban or rural upbringing. It may be helpful to know to what degree the youth with urban upbringing differ in their preference for community in comparison to the ones who grew up in rural areas. Is there substantial a difference in their orientation? If there is substantial difference, then this information will help the church youth ministry in determining how to approach each group differently with regard to discipleship.

The findings of the survey were based on the responses of the 1427 respondents who filled out the survey questionnaire. In order to determine their rural or urban upbringing, each respondent was asked to indicate the place of his/her upbringing—rural or urban. Based on their responses to five questions[54] in the questionnaire (the items 3-7), these respondents were divided into two groups. Those who ticked "rural area" for three or more questions were placed in the rural upbringing group. In the same way those who ticked "city" or "town" in answer to more than three questions were placed in the urban upbringing group.

After dividing the respondents in two groups according to on their place of upbringing, 39.3 percent (561) of the respondents were categorised as having rural upbringing, and 60.7 percent (866) as having urban upbringing. This gave a ratio 2:3. It indicates that one should expect two out of every five youths in an average church youth group to be most likely from a rural background.

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[54] 1. Where were you born?
    2. Where did you spend most of your first fifteen years of life?
    3. Where did you attend most of your primary school?
    4. Which place do you consider as your home?
    5. Where did you receive most of your religious instruction during the first fifteen year of your life?

After dividing them into two categorical groups, the responses from each group to the thirteen questions on traditional community values were entered into the computer, using the SPSS program at the Daystar University Research Department for data analysis. The data analysis and findings provided a brief demographic comparison of gender and age which is presented below and is followed by a discussion on the comparative perception of traditional community values among the youth from a rural background and an urban background.

5.8.3.1 Demographic comparison

A brief descriptive comparison of demographic data related to gender and age of the rural and the urban respondents is presented here. The purpose is to learn how the gender and age profile of each group differs in an average church youth group.

5.8.3.1 (i) Gender comparison

A brief comparison of gender differences of each group is presented here to show the composition of female and male in each group.

Frequency of Gender According to Rural and Urban Upbringing

	Rural		Urban	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Female	250	45.9	399	46.8
Male	295	54.1	453	53.2
Total	545	100.0	852	100.0
Missing	16		14	
Total	561		866	

The result shows that the percentage ratio between female and male is almost the same with only one percent difference between the rural and the urban group. The number of males is higher in both groups. It is in consistent with the city population of Nairobi, where there are more males than females.

5.8.3.1 (ii)   Age comparison

Frequency of Age According to Rural and Urban Upbringing

	Rural		Urban	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
11-15	3	.5	101	11.7
16-20	87	15.6	354	41.0
21-25	316	56.6	321	37.2
26-over	152	27.2	87	10.1
Total	558	100.0	863	100.0
Missing	16		3	
Total	561		866	

The analysis shows that there is a big difference in the number of youth in each age category. Among the rural group, only 0.5% (three) of the respondents were found to be under fifteen years of age. In contrast, nearly 12% (101) of respondents were under the age of fifteen in the urban group. Even in the age category of sixteen to twenty, the rural group represents only 15.6% of the total respondents while the urban group has nearly three times (41%) more youth in that age group. The highest percentage of youth in the rural group is found in the age bracket of twenty-one to twenty-five years (56.6%), whereas the urban group has 37.2 percent. In the age bracket of twenty-six and over, the percentage in the rural group is also very high (27.2%) in comparison to the urban group (10.1%).

It is clear that the majority of the youth population with a rural background are in the age bracket of twenty-one or over, which comprises nearly 84 percent, whereas only 47.3 percent of the youth in the urban group was twenty-one or over, nearly two times. However, on the other hand most of the youth in the urban group were below twenty (nearly 53%).

In summary, the findings show an interesting demographic age difference between the two groups. The majority of the youth with urban backgrounds are found to be below the age of 20, whereas the majority of those with rural backgrounds were above the age of 20 in Nairobi churches. Why is there such a difference? One plausible explanation could be that most of the youth with rural background are migrants in their 20s, who have come to Nairobi for jobs

and education. Because of age discrepancy and rural outlook, it can result in tension and conflict in the youth group concerning the style and preference of youth programmes. Such conflict was observed in several youth groups when the interviews were conducted. In one church the leadership of the youth group was in the hands of the older youth who were very conservative in their style and preference of music programmes, which frustrated the younger youth who had a taste for modern contemporary music because of their urban upbringing. The youth pastor commented that there actually were two sub-groups within the youth group. This urban-rural tension exists in many urban youth ministry groups. Often it is not clearly recognised.

5.8.3.2   Perception of community values among the urban and the rural groups

In this section, a comparative analysis of the findings from the survey response to the thirteen questions on traditional African community values is presented and discussed. For the sake of brevity and clarity, responses to the questionnaire of "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" are considered as the same—positive agreement. The valid percentages of both responses are combined. Similarly, the "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses to the questionnaire are also treated as the same—a negative agreement. Their valid percentages are combined.

5.8.3.2 (i)   Comparison of responses to question 1

Frequency of Response to Question 1 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 1: *Being with the members of my extended family gives me a sense of oneness with my people.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	88.6%	81.6%
Disagree	6.4%	8.9%
Not sure	5.0%	9.6%
Total	100.0	100.0

Both groups indicated a very high value for being with the members of the extended family. In comparison to the urban group, the rural group has a higher affinity for relationship with

one's community. In the urban group a higher percentage (9.6%) indicated that they were not sure of their need for relationship with the extended family in comparison to five percent in the rural group. Such a difference normally is expected in the urban group in comparison to the rural group because of urbanisation.

5.8.3.2 (ii)   Comparison of responses to question 2

Frequency of Response to Question 2 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 2: *Apart from my parents, I expect my extended family members to help meet my economic or material needs*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	57.9%	56.4%
Disagree	34.4%	32.1%
Not sure	7.7%	11.5%
Total	100.0	100.0

In relation to economic dependence on the extended family, more than half of the respondents in both groups agreed with the value of seeking help from one's extended family members. There is not much difference in their agreement and disagreement, except that a slightly higher percentage of respondents among the urban group are not sure about it. In comparison to social relationships in the previous question (Question 1), both groups expressed their strong reservations (rural—34.4% and urban –32.1%) about receiving economic assistance from the extended family.

5.8.3.2 (iii)   Comparison of responses to question 3

Frequency of Response to Question 3 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 3: *Besides my parents, I often seek advice from my extended family members for guidance in life.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	73.4%	63.2%
Disagree	21.1%	29.2%
Not sure	5.5%	7.6%
Total	100.0	100.0

This question is similar to Question 1 but focuses more on seeking advice from the extended family members, besides relationship. Nearly three quarters (73.4%) of the rural group

indicated their agreement positively compared with two thirds (63.2%) of the urban group. However, both groups agreed that seeking advice from the extended family is quite important. It shows that the extended family as community is important to them in this respect. Obviously, the rural group expressed a higher preference for seeking advice from the extended family than the urban group.

On the side of disagreement, a greater percentage of the urban group (29%) compared to the rural group (21%) find that seeking advice from the extended family members is not important to them or not relevant to their independent urban lifestyle.

5.8.3.2 (iv)   Comparison of responses to question 4

Frequency of Response to Question 4 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 4: *I must listen to the words or opinions of old people (like grandparents) who are traditionally regarded as wise.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	80.6%	78.9%
Disagree	13.8%	13.4%
Not sure	5.7%	7.7%
Total	100.0	100.0

In response to showing respect to older people and their opinions, both groups expressed a similar attitude. They indicated a very high value concerning listening to older people's advice (80%). In their disagreement, both groups also expressed a similar response (13%). In traditional community, the older people are highly respected and their words are seriously received. The result shows that this African value has not diminished. Most urban young people have continued to view older people with high regard. This is highly commendable in contrast to Western society where old people are marginalised and no longer valued in the society.

5.8.3.2 (v)   Comparison of responses to question 5

Frequency of Response to Question 5 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 5: *To me eating meals together signifies a sense of solidarity with others.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	81.7%	81.3%
Disagree	9.9%	10.9%
Not sure	8.4%	7.9%
Total	100.0	100.0

Eating meals together symbolises social oneness in traditional African community. In this regard, the rural and urban group both share a very high value (81%). Their positive and negative responses to the question were almost the same, with the difference being recorded at one percent or less. Even the "not sure" responses were similar at around eight percent.

5.8.3.2 (vi)   Comparison of responses to question 6

Frequency of Response to Question 6 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 6: *Attending a funeral of my relatives or friends gives me a feeling of belonging to a community.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	78.4%	78.7%
Disagree	14.1%	10.9%
Not sure	7.4%	10.4%
Total	100.0	100.0

Attending a funeral in a traditional African society is seen as a community event in which everyone participates. Both the urban and rural group expressed similarly high values in their agreement to its meaning (78%). In their disagreement, the rural group scored a higher percentage than the urban group, contrary to normal expectations. The difference was not much, however, at only 3.2 percent.

5.8.3.2 (vii)   Comparison of responses to question 7

Frequency of Response to Question 7 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 7: *For me the most important reason for getting married is to maintain our family roots by having children.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	43.0%	34.0%
Disagree	50.3%	54.0%

Not sure	6.7%	12.0%
Total	100.0	100.0

More than 50% of the individuals in both groups did not agree with the traditional reason for getting married, which is to maintain family and community roots by having children. However, among the rural group, those who agreed with the traditional reason scored nine percent higher than the urban group. This indicates that this traditional value is stronger in the rural-oriented youth than the urban-oriented group. Even among the urban group, 12 percent of the youth were not sure about the relevancy of this value in their lives versus seven percent in the rural group.

5.8.3.2 (viii)   Comparison of responses to question 8

Frequency of Response to Question 8 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 8: *When a relative comes to my place, I feel under obligation to help the relative.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	72.6%	63.3%
Disagree	18.6%	22.0%
Not sure	8.8%	14.6%
Total	100.0	100.0

Helping one's relative is an important traditional African value. A high percentage among both groups indicated their agreement positively to this value—72 percent of the rural group and 63.3 percent of the urban group. However, the rural group appears to feel 9.3 percent more obligated by this custom compared to the urban group.

A greater percentage (14.6%) among the urban group expressed uncertainty regarding their obligation to help one's relative in comparison to the rural group (8.8%). This indicates a tension between the traditional expectation and the urban reality of life among many the urban youth. It is greater among the urban group.

5.8.3.2 (ix)   Comparison of responses to question 9

Frequency of Response to Question 9 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 9: *Attending a wedding of my relatives or friends gives me a sense of being a part of the community.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	82.1%	80.4%
Disagree	11.3%	10.9%
Not sure	6.6%	8.7%
Total	100.0	100.0

Attending a wedding in traditional African society is viewed as a community affair. Everyone is expected to participate. The response to this question by the both groups was very similar to the response to Question 6, related to attending a funeral. Both the rural and the urban group indicated a very high value in their agreement to its meaning—above 80 percent. There is not much difference in their responses, just one percent above. Around ten percent in both groups expressed their disagreement.   The positive perception towards attending a wedding shows that a wedding as an event still provides an occasion for community solidarity.

5.8.3.2 (x)   Comparison of responses to question 10

Frequency of Response to Question 10 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 10: *When I die, I would like to be buried in the land or village of my ancestors.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	42.0%	43.8%
Disagree	35.1%	30.5%
Not sure	22.9%	25.7%
Total	100.0	100.0

To be buried in one's ancestral land is a very important desire and custom in traditional African society. It binds one's relationship with the community. It is surprising to note that among the urban youth—from both the rural and the urban background—less than half expressed their desire to uphold traditional custom. In their responses, there is hardly any difference between the urban and the rural group, except that the percentage registering disagreement in the rural group is nearly 5% higher than in the urban group. This is also unusual. Normally, higher disagreement would be expected from among the urban group.

Nearly one third of the respondents in both groups expressed the opinion that the custom of burial in the ancestral land is no longer important to them.

The uncertainty or "not sure" response was quite high from among the two groups—for the rural 23 percent and for the urban group 26 percent. Their response shows that individuals from among both groups appear to be torn between the conflicting forces of modernisation and African traditional customs. This indicates that belief in ancestors is gradually diminishing among the youth in urban areas.

5.8.3.2 (xi)   Comparison of responses to question 11

Frequency of Response to Question 11 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 11: *Honouring ancestors reflects a sense of solidarity with my clan or family.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	35.8%	42.7%
Disagree	44.4%	33.7%
Not sure	19.8%	23.6%
Total	100.0	100.0

To honour one's ancestors is one of the strong values in traditional African community. Belief in ancestors binds the community together. Similar to the response to one's burial preference in Question 10, less than half of the respondents from both groups indicated their agreement regarding the value of honouring one's ancestors. However, it was surprising to note that the rural group indicated seven percent less inclination to honour the ancestors than the urban group. Similarly, the rural group expressed a nearly eleven percent higher disagreement about honouring their ancestors. Normally, the youth from a rural background would be expected to be more favourable inclined towards ancestors than the youth from an urban background. It shows that the trend is the other way around. One possible explanation could be that the young people from the rural background are reacting to urban reality and find that the idea of ancestors is difficult to sustain. The result seems to be a willingness to discard it in order to adapt to the urban world.

A high percentage of respondents from the two groups expressed uncertainty regarding honouring one's ancestors—20 percent of the rural group and 24 percent of the urban group. This indicates that belief in ancestors is gradually diminishing among the urban youth. They find it less relevant to their urban way of life and thinking.

