Biblical leadership and healthy church growth: Perspectives from the Reformed Churches in South Africa

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all servant leaders in the Reformed Churches in South Africa and beyond who prioritise their roles as servants of the Lord who sacrifice their all in faithfully serving God and His followers to the glory and honour of God Almighty.

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ABSTRACT

Studies on church growth were conducted extensively in the whole world. The strategies and indications of church growth or decline were mainly the focus of the studies. The church growth movement has Donald McGavran as the chief architecture. Though the church growth movement claims the Great Commission as its focus, it tends to emphasise numerical growth or decline of membership as an indicator. On the contrary, the present study focuses on membership quality (spirituality) as the prime indicator of church growth or decline. Nevertheless, the quality members affect numerical growth positively, unless it is counterfeit. This means therefore, that membership increase or decrease on their own cannot suffice for either church growth or decline. Thus, growth or decline can only be established after the two variables (quality and quantity) realised in a membership of various investigated. Central to this article, was to establish the RCSA leadership functions, which culminates into the continuing membership decline. The study made use of the deputies reports to the General Synod of the RCSA and other related literature that highlighted the trends of Protestant Churches globally and RCSA locally.

The following are the objective that the present study seeks to achieve:

- Substantiate the characteristics of continuing church decline that is occurring in the Non-Western world and in the RCSA.
- Determine the role of church leadership in church decline or growth.
- Research and develop biblical teaching on leadership and church growth.
- Provide practical guidelines and strategies for leadership that could be implemented for a real turn–around and church growth within the RCSA.
- Provide a systematic church growth process, given in Ephesians 4:11–16

Each of these objectives is dealt with in an independent article.

The contents of the thesis:

The thesis is made up of four sections as follows:

Section A

Section A provides an overview to the entire study, which endeavours to tie up the whole thesis together. The introduction forms part of this section, highlighting the various chapters that constitute the present study.

Section B

Section B is made up of the five articles. Four of the articles are built around 4 of Osmer's 2008 pragmatic questions. Each of the four articles provided answers to a specific question.

Article 1 answers Osmer' first research question, describing what is going on the world Protestant Churches and the RCSA. To answer this question, membership statistics and their description is given.

Article 2 answers the second questions by suggesting the possible leadership problem that are leading to membership decline in the RCSA.

Articles 3 provides the biblical leadership principles that were identified in the Bible to highlight what the RCSA leadership needs, for turn-around and church growth to be.

Article 4 provides a practical leadership strategy that was built on the biblical leadership principles. This is given diagrammatically and is further discussed on.

Article 5 gives a summary on the process of church growth as given by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:11–16. This process points at the leadership gifts as the means to church growth, hence omission in the leadership functions result in church decline.

Section C

This contains the summary to the whole study, conclusions and recommendations.

Section D

This is a unified bibliography from the entire study.

Key Words: Biblical leadership, Healthy church growth, Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA), Quantitative church growth, Qualitative church growth, Church health, Leadership Principles.

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.   INTRODUCTION

An overview of the study highlights aspects that are covered in the various articles that constitute the present thesis. Definitions of key concepts that run across the articles, are discussed to give their meaning as they are used in the present study. These words are briefly highlighted in different articles, pointing back to the explanation in this overview section. Thus, in each article the word should be understood in the way indicated in this overview section.

The overview section also discusses the limitations and delimitations to the study. These point the reader to the parameters of the study, and thus are focused on what exactly the study is all about. Thus, the reader approaches the study with an informed knowledge of what to expect and not to expect herein.

Schwartz's 1996 Natural Church Development quality principles that are reiterated and further explained in the 2006 version, are explored to show how they are relevant for the turn–around and church growth in the RCSA. These principles are discussed in relevant articles, to indicate their applicability for a turn–around and church growth.

2.   LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

i. The present study explored church decline in the Protestant churches only. Due to the breadth and depth of the Protestant churches, the study funnels the focus to the RCSA. Thus, the present study briefly highlighted on Protestant churches in general, before zooming in on the RCSA. Although the investigation is done with the RCSA in mind, it could be applicable to other denominations of the Protestant churches that mirrors the RCSA. Nonetheless, the discussions and arguments are done with the RCSA lenses in aspects such as leadership, the place of the Bible in the decision making of the church. In this regard, leadership in the RCSA is biased towards males, other than females who serve in the diaconal ministry. Thus, the discussion on women leadership, although particularly important in other Protestant denominations, has no space in the present study, because this study is conducted under circumstances in the RCSA. Furthermore, the RCSA elevates the Word in establishing a point for agreement, hence Scripture verses are used to argue or authenticate findings in the present study.

ii. Although there are varied reasons that contribute to church decline such as secularisation, Postmodernism, change in demographics, political leadership, and cultural differences, among others, the present study focuses on leadership only. The study is not belittling the

other causes as less important but intends to explore in depth how the leadership affects church decline. The present study is convinced that the leadership should have been ordained properly, to spearhead church growth through the spiritual gifts given to them by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:11). Notwithstanding the effects of other causes of church decline, the church could not move towards the will and purpose of God without the empowered leadership. It follows that the church needs leaders with the necessary capacity to take the believers to where God wants them (Weems, 2010:2). It stands to reason that the triune God uses the leadership as agents to transform the church accordingly (Ephesians 4:11).