5.8.3.2 (xii)   Comparison of responses to question 12

Frequency of Response to Question 12 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

Question 12: *The custom of naming children with traditional names expresses my desire for maintaining a closer relationship with my clan or family.*		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	58.4%	60.1%
Disagree	31.0%	27.0%
Not sure	10.5%	13.0%
Total	100.0	100.0

Giving traditional names to children is an important aspect of traditional African community values. Among the groups from the rural and the urban background, a high percentage of respondents (58-60%) agreed with the traditional practice of naming children. On the negative side, the rural group showed four percent greater disagreement than the urban group, which is unusual. It suggests that some of the individuals from rural backgrounds are eager to distance themselves from some of traditional customs in order to conform to the urban lifestyle and values.

More than ten percent of the respondents in each group are not sure whether this custom has any value or not. Since urbanisation provides other alternatives to community living, these individuals are unsure which way to go. Both traditional and urban values seem to be equally attractive to them.

5.8.3.2 (xiii)   Comparison of responses to question 13

Frequency of Response to Question 13 Based on Rural and Urban Upbringing

I prefer community lifestyle over independent living.		
	Rural Group	Urban Group
Agree	51.9%	42.4%

Disagree	36.1%	42.8%
Not sure	11.9%	14.9%
Total	100.0	100.0

In response to preference for community lifestyle, the youth from the rural background indicated ten percent higher agreement than the urban counterpart. Close to 52 percent of the rural group favoured community lifestyle in comparison to 42 percent of the urban group. Among the urban group, the percentage of those who preferred a community lifestyle and of those who preferred an independent living is almost the same. But among the rural group, the majority preferred the community style—52 percent—over the independent living. But the negative response of 36 percent is surprising among the rural group. They are expressing a major shift in their values. Being in the city, they are experiencing freedom from community restraints and are more attracted to an independent urban living.

Among the urban group, a slightly higher percentage of youth were not sure (15%) about their preference in comparison to the rural group (12%). Both options may seem attractive to both groups so they could not choose any of one of them.

5.8.3.2 (xiv)   Summary

The results obtained from the comparative analysis of the responses of the group of youth from the rural background and the group from the urban background to the thirteen questions reveal the following information and trends:

In both groups, more than 55 percent of the respondents expressed their agreement positively for the following nine traditional African community values out of thirteen:

   * Relationship with the extended family members (Q1).

   * Expecting economic help from the extended family members (Q2).

   * Seeking advice from the extended family members (Q3).

   * Listening to older people (Q4).

   * Eating together for solidarity (Q5).

* Attending funerals for community participation (Q6).

* Helping one's relatives (Q8).

* Attending weddings for community participation (Q9).

* Naming children with traditional names (Q12)

On the negative side, less than 50 percent of the respondents in both groups considered the following three traditional African values as important:

* Getting married to maintain one's family roots through procreation (Q7).

* Desiring to be buried in one's ancestral land (Q10).

* Honouring one's ancestors (Q11).

Surprisingly, the rural group indicated a higher percentage in its rejection of all three values in comparison to the urban group. Normally, one would expect the percentage of disapproval of these values from the urban group. This is an interesting shift in attitude among the youth from rural backgrounds towards some of the deeply held traditional beliefs and practices. In the urban context, they no longer perceive them as relevant.

The only significant difference among these two groups of youth was found in relation to the question of preference for community lifestyle over independent living (Q13). The greater percentage—52 percent of respondents from the rural—group favoured the community lifestyle versus 42 percent from the urban group, a difference of 10 percent.

In conclusion, this empirical study points out that the youth from both the rural background and the urban background still have high affinity for most of the community values. Some traditional community values that are less relevant to life in the urban context are being discarded but not rejected completely, like belief in ancestors, burial in rural village and marriage for maintaining family roots. The community lifestyle is still favoured by the majority of the youth from the rural background because rural society is more community-

oriented by nature. Even the good percentage—42 percent of youth from the urban background— favours the community lifestyle.

CHAPTER SIX

COMMUNITY-BASED DISCIPLESHIP IN URBAN CONTEXT

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In light of the discussion in previous chapters concerning the important role of community in traditional African society and in the life of the early church and the findings of empirical research concerning the perception of community values among the urban youth, this chapter seeks to address the missiological question of the main thesis of this study. It concerns how the church should go about building its youth discipleship ministry on the basis of a community approach.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section answers the question of the thesis based on analysis and findings from research on African cultural values (Chapter Three), praxis of the early church (Chapter Four) and empirical findings (Chapter Five). The second section discusses the three-dimensional framework of community discipleship in view of the analysis of the findings. These dimensions incorporates the mission of prophetic dialogue[55] for a theologically, culturally, and contextually appropriate approach and praxis of discipleship. This is followed by the third section, which critically examines some of the current models of community-centred ministry in some of the urban churches and offers a modified model that may be suitable for building a youth ministry based on a community approach in the challenging urban context. Finally, the fourth section of the chapter presents some reflection on the findings and recommendations.

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[55] The term *prophetic dialogue* is proposed by Bevans and Schroeder (2004:348) with reference to a mission theology which synthesises three strains: *missio Dei*—"mission as participation in the life and mission of the Trinity", witness to the reign of God—"mission as continuation of the mission of Jesus to preach, serve and witness to the justice of God's 'already' but 'not yet' reign", and proclamation—"mission as the proclamation of Christ as the world's only savior." The dialogue implies both giving and receiving, sharing and exchanging.

6.2   RESPONSE TO THE THESIS QUESTION BASED ON ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As stated above, this section presents a response to the thesis question concerning why the church needs to consider structuring its youth discipleship ministry on the basis of a community approach.   In Chapter two, the state of the youth ministry in Nairobi was presented and analysed.   It was found that most of the youth ministries operating in Nairobi churches have been struggling to keep their youth in the church.   The churches are losing more young people than gaining them in their fold. The statistics clearly point out that the proportion of youth in the church is much lower than the general population of the city who claim to be Christian.   It was pointed out that one of the main contributing problems of lacking interest among the youth has been the praxis of the church that is rooted in the Western cultural assumption of dualism and the clerical paradigm (Dingemans 1995:84).   As a result, the church spends more of its time and effort on building the spiritual dimension of discipleship—mainly in winning souls or converts and nurturing doctrinal understanding of faith while ignoring the existential social and physical needs of young people.   Because of the priority given to building up the spiritual dimension of young people's lives and its clergy focused ministry, the church relies more on programmes rather than on building meaningful relationships.[56]   Consequently, the success of the ministry is often measured by how many youth attend or participate in the programmes.   Since many churches have not been able to keep pace with changes in urban society and due to limited resources to address the challenges of urbanisation, like poverty, crime and diseases, they are increasingly being perceived as irrelevant by many urban youth. The youth feel that the church does not relate to their problems or understand their hopes, desires and views.   In addition to these problems, most young people within the church often feel that they are not being heard and find themselves on the margin of church life.   With this as the contextual background to the

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[56] According to Dingemans (1995:86), "the individual paradigm" that has focused the ministry from the viewpoint of individual believers in recent years has been emerging as a new trend in Practical Theology.

problem, this study has proposed that the church build its ministry of discipleship among the urban youth on community values and structure.

In order to address the research problem in cultural context for relevancy, the study examined the significant role of community in traditional African society in Chapter Three, through descriptive research. It became very clear that the idea of community was more than a social arrangement for human survival in traditional society. The community was the expression of the whole culture. In community, the individuals found their human identity. The community provided a matrix for expressing religious and cultural beliefs and values through shared symbols and rituals. The values emanating from community life dictated all aspects of traditional African people's thoughts and behaviour. These values more or less defined African character as communal. "One of the outstanding characteristics of Africans is their communal way of thinking and living" (Hendriks 2004:148). On the basis of African cultural roots, there is a strong hermeneutical argument for the church to build its discipleship ministry among the urban youth on the foundation of community values and praxis. The empirical results presented in Chapter 5 strongly affirm that the majority of the urban youth have an affinity for community values. When the church communicates the gospel through its community life, as the early church did, it presents the gospel in relevant terms[57]. It reaches the heart of the people. The church no longer imposes an alien structure on its members as it is happening today. It is not enough to be convinced of the value of community praxis solely on cultural grounds. The church needs to be convinced on biblical ground as well. It needs to be sure that the community approach has a sound theological basis and praxis that is in agreement with the historic Christian faith.

For the theological basis, the study narrowly focused on the community dimension in the praxis of the early church in Chapter Four in light of its calling to make disciples. The early

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[57] Newbigin (1989:222) calls the church "the only hermeneutic of the gospel….a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it….a believing community."

church clearly understood itself as a community of believers based on the theological concept of *koinonia,* a fellowship of believers fully committed to the Lord Jesus and to one another.[58] The early Christians did not see the church as an association of like-minded, baptised Christians, as most Christians tend to believe the church to be in our day. The early Christians organised themselves as the community of God and functioned as a community of God's people, not like a well-organised religious institution of our time. Baptism and the Eucharist were the main sacramental events celebrated in the life of the early church to reinforce its identity and solidarity as the community of God's people. The character and identity of new members were often nurtured and reinforced in the context of community life in accordance with the teachings and expected praxis of the scriptures and the established tradition of the apostles of Christ. It was inconceivable for a Christian to believe in Christ and not to belong to Christ's community, his body on earth (Bosch 1991:166). Therefore, from a theological and historical perspective the early church hermeneutically understood itself as a redemptive community of Christ. The study clearly challenges the church in Nairobi and in other cities in Africa, both on cultural and on theological grounds, to examine critically its current individualistic and clerical oriented praxis of discipleship and to consider a community approach as a way forward in its witness to the youth.

In addition, to find the basis for a community approach to discipleship on cultural and biblical grounds, the study incorporated empirical research to discover the youth's perception of community values in relation to African culture.[59] The questionnaire asked the youth to respond to thirteen operational questions which were closely associated with traditional community values. According to the findings, between 56% and 81% of the respondents

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[58] This concept was rooted in the hermeneutical understanding of a Saviour God. Yahweh, in continuity with the people of ancient Israel, who were brought into a covenant relationship after delivering them from slavery in Egypt to freedom, now revealed himself in Jesus Christ for delivering people from sin or death to life with an invitation to all humankind to enter into God's kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ.

[59] The project made contact with 1428 youth in a wide variety of churches in Nairobi and gave them a survey questionnaire to fill out. Findings based on information gathered from 1398 respondents who filled in the questionnaire completely or partially were tabulated after analysis.

indicated agreement with the nine statements that clearly expressed community values, but fewer respondents responded positively to statements involving adherence to traditional beliefs.

The following three statements reflecting community values associated with traditional beliefs received a less than forty three percent positive response:

1. The reason for getting married is to maintain one's family roots by having children—37.5%.

2. Honouring ancestors reflects a sense of solidarity with one's clan or family—40%.

3. A desire to be buried in the ancestral village or land—43%

This discrepancy seems to indicate that young people appreciate community values but are less interested in traditional beliefs associated with ancestors and their traditional practices.

The following nine value statements were accepted positively by the majority of the youth with a cumulative average of 73%:

1. Depending on the members of extended family for social oneness—84%.

2. Depending on the members of extended family for economic assistance—57%.

3. Seeking advice from the members of extended family for guidance in life—67%.

4. Respecting the words or opinions of old people—80%.

5. Eating meals together as a symbol of solidarity—81%.

6. Attending a funeral of relatives or friends for community solidarity—78.5%.

7. Attending a wedding of relatives or friends for community solidarity—81%.

8. Naming children with traditional names for clan or family solidarity—71.5%.

9. Obligation to help a relative when they come to one's place—67%.

To the last statement (item 13), which asked respondents to indicate their preference for community lifestyle over independent living, 47% of them responded positively versus 40%

negatively. This indicates the effect of modernity in shifting cultural values towards a personal and private lifestyle as a possible choice in the urban context.

The results of the survey clearly show that the majority of urban youth have a favourable disposition towards community values, which is largely characteristic of traditional African society. On the basis of empirical evidence, the church can therefore confidently assume that urban youth would be receptive to discipleship ministry based on a community approach, provided that the church does not impose community as another programme without taking into consideration the particular characteristics of each urban context where the youth are located. For instance, the youth who were born and grew up in Nairobi are more likely to have different values and preferences to the youth who have come from rural areas recently. In terms of their affinity for community values, however, there is not much of a gap.

The survey questionnaire also measured the differences in the perception of community values of the two groups of youth—the youth whose upbringing was predominantly in the rural area and those whose upbringing was predominantly in the urban area. When their responses were compared, there was not much of a difference between their responses. Both groups indicated a high affinity for community values and practices; 60 percent on average. However, the rural group was slightly more biased towards community than that urban group, by a margin of three percent, which is not significant. This clearly indicates that growing up in an urban environment does not necessarily mean that one's affinity for community and its related values is lessened. The response also confirms the assumption behind the proposed thesis statement that the basic worldview or symbolic system of meaning which shapes the culture does not change too readily but may do so over time.

In summary, the study, on the basis of the cultural, theological and empirical analysis and findings, concludes that the church in Nairobi, in response to the missiological problem that has resulted from a praxis guided by the Western dualistic view of Christian faith and the

clerical paradigm, should seriously consider structuring its youth discipleship ministry on the basis of community praxis. The church needs to integrate three dimensions of missional discipleship—believing, belonging, and exchanging—by correlating with the contextual realities of African cultural values and urban factors to create a discipleship community as a community of character. In becoming a community of character, the community bears witness to Christ and proclaims the gospel of Jesus, "a hermeneutic of the gospel" (Bevans 2004:352, Newbigin 1989:222). The next section explores the ways of constructing such a community guided by the three-dimensional framework of discipleship that seeks to correlate the theological, cultural and urban contexts.

6.3   PRAXIS OF THREE-DIMENSIONAL COMMUNITY DISCIPLESHIP

In response to the missiological problem described in Chapter One (**1.4**), the main goal of the thesis informing this study is to develop a missional community of discipleship for the formation of Christian character among the urban youth. In order to attain this objective, it was proposed that the church in praxis needs to critically correlate the three important dimensions of discipleship with community structure in the context of African urban life, with consideration of African cultural values and the missional praxis of the early church as a discipleship community.

The three dimensions of Believing, Belonging and Exchanging, which are stated in Chapter One (**1.5**), provide a comprehensive definition of discipleship as taught by Jesus and demonstrated in the praxis of the early church. This framework provides a methodological guide for constructing and analysis of a community-based discipleship ministry discussed in this chapter. For the sake of clarity and logical order, the study uses each dimension as a thematic outline and focuses discussion on correlation within the theological, cultural and urban contexts.

6.3.1   Praxis of Believing: Connecting to God through Jesus Christ

This dimension describes the people of God as a worshipping community, a true *koinonia* bonded by the common faith in Christ. Its liturgical dimension is not divorced from the missionary intention. The act of worship is viewed as preparing God's people for service, either serving God directly or indirectly by serving fellow human beings (Kritzinger 1994:38). Kritzinger (ibid) is right in saying that "…Christian mission, we can therefore say, is an inherent dimension of the worship we owe God simply for who He is". As discussed in the first chapter, discipleship involves continuing identification with Jesus, which begins in baptism. Through worship in a community of faith, believers continue to renew and affirm their identification as the chosen people of God in Christ Jesus. In worship, Christians, as disciples of Christ, witness to him by focusing on him. In that sense worship is an act of being his witness.[60] The early church demonstrated this from the very beginning when they, as a community:

> …devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer….Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47 NIV)

From the text it is obvious that the Eucharist was the centre of the worship event in the life of the early church. In Chapter Four it was pointed out that the early church reinforced disciples' identity with Christ and their solidarity with Christ's community through the Eucharist. The missionary dimension of the Eucharist cannot be minimised as it is in many churches in Nairobi today because it is no longer viewed as a significant missionary event but mainly as an affirmation of one's salvation. Bevans (2004:363) writes emphatically, "Perhaps the richest source of missionary service in the liturgy is the celebration of the

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[60] Bevans (2004:362) in reference to Thomas Schattauer's proposition, explains three possible relationships between liturgy and mission as "inside and out," "outside in," and "inside out." Liturgy as "inside and out" describes "God acts to empower the Church for mission" (ibid). Liturgy as "outside in" emphasizes an open dialogical attitude with other people, especially strangers and those on the margins of life, culture and the world in order to be enriched and stretched beyond its comfort level. Liturgy as "inside out" calls for liturgy to be practised with a missionary intent, a moment of evangelisation.

Eucharist". The powerful witness through "the breaking of bread" was clearly evident in the life of the early Christian community, as stated in Acts 2:42-47. From an African cultural perspective, the sharing of meals together is very meaningful symbolic ritual. In the traditional African community, meals are eaten together in many of the rituals to signify oneness or solidarity as well as to show hospitality (Mbiti 1990:82, 104). It symbolises a sharing of life together. It also communicates peace and reconciliation among those who share the meals. Even among the urban youth, sharing of meal is considered as of high cultural value.[61] In the African urban context, the sharing of bread in a small group or community is more meaningful as it enhances deeper relationship with one another and with Christ. While it focuses on God, it builds community in oneness with Christ and with one another in the spirit of *koinonia*.

Another important aspect of worship is prayer and hearing from God. The worship needs to be guided by prayer and the hearing of the Word of God as it was in the life of the early community. For that reason **Prayer** is listed as the primary activity before **Concern** for others in the Small Christian Community or Basic Christian Community of the Roman Catholic Church (Lobinger 1981:3). Prayer involves meditating on God's Word, which is called Gospel sharing. Before any concrete action is taken, the members devote much time to prayer and reflection on God's Word (:5). Prayer and Bible reading need not be taken as another programme for a group to be engaged in as it is commonly practised in most urban churches today. It is an act of worship, a moment of communion with God through Christ. Bevans (2004:367) writes about prayer as a missionary act and points out that, "[p]rayer for those engaged in the church's work of crossing boundaries of faith, for victims of human-caused or natural disasters—this is a valid way of being caught up in the saving and redeeming mission of God in the world." For a community that engages in caring for others beyond its borders, prayer and reflection on God's Word becomes a mission in itself, because

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[61] In response to the survey question on the value of sharing meals together for solidarity with others, more than 81% of the urban youth indicated that this has important cultural value for them.

the group aligns itself with God's purpose for the world. In present praxis among youth groups, prayer is offered to God in view of the individual's needs or for the needs of the group. Very seldom is the prayer seen as an act of mission regarding the needs of the poor, helpless and hungry. True prayer and reflection on the Word of God with missionary intention opens one's eyes to look at the world with compassion as God sees it.

The present church ministry to youth in Nairobi that has been discussed in Chapter Two (section three) operates on the clerical paradigm and often views worship as another programme which seeks to create an experience with the aid of music and other media. The clerical paradigm postulates that worship must be led by a clergy or an appointed leader and that the rest of the congregants are expected to participate passively in the grace mediated by the appointed church official. This places a great burden on the clergy to perform in order to create a meaningful experience for the worshippers. In the early church community, everyone participated in worship because it was not a programme but a relationship with God. Leaders were not chosen or ordained for the particular position of leading the worship service as it is done in today's churches, but were recognised and accepted on the basis of their giftedness and calling, both men and women (Bosch 1991:468).

For the church in Nairobi to base its discipleship ministry on community praxis on theological ground, specifically among youth, will make it impossible to maintain the clerical paradigm, for this will result in another programme. The initiative will remain in the hands of the church-appointed leader rather than in the hands of the leader who is accepted by the community. The clerical paradigm would insist on controlling the group because it is the task of the "ordained minister" to lead. Bosch (:469) points out that the clergy-centred church is "a community mainly concerned with mediating eternal salvation to [the] individual. The ordained ministry is the primary vehicle for that work, so the shape of the church is built around it." According to this clerical assumption, the leader is usually called a pastor, the shepherd of the group, and the rest of the members of the group or congregation are called

sheep who passively follow the shepherd. This pattern is deeply ingrained in the polity of the church. For youth ministry to become a true and genuine worshipping community as it is proposed here, the church needs radical conversion in its self-understanding in order to trust its young people to worship God with freedom and responsibility. In agreement with Bosch (:472), who holds the view that ministry is given "to the whole people of God, not to select individuals", this study realises that the church needs leaders, whether they are called elders, priests, pastors, or clergy (ordained or not). But "[t]he clergy, then come *from the community* [italics in the text], guide it and act *in Christ's name*" (Moltmann, quoted in Bosch 1991:472, italics in Moltmann). A leader is not above the members of the community, but he or she is more specifically called to walk with the community as a fellow guide towards the goal of growing in the likeness of the Lord in whose name the community exists and for his name's sake.[62] Therefore, worship is a corporate affair. The community is nourished and strengthened by the Spirit of God in order to be sent back into the world to witness to the name of Christ by loving one another and serving others who are at the periphery of God's kingdom—"To encounter God at the center is to participate in God's life at the boundaries: to participate in God's boundary-crossing mission is to be drawn always to the center" (Bevans 2004:362).

6.3.2   Praxis of Belonging: Connecting with one another

This dimension of discipleship primarily focuses on social relationship within the community of discipleship. Apart from all the social factors that may contribute to the quality of the relationship between the members of the group, the members fundamentally relate with one another on the common basis of their faith in Christ. The theological understanding of *koinonia* is the ground for relating with one another. The rest of the relationships are built on that foundation. In the early church, people from diverse backgrounds and cultures came

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[62] Roxburgh and Regele (2000) in their work *Crossing the bridge: Church leadership in a time of change* wrote about the leaders on the margin who could lead from inside, outside-in, and inside-out.

together as the people of God, "as contrast society", later to be identified as the *ekklesia* of Christ demonstrating the power of *koinonia* in Christ (Lohfink 1985:122).[63]

The community that is proposed in this study needs to have this foundational understanding; otherwise it can easily degenerate into a Christian social club or "lifestyle conclave"[64] Such a community may be inclusive of other social and cultural differences, but it cannot deny its foundational principle, that is, it always faithfully remains "in Christ". On that theological basis, the rest of the relational dimension in the community will be explored and discussed in order to correlate with the cultural and urban context while taking a cue from the community praxis of the early church.

In the problem statement in Chapter One, it was pointed out that the reason why most youth do not attend the church in Nairobi is that the church does not respond to their social need, especially to their sense of belonging. To address the need to belong, this study proposed that the church needs to structure its discipleship ministry on the basis of community because the community by definition is a structured relationship around blood relations, common beliefs, interests or purpose. It is not a programme. As mentioned previously, the Christian community finds its common bond in Christ. Through baptism one enters into the community of Christ. However, the structure of our present-day church does not express this community understanding. Because its praxis is guided by the clerical paradigm, it mainly addresses the spiritual dimension of discipleship. Hence, the social needs of young people are not adequately met or are being ignored. Therefore, when the church provides a genuine community that cares for their social needs, young people will find the church to be relevant, a place where they can grow and be developed as disciples of Christ and become his witnesses in the world.

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[63] The term is used by Lohfink (1985:122) in reference to the church as the people of God in continuity to the Old Testament Israel as God's chosen people. The church as a holy people of God is called to live according to "a social order which stands in sharp *contrast* with those of all other nations" (:123).
[64] Bellah (1996:72) refers to a group who shared certain common interests while maintaining their separate individualistic lifestyle.

In Chapter Two (section two), it was pointed out that one of the great challenges of youth in the urban context is the identity crisis which contributes to alienation. The young people do not know who they are and where they belong as they lose their reference to their original community in rural areas or the conditions in the urban setting tend to destabilise social relationships due to economic factors and residential changes. Loneliness and identity crises among the youth is often compounded by family breakdown and confusion over one's role in the society. In this regard, a caring community where he or she finds a place of refuge and a place to belong is a welcoming option for a young person. In the African cultural value system, human relationship is considered very important. Human relationship often defines one's humanity and even self-identity. Only in relationship with others, can an individual find his or her self-identity.

A discipleship community that celebrates connection with one another is a gift from God. It overcomes human alienation. It welcomes those who are lonely and confused. The early church community was made of those who were at the margins of the society.[65] Jesus deliberately formed the community to welcome those "who were denied community at that time, or who were judged inferior in respect to religion" (Lohfink 1985:88). In the urban context, many young people are searching for such a community where they can belong. The church can extend the offer to them to join a genuine community where they can grow in Christian discipleship while they find their true human self in the context of a caring community.

For a community to be caring and loving there must be a structure of accountability. The writings of Paul are infused with admonishment containing the term "one another" in so many

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[65] According to Lohfink (1985:88), the community of Jesus was intended to be a *reconciled community*. He welcomed people from all walks of life: rich, poor, educated, uneducated, rural, urban, healthy, sick, just, and sinner.

ways.[66] These admonishments reflect the nature of accountability as all the members are responsible for the conduct of one another. In much of the present day youth ministry, young people hardly know what others are doing. Each one seems to live his/her private life. It is not that they would like to live a private life, but there is no such structure in the church where they can build and share their lives consistently. Most youth groups are activity-oriented, usually directed by a leader. People come and share an activity together for a specified time as part of the programme and then they go back to their homes with no accountability to anyone. No one seems to ask them how they are feeling or doing. If they are asked, the conversation remains superficial because there is no shared agreement to enter into a commitment to each other's life. A structure of accountability needs to be built into the community's life so that the members can feel free to share their problems and encourage one another in the love of Christ.

In the African culture, kinship relationship is celebrated in all aspect of life. One's identity is often wrapped up in the matrix of kinship. Even among the urbanised youth, the value of the kinship relationship was reckoned very highly when it was investigated.[67] This shows the idea of family relationship to be very important, even though many families in the city experience a great amount stress and turmoil in the face of various social factors resulting from urbanisation. It has been noted that family metaphors were widely used among the members of the group in the life of the early church community. Kinship terminology is found throughout the writings of Paul. He often used terms such as *father, son, child/children;* especially *brother/brethren* abound in his letter—clearly expressing a "language of belonging" (Meeks, quoted in Bosch 1991:166). In view of the cultural

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[66] In contrast to present day large institutional church, Lohfink (:104) points out that deeply members were expected to relate with one another in their daily life in the early church community as, for example, shown in Pauline's admonishment: "live in harmony with one another" Rom. 12:16, "have the same care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25), "build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11), "confess your sins to one another" (James 6:16), and "admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14) and many others.

[67] In the research questionnaire, a group of more than 1400 young respondents were asked to respond to the question whether they consider it important to depend on the members of extended family for social oneness. Close to 84% indicated that it was important to them.

preference and norm in the early church, it would be preferable to cultivate the ethos of family in a discipleship community. The church can help provide such a stable family-like environment where youth can experience "kinship" among the people of God.

In interviews with several youth leaders and other young people, it was noted that one of the needs of youth people in the urban context is for guidance. This results from being away from their rural communities where the patterns of conduct, roles and status are clearly defined and the fact that this no longer applies to life in the urban context where there are multiple ways of doing things. In the absence of moral guidelines or through having too many conflicting guidelines young people are often confused. They may move from one group to another or follow certain leaders who can give some guidance or rules of life to follow. When they come to church, they do not seem to find guidelines for life that clearly tell them what to do when faced with the realities of life, or hermeneutical examples or role models to follow. In the survey questionnaire, most of the youth expressed similar yearnings positively when they were asked the question related to seeking advice from relatives for guidance (67%) and listening to words or opinions of old people who are regarded as wise (80%). This empirical data shows that young people value guidance from an authority that they can trust. At present, they get most of their guidance from their peers or from media that often confuse them. While talking to some parents in churches, the author noted that even they need guidance. Some parents who used traditional way of commanding children to follow their ways without mutual understanding and dialogue find it hard to relate to their children. Children do not listen to them. Most youth do not seem to have confidence in their parents' ability to help them negotiate the rules of life. In the matter of a discipleship community, there is a hope that youth may find guidance for life from God's perspective in the community through interaction with peers who are also committed to seeking the will of God for their lives. God has given the church a responsibility to guide his people through people in the community. That is why he has bestowed different gifts on different people

who can help each other in the community in order to grow and mature in Christ together rather than individually (1 Corinthians 12).

The grim reality of dehumanising poverty, overcrowded living quarters, diseases, sexual abuse, crime, violence, drug abuse, and many other vices of urban life faced by youth was mentioned in Chapter Two. These factors together discourage many youth and push them to the margin of society. Even in the church, they find themselves on the margin. They are given hardly any respect and a platform for their voice to be heard seriously. They are often told what to do and how to behave by the leadership, with very little dialogue or understanding. In such a context, the proposed community could be a place where they can find a voice and be heard and where they can participate in finding solutions to their problems. By being in a loving and caring discipleship community, most of them would find courage and hope to face the harsh realities of daily urban life with help and encouragement from fellow believers. By being in a community where youth are guided to follow the ways of Christ, many can be helped to avoid diseases and emotional pain resulting from wrong choices or being pressed into a destructive lifestyle by friends whose values and behaviour are detrimental. Many young people join gangs or wrong groups of people because of loneliness and wanting to belong and be accepted.

The place to belong is where God is worshipped and his people care for one another. The Belonging dimension of discipleship can offer youth more than good Christian fellowship, a new way of life with meaning and purpose in the challenging realities of life. The marginalised people of the early church communities who lived in the oppressive and inhumane society of the time would testify that they discovered their human dignity in the fellowship of believers in Christ and became the light in the dark society and the salt in the tasteless world. With that in mind, the study turns to the praxis of exchanging--an intentional mission of giving and receiving.

6.3.3   Praxis of Exchanging: Giving and receiving

This dimension of discipleship calls the community to engage in the wider community with missionary intention through prophetic dialogue in an attitude of giving and receiving in the process (Bevans 2004:348).   It does not approach the people of the world or their culture or religion with a condescending attitude of superiority (ibid).   It is a call to engage in the prophetic ministry of dialogue in humility, and being open to receive from others as well, so as to be enriched and challenged to expand one's vision (ibid).   For prophetic dialogue, the discipleship community needs to be engaged both as witness and in proclamation (:352). Witnessing and proclamation are inseparable—two sides of the same coin.   Newbigin (1989: 132) clearly states that the gospel needs to be interpreted through words and through deeds; otherwise it would be misunderstood.[68]   The early church as a community was both a witnessing and proclaiming community, a hermeneutic of the gospel (:137).   The life of the community with believing and belonging dimensions attracted the attention of the unbelieving world and many were converted through that witness and the proclaiming of the message of the living and risen Lord.   Even today, the Lord of the mission expects the same from his church.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the early church as a community, while uncompromisingly maintaining its distinct boundary and identity, very seldom separated itself from the affairs of the greater society of which the community was a part.   Bosch (1991:168) points out that this self-understanding of the church as a unique people of God and their exclusive commitment to Christ and his kingdom gave the church courage and confidence to share its life in the service others—"There is a creative tension between being exclusive and practising solidarity with others."   While serving the world, it is important to be reminded that "to be in the world"

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[68] In reference to Jesus' ministry, Newbigin argues that all the works of healing and other miracles were made clear by proclamation; otherwise they could be misinterpreted. For instance, when his disciples were sent with power to perform healing, they were also instructed to proclaim the message "the kingdom of God has drawn near" (1989:132).

does not mean the group needs to become "of the world". The community in Christ is called to serve others by being rooted in Christ.

In the urban context, the church through praxis of discipleship community among the youth can address many of the social challenges of urbanisation that have been mentioned in Chapter Two, which are adversely affecting the youth in various ways. In order to be engaged in the society in prophetic dialogue, the community needs to be committed to maintaining its missionary intention. Too often when this dimension is compromised, the group easily turns into warm and cosy fellowship. In so doing the discipleship community loses its ability to be the light and the salt in the greater community. Its witness is greatly compromised. Therefore, it is imperative that the three dimensions of discipleship are well-integrated.

With that in mind, each discipleship community in its specific local context engages in addressing to the needs of other youth in the greater community, first by listening to them. Too often the church is known for preaching its message without listening. Listening is a ministry of healing. In the urban context, many youth feel that churches and youth organisations offer their programmes to help youth but no one wants to listen to them. These institutions come with their agendas to solve youth's problems, but most young people want to be listened to first and help *themselves* by being empowered to addressing their needs. They do not want to be a project of the church or the organisation. It is true that even the youth in the church feel that the church does not listen to them; thus the youth outside the church have greater reason to complain of not being heard. Just by listening with sympathy, a community of discipleship could bring much healing to the hurting youth outside the church. By listening with compassion, a community of discipleship could become a healing witness.

In addition to listening to the hurts of the youth, the community of discipleship could engage in healing through prayer. This aspect of mission has already been discussed above in the

believing dimension of discipleship. While engaging in serving others, prayer can be a source of power and strength. Jesus was a great model. He prayed earnestly while he engaged with the forces of the domain of darkness. The early church prayed diligently when they encountered opposition from rulers and authorities in unjust systems. As it was pointed out in the theology of the city in Chapter Two, the urban context should be interpreted from a theological perspective in addition to the social, political and economic. The unjust structures of the city can be taken captive and manipulated by the forces of darkness according to Ephesians 6:10-18. Through the power of prayer, they can be overcome.

As the community of discipleship learns to intercede for healing from all kinds of social ills, this community will also learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in taking concrete actions. This may involve voicing a complain on behalf of those who are not able; making a petition for change in the unjust urban polity; helping someone with their medical bills; finding a job; feeding a hungry family or visiting a sick and lonely person. When the community or its members carry out such actions in Christ's name, it incarnates Christ in its witness (Matthew 25:31-46).

6.4   MODELS OF DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY

In recent years, several churches in the city of Nairobi have realised the significance of community in their church structure for pastoral and mission purposes, as well as to provide their members an opportunity to experience some degree of Christian fellowship beyond the normal Sunday gathering. The degree of community experience varies in accordance with the structure, theological understanding and purpose of the group. Some communities or small groups are highly regimented from the top down, and others are loosely organised under the auspices of the local church. Within that range, following three models of community praxis that aim to build Christian disciples in various ways have been identified:

    1) The Cell Group Church: The Nairobi Lighthouse Church is the prominent one.

2) Small Christian Communities—SCCs: These are common in most of the Roman Catholic Parishes in urban areas.

3) Small groups: Small groups are slowly gaining popularity among several Protestant churches. Mavuno Church of South B in Nairobi stands out well as the church of small groups.

6.4.1 The Cell Group Church

In the city of Nairobi several churches have recognised the importance of organising the church at basic community level, where the people have maximum opportunity for interaction, spiritual growth and mission outreach in the local community. Some of these churches have adopted a model of ministry known as the cell group church. Among these cell group-oriented churches, the Nairobi Lighthouse Church (NLC) has been the most prominent because of its strong emphasis on building its church structure around the praxis of the cell group model.[69] The term *cell* is borrowed from biology to illustrate the pattern of church growth after the manner of biological cells that grow, divide and multiply (Hurston 1977:11). The basic unit of the church is a *home cell unit*, a group of eight to fifteen families in the local neighbourhood led by an appointed cell leader. They come together for loving encouragement, pastoral care, studying God's Word, prayer, testimony and evangelism (:16-18). Yoido Full Gospel Church (formerly called Full Gospel Central Church) in Seoul, Korea is known for not only as the largest church[70] in the world but also as one of the impressive examples of a church that has build its structure on the home cell unit system (:11).

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[69] Most of the information related to the cell group church strategy and ministry has been collected from notes and personal interviews by the author since 2000 with one of the assistant pastors of the Nairobi Lighthouse Church, Rev. John Magangi. Some of the information is based on personal observation and interaction with various individual members of the Nairobi Lighthouse Church, as well as taken from the book "Caught in the Web" (1977) by Dr. John Hurston who worked closely with Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, the founding pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church of Seoul, South Korea.

[70] According to a Wikipedia report as of 2007, close to 830,000 people are current members of Yoido Full Gospel Church. http://en.wikipdedia.org.wiki/Yoido_Full_Gospel_Church 10 October 2007

According to Reverend John Magangi, one of the associate pastors of the Nairobi Lighthouse Church, the cell group church is structured according to the Jethro Principle taken from Exodus 18:13-26. Moses was advised by Jethro to share the burden of ministry by appointing leaders at various levels from the top down. Following the Jethro Principle, the cell group church structure has the form of a pyramid:

The senior pastor who is the top leader

District Pastors (over thousands)

Zone leaders (over hundreds)

Section leaders (over fifties)

Cell leaders (over tens)

The cell leader (male or female) is responsible for one cell group consisting of 3-15 (usually averaging ten) members. He/she provides pastoral care according to the needs of the members and is responsible to recruit an assistant cell leader. Within a year he is expected to recruit more cell members and to multiply to produce another cell. In order to reach this goal, he needs to organise and oversee an evangelistic outreach, more often because numerical growth is considered one of the intrinsic values of the cell group church (Hurston 1977:51).

Because of its emphasis on numerical growth, the cell group church is highly growth-oriented. This philosophy is expressed well in the words of John Magangi: "When God calls you to be a pastor, he calls you to raise disciples." In order to grow, the cell group church strategy focuses strongly on evangelism and discipleship. It encourages the members of the group to be involved in serving the community in order to win people's hearts to Christ. Through this grassroots evangelistic approach, the cell group church recruits new members. The Nairobi Lighthouse Church has grown from a handful of people to 6000 members at present within a decade. Most of its members are involved in their neighbourhood cell groups.

Most of the pastoral care is provided in the cell group. It is the responsibility of the cell group leader to care for each member in the group and the members are encouraged to care for one another. The main responsibility of the senior pastor is to preach and oversee the church through district pastors and assistant pastors under him. The other pastors' responsibility is to teach and train cell group leaders under them. The senior pastor seems to direct the entire church ministry through a chain of delegated leadership under him, all the way to cell group leaders.

According to John Magangi, the activity of the cell is structured around four main elements known as 4W's:

> Welcome: this involves fellowship and refreshment
>
> Worship: this entails praise and prayer
>
> Word: this activity calls for Bible study and sharing of testimonies
>
> Works: this includes an act of service, outreach in the community, missions

In the Nairobi Lighthouse Church, each cell group is regarded as a mini-congregation. On Sunday, all the cell group members and those who are not part of the cell group meet together for a corporate service of worship which follows the Pentecostal tradition in its liturgy and style. One of the unique characteristics of the NLC is that it is predominantly a youth congregation. They meet in a city stadium, close to the town centre, so it is accessible by public transportation.[71] The worship attracts a large number of youth from many parts of the city. The singing is very moving and emotional and consists of contemporary English and Swahili choruses. The acoustics is very high, like in youth musical concerts. Young people freely express their emotions—some dance and others jump as they wish. Most of the time, the senior pastor preaches the sermon. At the end of the message, a call is made for those who want to commit their lives to Christ. Those who come forward are prayed for in a short

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[71] Accessibility by public transportation is one of the key factors for any public meeting in urban contexts like Nairobi because most people do not own private means of transport.

prayer. Their names and addresses are recorded and given to the cell group leaders from their geographical location for pastoral care and visit.

Although the cell group church as a community provides a sense of close social fellowship, mutual accountability for spiritual growth and opportunity for service and missions in the local community to its members, it has some weaknesses that raise points of concern. It is highly structured and is well regulated from top to bottom to maintain a quality control within each cell group. In order to do that the senior pastor assumes much power and authority over the entire congregation. He determines the biblical text and interprets message for the week. Within the cell group, only the message from the Sunday sermon is allowed to be discussed. Usually there is very little freedom for critical reflection. In this manner, the members are subtly expected to conform to the vision and mission of the church set by the senior pastor and his appointed team.

According to John Magangi, the leadership of the NLC highly values consensus and unity. However, in praxis, the cell group model seems to be expecting uniformity in its striving to maintain "quality" and "standard", like many commercial franchises do. In this regard, the cell group church may facilitate meeting the belonging needs of its members effectively, but it could also regulate what one should believe and how to relate to God. In doing so it could stifle the voice of prophesy that usually does not conform to the pattern of an establishment but calls for repentance that the church may need to hear. In theology and praxis, when one person holds too much power and authority over the rest of congregation, it negates the theological concept of the body of Christ and mutual accountability. One of the grave concerns seems to be that a cell group church like the Nairobi Lighthouse Church is heavily dependent on the senior pastor for vision, direction and hearing the voice of God. Although the church functions as a community at grassroots level, each cell is strongly subjected to the influence of one leader. When the leader errs, it can affect the whole congregation. In contrast to the cell group church model, the early church as a community was not under the

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subjection of one leader who was solely responsible for the community's welfare, but was led by the group of leaders who were recognised for their gifts and calling and were mutually accountable to one another in accordance with Ephesians 4 (Guder 1998:186ff).

In the cell group model, the individual's commitment to Christian faith is often measured by his active involvement in cell group activities. Within the cell group, the members do seem to participate in serving one another because that helps in meeting each other's social needs. It is rewarding. However, in the NLC the cell group's involvement in the wider community is limited to serving social and charitable needs of neighbours. The cell groups usually stay away from being involved in addressing the issue of social justice in the society or raising a prophetic voice against structural sins like injustice and corruption in the city. As the leader of the church, the senior pastor has seldom confronted or spoken against social issues which may touch political and economic establishments of the city negatively. Its limited social involvement is simply a reflection of the Pentecostal understanding of mission, which is primarily understood as salvation of human souls in light of the imminent return of Christ (Kritzinger 1994:11). For that matter, the engagement of a cell group in community service is simply a means for evangelism and winning souls for Christ.

6.4.2   Small Christian Communities

Small Christian Communities (SCCs), which are also called Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), were started in Latin America in the 1950s as a grassroots movement in the Roman Catholic Church. These communities sprung up in response to oppressive economic and social conditions in several Latin American countries. They are Bible-based and focus on Gospel praxis related to the Theology of Liberation (Healy 2006:9).   The term *Basic Community* simply refers to a group small enough for members to interact intimately on the personal level. The word *base* or *basic* emphasises that it is at the grass roots or base of society and also the everyday realities of life and the basics of Christian living (:9). In East and Central Africa, where it is known as *Small Christian Communities (SCCs)*, the movement

was started in the 1970s. SCC is primarily associated with the concept of neighbourhood fellowship. Each community is a part of the main parish church. The parish is viewed as the community of communities. The following statement by Mugambi (2000:172-173) sums up their background and challenge:

> In many areas of Africa, the church prides itself these days on having a system of groupings of Christians of a small size. These are constituted on the basis of geographical locations, vocation, or professional interest. They go by different names, but the most common is Small Christian Communities (SCC's). Whatever name they go by they have common characteristics. Their purpose is to live out the Christian vocation in such a way that they can be witnesses of the presence of God's reign in their environments. It is in these groups that ecclesiological grounding should happen. But this cannot occur if they are deprived of the power to witness meaningfully. Empowerment is what they need most.

Why has SCC sprung up in the Roman Catholic Church in the African context? According to Lobinger (1981:3), in his book *Small Christian Communities,* the Church leaders came to realise that parish congregations were becoming quite large, and most members hardly knew each other. Many were becoming "Sunday Christians" only and were used to living as individuals and caring for themselves, mainly because most of the parish work was done by priests and associations (ibid). In addition to growing apathy among the lay people, the priests were overworked and hardly able to cope with the demands of their pastoral duties. In order to reverse these negative trends, the leadership of the Church decided to introduce the concept of Small Christian Communities. The concept has a strong theological foundation based on the communion model of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. God shares this fellowship with his creatures who are made in his image. It has to do with the sharing of life in communion with the Trinity (ibid).

SCC has two primary purposes: Prayer and Concern for others (:5). Prayer is the centre of SCC life. Prayer involves meditating on God's Word, which is called Gospel sharing. Before any concrete action is taken, the members devote much time in prayer and reflection on God's

Word. This praxis is based on the assumption that God speaks to his people today. It needs a prayerful, humble and careful search to discover his message for our situation of today. The Gospel sharing needs to relate to the concrete issues of life. Usually the Bible text is read and discussed in the group and is applied to individuals' lives or the community. Sometimes the communities analyse the local situation in great detail and turn to the Bible text for answers (:9). There is no set pattern. The main idea is to promote a deeper dialogue between the local situation and the Bible text with an expectation to be transformed by the power of the Gospel.

The following are some of the characteristics of the Small Christian Communities as taken from Lobinger (1981):

1. The community is started by a volunteer leader, not by an appointed leader as in the cell group model. There is no coercion of anyone to join the group. The leader of SCC also serves as a member of the parish council.

2. Each SCC is viewed as the local neighbourhood church, the place where the members live as the body of Christ.

3. Each SCC is expected to be involved in pastoral care, for instance by visiting the sick, caring for a needy family, counselling, preparing for sacraments, conducting funeral services, and others.

4. All the baptised members are welcomed into a community. It is an open community welcoming anyone who wishes to participate in Christian fellowship.

5. It is a bottom-up movement, beginning at grassroots level, not being imposed or controlled from above as in the cell group church.

6. The leadership is shared. Each member is encouraged to use his/her gifts in serving others.

7. All the SCCs are linked to the main parish through the Eucharist. It believes in Christian unity while allowing diversity at community level.

Although SCC has been heralded as a positive move forward in revitalising the Roman Catholic Church, it has faced several challenges on its way forward. One of the challenges SCC has been facing is that the group has a tendency to lose its missionary vision and to become a comfortable prayer group (Healy 2006:105). From observation and experience in the city of Dar-es-Salaam, Christopher Cieslikiewicz writes, "Social issues are still marginal in the life of the SCCs. There is an urgent need to stimulate social awareness in the growing situation of poverty and injustice" (:104). These problems seem to point out that, unless there is a strong leader in SCCs with a missionary vision, the group would gravitate towards inward fellowship. In the urban context, the need for relating with one another has been a high priority among people because of the alienating condition created by urbanisation. SCC has been seen as an answer to such a need.

The second issue most of the SCCs face is the minimum involvement of men in the life of SCCs. The SCCs do not adequately mirror the model of family when they are reduced to gatherings of women and children (:102).

The third issue is the challenge of bridging the gap between the have's and the have not's. According to Shorter's (1991:107) observation of the Nairobi context, it has been difficult to establish SCCs in the suburbs where the affluent people live, because suburban dwellers often insulate themselves from the rest of the city by creating their own home environment, "their garden of exclusive-zones." SCCs seem to be limited to the lower socio-economic strata of urban society, unlike the parish church.

Besides failing to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, Small Christian Communities have also failed to attract the youth in spite of its beginnings as an ecclesial movement at the grass-root level in African urban centres. In his recent report on SCCs in East Africa, Healy (2006:102) noted that only a small number of young people participate in the meetings of SCCs in East African cities where a large percentage of the population is young, being

between sixteen and twenty-five years old. The youth have their needs which are often not understood in the SCCs. They would prefer to have their own small communities where they can discuss and reflect on the issues that concern them (:98). The above problems seem to indicate that the Church will need to address some of the fundamental issues like whether to permit SCCs to become a specialised group. In so doing, the character of the community will change radically from the model of family to that of a small group based on common interest, age or even socio-economic class. This may imply that the Church would need to adapt the concept of SCCs from a mini-ecclesia in the local neighbourhood to that of a special group based on common age and interest.

6.4.3   The Church of Small Groups

The concept of a congregation with many small geographical groups as well as common interest groups (like choir, drama, prayer, social project) has been gaining popularity in recent years in many urban churches, especially where the congregation is large. In a large congregation, people often yearn for close fellowship. On Sundays, the worship service in a large congregation is often crowded and brief in order to conduct multiple services of worship during the day. People often feel like strangers in the big anonymous crowd rushing in and out with hardly a moment to greet anyone or to be greeted. As a result, most of the members of the congregation do not feel connected. In response to the social need of being connected, some churches in Nairobi have started to form small groups that meet in the neighbourhood of church members or in the city centre for working members. The primary purpose of the small group is to provide some sort of community experience through weekly fellowship. The other purpose may include pastoral care like counselling, providing opportunities for mutual care and hospitality, and an outlet for community service and missions. It is a compromise between the cell group church which is highly regulated from the top down and the Small Christian Communities which are bottom-up and led by a volunteer leader. The small groups allow wider flexibility in terms of the social make-up of the group based on a variety of

common affinities—gender, age, ethnicity and others. It assumes that a congregation as a community is made up of many small sub-communities—unity being celebrated in diversity.

Not many small groups meet together specifically with a commitment to discipleship, intentional formation of Christian character. Some small groups meet together mainly for prayer and Bible study in the context of fellowship, while other small groups meet together for community outreach. In some churches a small group leader is usually appointed by the church leadership team or pastor: while other churches may have volunteers from the group to lead according to his/her maturity and the interest of the group. There is no set pattern.

In most churches, small groups are added as peripheral to traditional structure of the church, in order to offer to those who wish for more fellowship with prayer and Bible study in addition to the Sunday gathering. In recent years, a few churches in Nairobi have intentionally begun to organise their structure and praxis around the small groups. Mavuno Church in Nairobi is a good example of such a local church.[72]

Mavuno Church describes itself as the church of small groups. The small groups provide the focus and the means of fulfilling its main ministry. The primary goal of the church is *to turn ordinary disciples into fearless productive influencers in society*.[73] The small group is perceived as the place to nurture such disciples who would impact the society. The small group is structure around three A's:

> **A**ssociation: This involves fellowship, caring for one another, encouraging one another, and building up one another.
>
> **A**ccountability: This involves helping one another to live a holy life pleasing to God.

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[72] Mavuno Church is a young church started four years ago among the young urban middle income professionals. It is associated with Nairobi Chapel Group, a group of interdenominational churches. It has roots in evangelical Baptist tradition. Much of the information concerning its small group ministry was collected by the author through a personal interview with one of the church leaders on 28 October 2007.

[73] This is the slogan or motto of the church, its mission statement.

Application: This involves putting into practice what the members learn from the sermon or message they hear in the Sunday worship service.

Application is strongly stressed and is reflected in its mission statement. The leadership of the church strongly feels that most Christians are overfed with Bible knowledge with very little application. Therefore, Bible study is not conducted in the small group. The members discuss and reflect on the text of the sermon and find ways to apply it in their daily lives. They are encouraged to become doers of the Word as well as hearers.

The current attendance on Sunday worship service is over 400 people. Nearly 60 percent are involved in small groups. Currently there are 30 small groups with sizes varying from six to twelve people. Most of the small groups meet in homes of the members in different neighbourhoods. Four small groups are non-geographical. They meet together as a group each week on Sunday at the place where the worship service is conducted.

One of the strengths of the small group structure at Mavuno Church appears to be its emphasis on integrating God's Word into the lives of the members through interaction and accountability in the context of loving fellowship and directing their focus outwards to have an impact on the society through social action and proclamation of the gospel.

Because of its strong emphasis on action, the worship aspect of discipleship appears to be given lesser priority, while it is so central in the life of Small Christian Communities. In praxis, the worship dimension is overshadowed by its doing dimension of discipleship. Worship is not even stated in the three A's of group life. According to Bevans and Schroeder (2004:362), prayer and liturgy ought to be the centre of Christian life while keeping our eyes on the periphery of the church. This tension must be maintained for the liturgy and prayer to remain missionary in dimension.

In regard to youth, Mavuno Church has not given high priority on reaching them. At present, close to 30 or 40 young people attend the church on Sundays, but there is only one small group operating among the youth. It is a matter of great concern that so few young people are actively involved in the life of the church, especially in small groups. The majority of the congregation (70%) consists of young families with little children. It seems that the church is more concerned with children at this phase of life because of the demands and expectation of the young families to care for them. The youth are not the main concern for the church at this time.

SUMMARY: In this section, three models of community oriented structure and praxis—the cell group church, Small Christian Communities and the small groups--in different churches have been discussed, analysed and evaluated according to the three-dimensional framework of discipleship in the context of the city of Nairobi. The weaknesses and strengths of each model have been critically noted. In the cell group church model a strong leader with a vision and commitment is required to keep the cell groups together and to keep them going. The major weakness in that model is that the structure is too dependent on the ability of one leader. When the leader falls or moves away, the structure could collapse or lose its viability. Because of the high expectation of conformity to the ideology of the church, the cell group would be less likely to appeal to young people who may think critically or differ in their thoughts and opinions. The cell group church tends to nurture conformity to the group's ideology.

Small Christian Communities as neighbourhood mini-parishes have been proven to be an effective structure for providing pastoral care and concern for parish members. However, they have not been able to attract the youth in their communities. Young people normally like to meet at the level of peers. They do not easily mix with people of different age groups, like children or older adults. They feel that their interests and issues of life often differ from other age groups. The Church is reluctant to start separate SCCs for youth on theological grounds.

The Roman Catholic Church views the church metaphorically as family. So there should be no division within. However, the reality of the urban context is at odds with the theological assumption of SCC as mini-church. Until this matter is resolved, it is unlikely that the youth would join the SCCs.

The small group model as community is noted in Mavuno Church. As the church of small groups it seems to have a strong emphasis on missionary intention but it is weak in the dimension of worship as discipleship community. However, this can be corrected. It has a potential for building its discipleship ministry on a community structure among the urban youth when it gives its youth ministry a high priority.

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In comparison to other two models, the small group model allows much flexibility to urban youth ministry to form a discipleship community as part of the congregation, since it is not tightly controlled from above as in the cell groups, nor it is hindered by the ecclesiastical understanding of the small group as mini-congregation as in Small Christian Communities. In the next section the study proposes a model called the Covenant Model, with some guiding principles and practical steps for the formation of discipleship communities among the youth in an urban context.

6.4.4   The Covenant Model

In view of the strengths and weaknesses of the three models that have been discussed above, the study proposes a model called the *Covenant Model*. It is similar to the small group model, but its main emphasis is on the covenant that binds the members together as community specifically for the purpose of discipleship that intentionally focuses on building Christian character within the three-dimensional framework of mission as stated in the thesis.

The idea of the covenant goes back to the Hebrew word *berit* and to its Greek equivalent *diatheke*, used in the Septuagint. In the Christian tradition the Greek word *diatheke* also

introduced the use of the word *testament,* which is applied in the division of the canon into an *Old* and a *New* Testament (La Coste 2005:371). The concept of covenant is one of the central theological themes running through the Bible (ibid). A covenant defines a relationship between God and his people "by privileged relations that men establish with each other by contract" (ibid). This relationship is often signified with a symbolic object or a ritual that describes the covenant. For instance, the circumcision of a Hebrew male was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:10-11). Law, especially the rules that govern the relationship, is also a part of the concept of covenant (La Coste:371). In the Bible, various kinds of covenants between God and human beings are mentioned that depict the story of salvation (ibid). The covenant could be made between individuals, small groups, or large political entities like nations. Contracts could be concluded between peers or between partners of unequal power. The stipulated obligations might be reciprocal or unilateral (ibid).

Because the concept of covenant is deeply rooted in the Bible and Christian theology, it would be useful to develop a discipleship community model that is guided by it. The covenant would define the community's identity and purpose as a discipleship community rooted in the three-dimensional integrated framework of missional discipleship. It would seek to correlate these dimensions with cultural and urban realities in order to contextualise the community structure and praxis in each specific urban context. In so doing, it would permit greater flexibility and freedom to adapt to various urban contexts while being a part of the local church. The covenant model should not be viewed as an independent group or a mini-church like SCC, or even a house church. The covenant group is a part of the church, the local body of Christ. Members come together as a small group consisting of youth, like many other small groups in the church, specifically for the purpose of discipleship. The covenant model allows each small group to operate as a community on the basis of common age and gender, while remaining committed and subjected to the wider body of Christ, the local church. While remaining united with the church, it expresses its diversity in the form of a variety of small covenant communities where discipleship formation takes place.

The covenant model is meant to allow a youth ministry to function as community with creativity and faithfulness to the gospel while responding to the challenges of urban realities. But on the cautionary side, there is a human tendency for any community to become an exclusive group. In order to prevent that, the church must not create or encourage any community that excludes others on the basis of race, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, nationality, language, socio-economic status and others. The question of gender—whether the group should be an exclusively men's group or a women's group—needs to be decided by the church and the youth in sensitivity to the cultural context. In some cultures, it is not advisable for single men and women to come together as community where intimacy and accountability is fostered. In the church gathering it is permissible because it is a public event open to all. However, it would be a very sensitive matter for the youth of both genders to meet in homes as small groups for a deeper relationship in the East African Christian community. The age factor is understandable. The youth ministry by definition is a ministry based on the factor of age. Within the youth ministry there already are divisions according to age: teenagers, younger youth and older youth. This is not an issue of discrimination in the church, but a normative practice. Each church divides its youth in different ways according to common age brackets in order to minister to them most effectively.

In the covenant model, the members are joined together as a community for a common religious goal or purpose, but not to live together as in a communal model like a monastery (Smith 1994:90). The members come together more often, sharing their resources in a limited way. The level of social intimacy may be less than the communal type; however, this model allows individuals freedom, while remaining attached to the community. The early church community reflected a covenant model. They shared a common religious goal and purpose (covenant) established by its founder. The community existed primarily on the basis of the common faith in Jesus Christ while respecting the cultural diversity of its members. The church of Antioch was a good example. It existed as a community of faith with members from diverse backgrounds in the urban context of its time. The shared covenant (common

faith) held them together as a community. In an urban context like Nairobi, where the church is so diverse, this model of community based on a covenant has the potential to satisfy the social and cultural needs of young people, while building them as disciples of Jesus Christ in order to fulfil the missional purpose of God. Covenant communities of youth can function within the context of the church. However, it needs to be guided by the following principles:

1. Covenant: The covenant is a personal commitment that members make to a fellowship or a group to pursue the common goal of becoming a disciple of Christ (Smith 1994:90). The covenant binds the members of the group together as a community with a common purpose. The sense of belonging and sharing of common beliefs grow together (:104). Belonging takes a form of personal commitment to the community while sharing in the common purpose. It is not uncommon among many fellowship groups that might promote social intimacy but might not pursue Christian discipleship as their primary goal (:108). Therefore, a covenant provides a clear purpose or a mission for the existence of the community; otherwise the community becomes a social gathering to meet the need for intimacy. In this respect, this study emphasises a commitment to the covenant that integrates three dimensions of discipleship— believing, belonging, and exchanging—in a particular cultural and urban context for the formation of the youth's identity and character as disciples of Christ. In so doing, the community fulfils its missional purpose by giving and receiving from others while meeting the social and spiritual needs of its members.

2. Authority: For any covenant community to function effectively and harmoniously it is imperative that it has a clearly defined structure of authority to guide and manage the group. When people with diverse opinions and interests come together in intimate relationship, conflict is imminent. Therefore, there must be authority to decide matters in the interest of the group. It is important that the authority must be trustworthy, whether it is autocratic or democratic (Smith 1994:128). In the covenant community, leaders or decision makers are fellow companions. They must abide by the goals of the covenant, which is Christian

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discipleship. When decision makers violate the trust, the authority can be taken away from them (:129). The goal of the covenant always precedes submission to the authority (ibid). In other words, the community is guided by the goal of the covenant informed by the Bible more than by the charisma of the leader.

3. Submission: For the discipleship community to function in an orderly manner, it is expected of the members to submit to the authority of the community. For the youth group to operate as community under the authority of the church, it should be supervised by a youth pastor or other appointed leaders. However, it must follow certain principles so that it does not become a cultic group led by an autocratic leader. In order to safeguard the community from abuses, the group should take into consideration the following seven principles adopted from Smith (1994:111):

1. The group members should promote the attitude of interdependency among themselves rather than build their dependency upon a leader.

2. The group should follow a democratic procedure or consensus approach when making an important decision.

3. The Covenant principle must be the guiding principle.

4. Individual autonomy is respected, not coercive.

5. Submission should be perceived as freedom from the enslavement of self-deception, self-righteousness and self-indulgence. Each one is accountable to the group for the goal of Christian discipleship.

6. Submission involves acknowledgement of individual identity with the group identity.

7. There must be a commitment to strengthen the group identity and solidarity by participating in and abiding by the decision-making structures and rules.

4. Boundaries: For any community to define its identity, it must have clear boundaries. The boundaries inform what is excluded and what is included. They are communicated both

explicitly and implicitly, formally and informally. The following four principles are important to bear in mind for any youth group that wishes to become a covenant discipleship community (Smith 1994:118):

1. The group should remain within the authority and context of the mission of the local church by submitting to the elders to oversee its plans and activities.

2. Membership is "the most important boundary marker" (ibid). The goal, criteria, expectations, time, resources, way of life and commitments should be clearly stated.

3. Inclusion of non-members can potentially bring discomfort to intimacy among the group members. They might feel second-class in status in the group. However, they are potential partners. They should be welcomed like the members of extended family in a metaphorical sense and encouraged to join the group.

4. The boundaries should not be used for judging anyone's spiritual character.

The four major principles or guidelines as stated above are essential for the formation of the community to function as the covenant model. It is important for the church youth ministry to define the goal or purpose of the covenant clearly and specifically in relation to its specific context. The covenant is the most important guiding principle that makes the community into a *discipleship* community; otherwise it can degenerate into a fellowship group. The specific goals need to be set within the broad framework of God's mission for the church. As a missional discipleship community, its structure must be guided by the three dimensions of God's mission as stated in the thesis. The following practical steps are suggested to incorporate the three dimensions into the covenant community.

WORSHIP: This is the heart of the covenanted discipleship community. It would be evident in the expressed commitment of members with a deep desire to know and experience the triune God through corporate worship. Through worship, people often experience a deeper bond of *koinonia* in Christ as they realise the centrality of faith in Christ that binds them together. As the community worship together, they become aware of the presence of the

Spirit of Christ in their midst (Matthew 18:20). Two primary activities—prayer and hearing of God's Word—must always follow in a variety of forms and expressions relevant to the cultural context. In other words, a group should have freedom and creativity to worship God through prayer in many ways. Prayer should include singing of hymns and choruses of praise with music, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, fasting, meditation and other means (Psalms 149-150, Ephesians 5:19-20). Whatever the appropriate ways the community may find to express their prayers to God, it should be aware of the fact that prayer should not become a dull monotonous spiritual exercise. In the group, prayer is an active form of communion with God, an act of experiencing community with the Divine.

When the community prays and experiences the presence of God, it opens the Bible with an expectation to hear from God. Just as there are many ways to pray, the community can hear the voice of God in the Bible in many creative ways as well. The voice of God can be heard through contemplative reading, studying, discussing, listening to a message or testimony, or through other artistic forms like drama and life stories. A truly worshipping community would provide an encouraging and motivating environment for youth to seek God and his will for their lives as they experience and understand the love of God in Christ Jesus. This love of God becomes the basis for loving others and for engaging in the broader society as witnesses to Christ and his kingdom (Kritzinger 1994:38).

FELLOWSHIP: This dimension shares a common life in Christ, edifying and building up of one another in mutual love and care. While grounding in the love of Christ, the members of the community seek to meet one another's social needs. In covenanted community, the members *intentionally* commit themselves to meet each other's need and hold each other accountable. This is one of the key elements of community discipleship that brings to realisation a true transformation of character in the lives of members. In this study, it has been stated emphatically that mere Bible knowledge does not change lives but lives are changed through social interaction guided by biblical truth. With that assumption, the goal of

the fellowship is more than meeting members' social needs. Its primary intention is character transformation. The aim of the covenant relation is to create an environment conducive to the formation of Christian character in the context of community life. Members of the community clearly understand that each person is responsible for the other's growth in character. Their wellbeing depends on each other. As a result, the focus on self is minimised and the focus on others is encouraged. Mutual accountability based on covenant is viewed as the key for the community to function as discipleship community; in the absence of accountability the group would slide back into a cosy social gathering. The community must be aware of this danger. Therefore, it is recommended that the community must evaluate itself periodically in light of its covenant.

3) MISSIONARY INTENTION: This dimension intentionally engages the group as being, doing and saying witness in dialogue with the society and world in all spheres of life. Although most small groups in the churches in principle agree theologically to the importance of being a witness to Christ in the world, many shy away from being a bold witness in deeds, especially in the realm of addressing the issues of social injustice in the society as well as within the church. Some groups limit their missionary involvement to some charitable efforts among economically disadvantaged people. Unless a group intentionally agree in their covenant to be involved in God's mission of social justice and proclamation of the gospel that goes beyond mere charity, it is doubtful that any community would sustain its missionary involvement in the broader society, because this may involve some risk and possible opposition. As His witnesses, Jesus calls Christians to suffering as they encounter evil in this world. On that note Newbigin (1995:107-108) writes:

> This suffering is not the passive acceptance of evil; it is the primary form of witness against it. It is the way in which we follow Jesus along the way of the cross. Jesus challenged the power of evil consistently to the end. At the end, when the limit was reached, he surrendered, not to the power of evil, but into the hands of the Father. The final surrender is not the defeat but victory…The church is enabled by the presence of the Spirit to share in that victory as it gives itself continually to be offered up in and through the Son to the Father. In this life the church is enabled to share in the victorious passion of the triune God.

According to Newbigin, the community has to accept the fact that the power of evil exerts influence in the society. Christ consistently challenged those forces and eventually overcame them through his death and resurrection. He sent out his disciples to do the same. Even today he expects the same from his disciples. He does not expect his disciples to wage a war on the evil power, structures and authorities on their own, but through his power (ibid). The church is made victorious, "[t]heir sufferings can be a participation in the victory of the Lamb" (ibid).

With such confidence in the resurrected victory of Christ, the community of discipleship is called to engage itself in the mission of God in the world. It proclaims Christ as saviour and challenges the evil forces and structures in society. In the context of Nairobi, the various ways in which the youth have been oppressed by the economic, political and religious systems of urban society were discussed in Chapter Two. The covenant discipleship community could become the voice of concern for the poor and helpless youth. First, it could challenge the oppressive structures in the church community by creating awareness through dialogue with the leadership in the attitude of respect and good will. In most cases, the leadership is ignorant of the youth's present predicament. Many are blind to the problems of young people. It will take time and patience on the part of the youth to see the fruit of their effort. Their aim should not be to pose a challenge to the leadership openly, but to win their confidence in the spirit of love and humility for the sake of unity. It is more likely for a group with a strong Christian character than a few lonely voices to be heard in the church.

Outside the church, the community bears witness to Christ by engaging in various youth-related issues in the broader society. Many youth are lonely. They are looking for positive role models. The discipleship community can reach out by inviting them into their group, by listening to them and by demonstrating the transforming power of Christ simply through sharing the authentic Christian life with no pretence. Many young people are not impressed by false spirituality as expressed by many Christians who pretend that they have no real problem with sin and temptation, as if their lives are clean because they do not have bad

habits. The youth are looking for authentic Christians who can identify with their problems and demonstrate to them how they are learning to overcome the challenges of life through the grace and power of the risen Christ. Such Christians should be like lost pilgrims who are guided by Christ in their journey and are inviting other youth to join them in this pilgrimage. The members of a covenant community would do well in their witness if they maintained their perspective as fellow pilgrims who would like to share their journey of faith with other youth in humility and love. With such an attitude of humility and compassion, they will find openness to the gospel among the urban youth.

In their engagement with the forces of evil in society, the discipleship community has much to offer. With confidence and faith in the resurrected Christ, they can help youth by exposing the lies and deception that often trap many young people into servitude. In many places youth are discriminated against in housing. Because of their ignorance of their rights, many youth are forced to pay higher rent or to move out of housing. In some situations, employers cheat them and do not pay their fair salary. Sometimes they are not paid for weeks or months causing them great financial hardship. In all such instances, the Christian discipleship group could become their voice and seek justice. The discipleship community could be a great help in fighting for social justice at grass-roots level. It is at the micro level that many young people can be helped most effectively in the ordinary activity of daily life. At this level, people often are found to be thirsty and hungry and in need a glass of water or bread (Matthew 25:31-46). Members of the Christian community who, as disciples of Christ, have learned to perceive the need around them, will find many such opportunities to satisfy the hunger and thirst of others in Christ's name. In that way they can be the salt and the light in the world.

In summary, the study proposes that the churches in Nairobi, within their institutional structure, allow and encourage the youth to form their own community as a small group based on the covenant model guided by the four principles—Covenant, Authority, Submission, and

Boundary. The goal of discipleship should be clearly spelled out within the guiding framework of *connecting with God*, *connecting with one another* and *connecting with the world*. Each community needs to adapt to and address its unique social and urban context. This calls for much creativity and commitment on behalf of the leadership of the church and the youth group, to go forward in order to become a missional discipleship community. While pursuing this goal, one must be aware of the fact that communities in the urban setting are dynamic in nature. They may change as the context changes. Nothing can be set in concrete. In the next section, the study examines a case study of a real-life discipleship community that exemplifies some of the aspects of the covenant model.

6.4.5   A case study

In Chapter One the study proposed community-based discipleship among the urban youth in response to the problem of many church youth ministries which do not seem to address social needs of belonging in its praxis. In light of that proposal, this study planned to do a case study of an urban youth group that seemed to be committed to discipleship by following a community-like approach. The aim of the case study was to learn how a discipleship group functions as a community in an urban context. What are the challenges to forming a community of disciples in urban context? In what way does it differ from many of the youth groups in the urban church? Does it meet the social need of belonging while it shapes the lives of youth to grow in conformity to gospel values? How does it engage the broader community in its mission of prophetic dialogue? Finally, how can the case study contribute additional insights to the proposed covenant model for forming a discipleship community in the urban context?

With these questions in mind, the author selected one of the youth discipleship groups in Nairobi that operated like a community.[74] This group consisted of ten young men between the ages of 20 and 30. It was an exclusively men's group. Most of them have completed university degrees and have been employed in different professions. A few were still pursuing their studies. None of them were married yet, but one was in the process of getting married soon. The group was led by the youth pastor named Reverend Mulandi, of a large urban church of more than 3000 members.[75] The group identified itself by the Swahili name *Jeshi la Mzee* (equivalent term for Lord's army) or *JLM* for short. JLM as a group has been in existence for over ten years. The group came together twice a month in the home of Mulandi, on Fridays from eight p.m. to beyond midnight.[76]

The author joined the group as an active participant for seven months, from December 2005 to July 2006.[77] While observing through participation, the author also collected data through interviewing some of the members of the group, to understand their perception of their involvement in the group (Babbie 2001:280). During the seven months, the author was able to attend eleven of the meetings.

Based on those observations, the following general pattern was noted. On Friday most men started to arrive at Mulandi's house after eight p.m. in the evening. Between eight and ten p.m. they visit with each other. Around ten p.m. Mulandi would call all of the men to assemble in the living room for discussion centred on the Bible, which lasted until 11:30, and then spent ten or fifteen minutes in prayer for various issues. After that, the group members ate a meal together and enjoyed the fellowship until 1 or 2 a.m. Since most of them did not

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[74] It is rare to find a youth discipleship group in Nairobi churches that has a community character. This group attracted the author's attention in the year 2001 (see "the background" section in Chapter One for further details).

[75] Mulandi's wife leads a discipleship group of fifteen young women separately on a different day.

[76] Mulandi lives with his wife Levina and two sons (ages eight and ten) in a high density housing estate in a modest house, a kilometre away from one of the largest slums in Africa called Kibera.

[77] The author requested to be allowed to join the group and explicitly communicated to them the nature of the research. On gaining the approval of group members, the leader allowed the author to become part of the group. They warmly welcomed him.

have their own transportation, they slept at Mulandi's home and left in the morning to attend to their business. Once a year they plan a camping trip for a few days for fun and fellowship.

Although it could mean inconvenience to his family, Mulandi has intentionally chosen to meet at his home. The home environment creates a feeling of family. It does not have the feeling of attending a youth ministry meeting. These men feel that they are a part of the family. Mulandi's home is open for young people to come in any time. In interviews, most of them expressed that they feel at home when they come to Mulandi's house. A home symbolises a place of warmth and belonging. The believers in the early church experienced a community with intimacy when they met in people's homes in urban centres. Then they ate meals together in symbolic oneness with each other in Christian faith.[78] In JLM group a similar practiced was observed.

After the Bible discussion and prayer, the meal was taken together with joy and thanksgiving because the food was often nice and people were hungry at late hours. Culturally it is an appropriate African custom to share and eat meals together, especially in a home where people feel welcome and appreciated. In the JLM, the ritual of eating a meal together was perceived as significant community building event. It builds relationship when people talk and share their joys and burdens with one another during the meal. After the meal, members took turns to share the responsibility of cleaning and washing the dishes. Each member was given some responsibility, from internal communication, finances, cooking, cleaning to sleeping arrangements. Everyone participated in community life in various ways.

Meeting from nine till beyond midnight every other Friday may seem an odd time for meeting as a group. It was a response to specific contextual problem faced by the group members. During the day, these men had jobs or classes to attend. This particular time was a

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[78] The early church was not an ideal community. Abuses concerning the sharing of meals were reported in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22.

compromise in order to adapt to everyone's schedule. It allowed the group to come together

with enough time for social interaction and spiritual nurturing of their Christian faith. In most

youth ministry, youth are asked to fit their schedule around the time set by the church rather

than around the time most conducive for young people to attend.   In order to build a

community, the group needs to structure ample and unhurried time for informal interaction.

Because relationship is a high priority in JLM, they were willing to meet late at night.

Although all the men were members of the same congregation, including their leader, the

youth pastor of the church, the relationship of the group with the church was not clearly

defined. The JLM group operates on the margin of the church life because the church youth

ministry operates according to traditional pattern guided by the clerical paradigm. Much of

the church's youth ministry is programme driven. The concept of building a youth ministry

as a community-based discipleship was not well understood by the leadership of the church.

However, since Mulandi was a youth pastor of the church, the leadership allowed him to

develop young disciples in an unconventional way of his own accord.[79] In fact, all the young

men in Mulandi's group actively participated in church life.   On Sundays they provide

leadership in the youth ministry by leading small group Bible study among the church youth.

In that case the congregation is benefiting from the JLM group. Similarly, young women

from Levina's group were also actively involved in church life and had been providing

leadership to young women in the youth ministry as Bible-study group leaders and

counsellors. By being members of JLM, they have grown in both spiritual and leadership

maturity, which they have demonstrated by their commitment in serving the church.

In the context of JLM community life, the reading and discussion of the Bible has been given

a very high priority. The leader allows free participation and difference of opinion among the

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[79] The question often has been asked why Mulandi as a youth pastor directs the youth program
according to the traditional pattern while he leads the discipleship on community approach. The
leadership of the church expects him to conduct the youth ministry because the church operated on the
clergy paradigm. In JLM he has freedom to structure the group as community because JLM is not
officially accepted by the church as the ministry of the church although they are benefiting from it.

group members. Critical thinking is encouraged. The group members feel safe to express their doubts and personal struggle in the discussion. This indicates that they have learned to trust one another and have gained confidence among the group members to be open and admit their weaknesses and to learn how to overcome them. While discussing the Biblical text, they have from time to time shown repentance and commitment to change their attitude of self-gratification against the biblical teachings. In that sense, the Bible knowledge that they gained has been processed through group interaction and has been applied to change their thinking and behaviour. This affirms the fact that transformation usually takes place in the context of social relationship. In that respect, the believing dimension of discipleship has often been integrated in the context of the belonging dimension in the JLM community.

From the missiological perspective, however, the group has demonstrated little interest in social engagement with the issues of the broader society. Their involvement in mission as prophetic dialogue has been very limited. The members find the group very helpful in meeting their social needs in the environment of mutual love and accountability. Most of the Bible text and discussion have been directed to their social and emotional needs. For example, questions about how one can overcome temptation in life, how one can develop better spiritual discipline, how one can deal with conflict with others were normally addressed. Issues of social justice, urban poverty, crime, violence and diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria have seldom been discussed. The reason could be found in theological understanding of the gospel and mission of the church. Their attitude towards the issues of the world and society is a reflection of the attitude of many churches in Kenya. Because of the dualistic approach to Christian faith by which the spiritual dimension is separated from social concerns the church has not been in the forefront of social change.[80] According to the author's experience, even youth groups among lower socio-economic strata seldom discuss the social

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[80] This tendency is clearly evident among most of the churches affiliated with Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism (Kinoti 2001:35). According to George Kinoti (1994:9), "It is rare to find committed Christians among those fighting for economic, political and social justice."

issues of urbanisation, like poverty, health, political and economic justice and controversial topics. A tendency to spiritualise those negative social issues as the work of demonic forces often hinders from addressing problems through seeking structural and institutional change. Spiritual explanations of the problems often seem to make sense in the context of traditional African view of reality which, for example, often sees spirits as the cause of disease or social problems.

In an interview with some of the members of the group, the author asked how they were recruited into the group. According to Joshua, members are recruited by invitation. A year previously Joshua had been very ill, experiencing a lot of stress and pain on losing a friend. While he was depressed, he came to see Mulandi for prayer and counselling. Mulandi invited him to JLM. He attended the group and liked being a part of it. There was no pressure on anyone to join the group. After the first two or three visits a person decides to commit himself to join the group. Usually they communicate their intention informally to Mulandi. There is no formal rite or initiation to join the group. The group does have a covenant. It is communicated informally over time. From observation and interviews it appears that the JLM tends to be as an exclusive group. Members are selectively recruited by invitation, which means that an individual who does not know a member of the group cannot join the group. At the same time, anyone who wishes to join the group is welcome, as long as he agrees to the rules and expectations of the group.

Mulandi does not place any condition or communicate expectations explicitly to new members at the beginning. The group has four core values (as covenant) that are important to JLM as discipleship group:

1. The centrality of the Word of God. The teaching from the Bible is always done in the group through interaction.

2. Meeting with Mulandi is considered a high priority. He often meets with the members and spends time with them. The assumption behind this meeting is that

principles of discipleship are communicated through personal interaction rather than formal cognitive dimensional teaching.

3. It is important for every group member to spend time in prayer, Bible reading and living a holy life in order to nurture personal spiritual growth. Accountability is an important factor in building spiritual discipline.

4. It is expected that each member spends time mentoring other Christian men[81] outside the group. In that way what they learn in the group could be passed on to others. It is meant to help them grow as leaders.

These core values or covenant act as a boundary marker for the group identity. Those who do not abide by these expectations would normally stop coming. Mulandi would check with them about their intention for not coming. There is no clear rule for leaving the group. A person may move out of the group because of marriage or moving to a different location or for other reasons.

The author asked several of the group members why they chose to join this group. All of them said that Mulandi showed personal love and care. The relationship was the primary factor that brought individuals into the group. One person said that he felt "a sense of belonging", like being at home in JLM. The second reason was that the group was composed of men in a similar age group. It was an exclusively men's group. This allowed the members to discuss personal issues and problems more freely and openly. The third reason was that the group addressed the issues that are relevant to their lives. For instance, the group members have been taught valuable lessons on dating and marriage. Mulandi and Levina often share their struggles in marriage life with them openly and honestly. They are good role models to them. The fourth reason for joining the group was that group members have been very caring to one another. They have experienced a deeper level of friendship in the group as members who

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[81] The group understands discipleship as building character in the context of intimate relationship. On the basis on such an understanding, as well as cultural sensitivity, it advocates the policy of men and women to form their own separate groups.

spend time together. In the group they have learned from each other how to live as a disciple of Christ and they have enjoyed close camaraderie with other men in the process. When they needed help, they knew whom to call. One member said that the group members were like "brothers" to him. He knew who to go for advice. It was very rewarding for him to be part of the group. It was interesting to note that they seldom mentioned programmes, or Bible-study guide books or other set of activities. One thing that became very clear was that people joined the group primarily in response to meeting their relational needs, their need to belong. Their desire to become a growing disciple of Christ was nurtured and developed in the context of loving fellowship and relationship. In many church youth groups, young people too often are admonished to follow Christ through inspiring preaching and teaching, with very little evidence of character transformation. JLM affirms the fact that disciples are made better in the context of human relationships. The early church demonstrated this praxis of building disciples in its community life.

In summary, JLM as a group has striven to be a discipleship community in an urban context in terms of integrating the dimensions of believing and belonging praxes. It has demonstrated that the need to belong is best met in the context of community experience. Meeting the need to belong creates an environment for learning and meaningful application of the truth of God's Word. In its engagement with the world and society, however, JLM has shown little evidence of missionary intention in its prophetic dialogue of witness and proclamation. It is because of the particular theological view of God's mission as the saving of souls for the next life that does not take into consideration the salvation of the human society. Hence, the meeting of personal relational need of individuals in the group would be expected to take a greater priority.[82]

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[82] Wuthnow (1994:347-49), speaking from American context, argues that people join the small group in order to develop and validate their individual faith through mutual support and encouragement. However, this might not be true in an African context. African people are relational people by nature. They may join the group primarily for meeting their social need to belong.

In many ways, JLM is far from being an ideal example of a discipleship community, nor does it represent a good example of the covenant model. However, it has attempted to follow the praxis of discipleship as a community among youth that is not understood well in most of the churches. Although its theology of mission lacks engagement with social issues of urbanisation, it has contributed some understanding towards the praxis of discipleship as character transformation through a community approach. However, as a discipleship community it needs to develop a theology of mission that encourages the praxis of giving and receiving in its engagement with the social issues of urbanisation. This will bring balance to the focus of the group "to encounter God at the center" while participating "in God's life at the boundaries" (Bevans 2004:362). God's mission is not only to transform individuals' lives but also to transform the world through his people. When JLM understands God's mission in this way, it will be a missional discipleship community.

6.5   FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The urban context is very diverse and complex. The church cannot simply duplicate one structure, like the cell groups, without critically evaluating various elements of each particular context. Each church will need to adapt its community structure to its context on the basis of location, socio-economic status, educational level, rural-urban orientation, theological orientation and denominational tradition. This calls for greater sensitivity and creativity. In response to the complexity, this missiological study has focused on how community-based discipleship among youth can be formed amidst the process and context of urbanisation. Secondly, it has contributed to research on the problems of discipleship—witness and proclamation—against the background of the clerical paradigm (Dingemans 1995:84). It has shown that the paradigm impacts negatively on the relationship between the maintenance mode of local church or congregation and emerging communities of discipleships, including those of the youth. Hence, this study is broadly informed by and contributes to Bosch's emerging ecumenical (post-modern) paradigm, particularly with regard to "Mission as ministry by the whole people of God" (Bosch 1991:467-474). Consequently Chapter One set

the problem in the context of Western "Christianity" and "the clerical paradigm". It has been discovered that most churches in Nairobi understand mission primarily as addressing the needs of individual souls (spiritual needs). Hence, a lack of the social dimension in the church's praxis has created a negative response among the urban youth who increasingly perceive the church as irrelevant to their lives. The youth often find themselves at the margin of church life and do not feel a sense of belonging in the church as the community of faith. In response to the emerging crisis, the study calls the church to approach its youth ministry through creating a community-like structure that fosters discipleship by integrating three key dimensions of mission that involve 1) worship, 2) mutual love and care, and 3) engagement with broader community. The empirical findings indicate that young people have a positive disposition toward community values. In traditional African culture, community is regarded as the heartbeat of cultural life. The community was prominent, both in theology and praxis in the life of the early Christian church of pre-Constantine era.

In light of the research findings, the characteristics, the process, and the impact of the present paradigm on African churches needs to be investigated continually in various contexts. Chapter Two has described and analysed urbanisation as the specific social context of the study. It has been pointed out in connection with the impact of urban growth on poverty among youth. The discussion has shown how poverty fosters social alienation, inhuman living conditions, crime, violence, diseases and more. This contextual situation needs further research from the missiological perspective.

Chapter Three has focused on the African cultural dimension. It assumes that "the clerical paradigm" has its own unique manifestation in African Christianity. It introduced the kind of Christianity based on Western thoughts and a cultural pattern that separated new converts from their traditional cultural pattern and expression (Mbiti 1990:231). The tension between this paradigm and the communal dimensions in communities and churches persists. Hence, it cannot be assumed that culturally the church will find it easier to develop its youth ministry

based on community approach. The fact that the concept of community is already imbedded in African mental frame does not guarantee that.[83] In fact, the chapter has highlighted some of the communal dimensions of the African "worldview", *the specific cultural-religious context* of the study, within which to deal with the problems and challenges. For instance, in the African cultural framework, separation between spiritual and social dimensions is inconceivable. They are deeply interrelated. Religion permeates in all forms and expressions of cultural life. This poses a challenge to the church to examine its present praxis and find ways to integrate faith with the social realities of urban life. This calls for more research on promoting ways to integrate Christian thought and values with the social and cultural sphere of human life, especially in the complex urban situation.

In view of the descriptions of the social and cultural context, Chapter Four developed the normative interpretative (hermeneutical) dimension by drawing selectively from biblical sources on community. Although the intention was not to deal extensively with the contextual and cultural aspects of the texts but broad themes, critical perspectives emerged. For instance, the images and metaphors used in the New Testament to describe the church were highly reflective of community in nature and content. Even the social relationships and individual ethical behaviours were expressed and judged in relation to the group. The church was diligently mindful of its corporate witness in all aspects of its life, in spite of the frailty of its individual members. In being part of the eschatological community, those weak and marginal groups of people in society, like women, aliens and the poor, found dignity, hope, and power to sustain themselves, and were able to extend their hands to help others in the society. These perspectives are powerful for addressing the needs of marginal groups in the church, like the urban youth. The potential of addressing many of the social issues of urbanisation through community needs to be explored further rather than seeking new

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[83] The response to community values in the finding of survey questionnaires reflected the youth's perception of a positive attitude towards community.

programmes to fix those problems in the structure based on "the clerical paradigm", which does not empower the youth.

With the contextual and cultural perspectives in place, Chapter Six has described and analysed the content of the survey research: realities, experiences, values, orientations, and the cultural and religious symbolic world within which the youth strive for meaning and belonging amidst urbanisation. These are primary sources for the proposed community-based approach for the formation of the youth as disciples of Christ. Theologically and missiologically the church has strong grounds to base its youth ministry on community structure, as shown in Chapter Four in the praxis of the early church, grounded in its theological understanding of *koinonia* and witness to the already here yet coming reign of God revealed in Christ. Any approach and praxes that deal with discipleship and youth in Nairobi need to integrate the sources, particularly the contextual and cultural exceptions and variations revealed by the data. For instance, the reality of HIV/AIDS among youth is not only a health issue. It needs to be approached from the perspective of the social dimension of urbanisation, like poverty, education, health care, political priority, and other related factors and also needs to be examined and evaluated from the cultural perspective which often plays a significant role in forming attitudes and moral responses to the problem. Similarly, the problem of alienation needs to be addressed by taking into consideration factors related to the urban and cultural context. This may include breakdown of extended family structures and social dislocation from rural to urban environment. Every context poses its unique challenge and opportunity. Therefore, the need to integrate local factors cannot be overemphasised.

Finally, Chapter Six has outlined the three missiological modes and praxes which constitute the framework of the study: the praxis of believing (worship dimension), the praxis of belonging (fellowship dimension), and the praxis of exchanging (giving and receiving in mission). They guide the response to the main problem and four models of grassroots community-based discipleship (the cell group, Small Christian Community, the church of

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small group, the covenant model). The question was whether and how the models would inform and guide the incorporation of data on the orientation, values, and experiences of urban youth. In sum, they are inadequate. The cell group model did not seem to show any inclination towards integrating urban and cultural factors. It was evident from its reluctance to be involved in social issues of the community. The Small Christian Community model does call for social involvement as part of its missionary calling, but in reality it is comfortable in the worship and fellowship mode. It has also not been successful in attracting men and youth for cultural and social reasons. The small group model with strong emphasis on action and social involvement expressed by the Mavuno Church has shown a greater potential for integrating social features of urbanisation and cultural values because it allows more flexibility in its ecclesial theology and structure and promotes local initiative. In praxis this has not realised, especially in its ministry to youth. The youth ministry is not perceived as a high priority. Therefore, no effort has been made to build a specific discipleship community with consideration of urban and cultural contextual factors.

The proposed covenant model, which basically comprises a small group approach within the context of the local church, has potential to create communities among youth with greater flexibility in response to particular urban and cultural contexts. The covenant model strongly emphasises commitment among group members to form a community with a shared covenant that explicitly states the discipleship purpose of the group and intentionally integrates three praxes of discipleship in its community life.

In view of the changing and challenging social, cultural and urban context in Africa, this study envisions a greater need for further research and analysis in order to explore the community-based discipleship model from different dimensions and perspectives. Mugambi (2000:76), in his analysis of mission in Africa, strongly suggests such research:

> …with a view to discerning the future of Christianity under changing demographic, economic and settlement patterns in the continent. This kind of analysis has not yet

been done in any systematic way to date, although in Europe and North America such analyses are abundant from theological, sociological and philosophical perspectives.

In response to the challenge, this study calls for the need to refine community-based discipleship through participatory-action or focused group research within the context of current and future survey research. In such a process, future studies could explore the educational mission of the church in Africa by integrating the teaching of the gospel with African cultural heritage, like community values, in different spheres of religious life, for the church to be a truly African church (Waruta 2000:146). From a pastoral perspective, in response to the current trend of globalisation and the related market-oriented world order guided by the philosophy of neo-liberalism, the church is increasingly coming under pressure to accommodate it. The present institutional structure seems to be oppressive and less affirming of life and freedom in its centralised power structure which negates the spirit of servanthood (Magesa 2000:169-173). The church needs to empower Christians through radical changes in its ecclesiology. In this regard, a further study could be undertaken to determine how small groups or communities can be structured in the African context to "live out the Christian vocation in such a way that they can witness the presence of God's reign in their environments. It is in these groups that ecclesiological grounding should happen" (ibid). In this respect, further theological and empirical investigation will need to be followed, by examining how a community of Christian disciples could play its prophetic role in the unjust urban society, like the early church community carried on the prophetic mission of Jesus (Nasimiyu-Wasike 2000:186).

The current dissertation contributes to and challenges the theological and missiological responses to the impact of the clerical paradigm and urbanisation on the church's witness and proclamation. For the church to be relevant in its witness and proclamation among the present generation of urban youth, the church is called to examine urgently its present praxis of discipleship guided by the faulty assumption "that old wineskins are adequate for the new

wine [urban youth] entrusted to their keeping" (Smith 1994:128). From a missiological perspective, the church cannot afford to ignore the plight of the youth if it seeks to remain faithful to the gospel.

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List of churches contacted for survey:

Church A: St Mark ACK Westland—(Anglican)

Church B: St John's ACK Pumwani (Anglican)

Church C: AIC Jericho (Baptist tradition)

Church D: Joy Christian Fellowship (Pentecostal)

Church E: Nairobi Baptist Church (Baptist)

Church F: Gospel Recovery Church International City Centre (Pentecostal)

Church G: St Francis ACK Karen (Anglican)

Church H: Parklands Baptist Church (Baptist)

Church I: Nairobi Mission Church (Pentecostal)

Church J: PCEA Eastleigh (Presbyterian)

Church K: New City Fellowship (Non-denominational)

Church L: St Polycarp's ACK Juja Road (Anglican)

Church M: Komorock Methodist Church (Methodist)

Church N: Redeemed Gospel Church Huruma (Pentecostal)

Church O: Deliverance Church Kangemi (Pentecostal)

Church P: Nairobi Pentecostal Church Karen (Pentecostal)

Church Q: Deliverance Church Langatta (Pentecostal)

Church R: Deliverance Church Ummoja (Pentecostal)

Church S: AIC Ziwani (African Inland Church)

Church T: PCEA Nairobi West (Presbyterian)

Church U: PCEA Ruai (Presbyterian)

Church V: Shrine of Mary Help Christians-Don Bosco (Roman Catholic Parish Church)

Church W: Kariobangi (Roman Catholic Parish Church)

Nairobi University Life Ministry Fellowship

Appendix B
FIELD RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE
For Nairobi Church Youth Research Project

Your cooperation in filling out this research questionnaire will be greatly appreciated. There is no right or correct answer. Please give your honest response to what <u>you</u> think and believe about each item. All your answers will be treated confidentially. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please tick one box in each item:

1. Gender: [ ] Male   [ ] Female

2. Your age: [ ] 11-15   [ ] 16-20   [ ] 21-25   [ ] 26 or over

3. Where were you born?
       [ ] City   [ ] Town   [ ] Rural area

4. Where did you spend most of your first fifteen years of life?
       [ ] City   [ ] Town   [ ] Rural area

5. Where did you attend most of your primary school?
       [ ] City   [ ] Town   [ ] Rural area

6. Which place do you consider as your home?
       [ ] City   [ ] Town   [ ] Rural area

7. Where did you receive most of your religious instruction during the first fifteen years of your life?
       [ ] City   [ ] Town   [ ] Rural area

8. What language do you often use when you speak with your close friends?
       [ ] Swahili   [ ] English   [ ] Tribal mother tongue [ ] Sheng

9. In your opinion, what are some of the traditional beliefs useful to Christian life?

       1.
    _____

       2.
    _____

       3.
    _____

In each item below, please tick <u>only one box</u> that reflects your feeling or opinion among the following choices: [ ] Strongly Agree, [ ] Somewhat Agree, [ ] Not Sure, [ ] Somewhat Disagree or [ ] Strongly Disagree

		(1) Strongly Agree	(2) Somewhat Agree	(3) Not Sure	(4) Somewhat Disagree	(5) Strongly Disagree
10	Being with the members of my extended family gives me a sense of oneness with my people.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11	Apart from my parents, I expect my extended family members to help meet my economic or material needs.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12	Besides my parents, I often seek advice from my extended family members for guidance in life.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
13	I must listen to the words or opinions of old people (like grandparents) who are traditionally regarded as wise.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
14	To me eating meals together signifies a sense of solidarity with others.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15	Attending a funeral of my relatives or friends gives me a feeling of belonging to a community.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
16	For me the most important reason for getting married is to maintain our family roots by having children.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
17	When a relative comes to my place, I feel under obligation to help the relative.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
18	Attending a wedding of my relatives or friends gives me a sense of being a part of the community.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
19	When I die, I would like to be buried in the land or village of my ancestors.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
20	Honouring ancestors reflects a sense of solidarity with my clan or family.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
21	The custom of naming children with traditional names expresses my desire of maintaining a closer relationship with my clan or family.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
22	I prefer community lifestyle over independent living.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]