3. DESCRIPTION OF KEY CONCEPTS IN THE WHOLE STUDY

3.1 Mission

It is critically important for the present study to give the background of mission, in order to provide a better understanding of the concepts of mission of God *(missio Dei)* and the mission of man (missions). Take note of the singular and plural forms of the same concept.

3.1.1 Background of mission

God desires that peoples come to know Him. This He did by revealing himself through nature (general revelation) and through his Word – the Bible and Christ (special revelation) (Berkhof, 2009:5–8; Grudem, 2000:601–602). Thus, people can know Him as far as He has revealed Himself. Mission is therefore traced in the revelation of God in the entire Bible and through its absoluteness in Jesus Christ. Berkhof (2009:2) explains that the special revelation was necessary because sin has obscured man to interpret the writing of God in nature. It is of utmost importance that the missional hermeneutic highlights on the grand mission of God (*missio Dei*), and human activities flowing from it (missions). *Missio Dei* and mission are defined below:

3.1.2 The mission of God (missio Dei)

The missional hermeneutics developed from Luke (24:25–27, 44–48), appraises Jesus Christ establishing that the entire Old Testament testifies about Him, and in the New Testament He is the absolute revelation of God (Wright, 2010:23–24; 2006:29–31). This hermeneutical argument confirms that the whole Bible is the mission of God, through which He reveals Himself. The mission of God involves the triune God in all aspects, from the creation story, the fall, and salvation that was planned by the Father, fulfilled by Jesus Christ (the Son), and is applied by the Holy Spirit. Jesus' testifying that the whole Bible is about Him, indicates that

salvation is central to the *missio Dei*. Thus, God's redemption plan runs throughout the whole Bible.

In fulfilling his purpose (*missio Dei*), God called and involved some people to join Him in the process. The participation of God's called people is under the headship of Christ, who came on earth to correct what was shuttered under the headship of Adam (Kreitzer, 2009:2). Mission is about being called and sent to accomplish the purpose to which one or a group of people is or are being send to (Wright, 2020:202). Lord Jesus was sent into the world to offer salvation through his sacrificial death on the cross, resurrection and ascension – good news (Luke 4:16–19). On the other hand, disciples were sent to preach and demonstrate the power of God through delivering and healing different peoples (Matthew 10:5-8). The apostles were also sent to make disciples of all nations, to baptise, and to teach the whole truth (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus indicates that mission is about sending and being sent, when He declared in his priestly prayer that 'As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world' (John 17:18). To emphasise the sending aspect, Jesus reiterates the same statements to the disciples after the resurrection, when He says: 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (John 20:21b). The place (world) Jesus was sent to, is the same place He sent the disciple to (John 17:18) – to redeem the fallen world.

The sent people have the mandate of fulfilling what they are obligated to, through the power of the Holy Spirit – as the resource of all what the sent people are doing. Matthew 28:20 and Acts 1:4 clearly indicate that the church can only participate in the mission of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were sent but were advised to wait for the Holy Spirit before they could go to proclaim the good news.

Wright (2010:24–26) differentiates between *missio Dei* and mission, as indicated in the following:

i. *Missio Dei* is that which God is doing in the world, to which He calls some people to cooperate with Him in that purpose. The key phrase in this definition is '*cooperate with Him*', highlighting that what called people do, depends on the Lord and flows from Him, hence failure to cooperate with Him, results in failure. Man cannot initiate anything new in the plan of God, other than obediently follow what God is already doing – His mission.

ii. Mission is the activity in which God's called people are engaged in, a means of participating with Him in the *missio Dei*. Mission is therefore a human action taken in response to God's call. Thus, missions are the various ministries that the church has in an endeavour to point the peoples to God, through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3.1.3 Old Testament and New Testament missions

Looking closely at Wright's (2006:29) hermeneutical argument for Luke (24:25–27 & 44-48), the Old Testament was centred on Jesus Christ, who is the absolute fulfilment of the *missio Dei*. This statement of Jesus Christ to the disciples (Luke 24:25–27), is explicitly that the mission of God, which is anchored in Christ, flowed from the Old Testament. Thus, it is coherent that God's called people in both the Old Testament and New Testament, participate with Him in the *missio Dei*. Wright (2006:41) appraises that God chose the family of Abraham to join with Him in his mission that led to the Messiah, and from Him 'the new covenant children of Abraham, including both Jews and Gentiles in Christ'. The Jews had an active role to play in the historical part of the *missio Dei* that is equally important for the Christians today. Though their roles look totally differently, the redemptive aspect is emphasised in each case.

God's redemptive history is highlighted in the Exodus narrative. God's intervention in saving Israel from Egyptian bondage, made both Israelites and Egyptians to embrace that God is distinct from the other gods. Exodus 6:1–2, 6, 8) emphasise who God is, viz. 'I am the Lord'. This is confirmed by Moses (Exodus 15:11):

> Who is like you, O Lord?
> Who is like you –
> Majestic in holiness
> Awesome in glory
> Working wonders?

There is no doubt that Moses and the Israelites were convinced about the sovereignty and majesty of God. His mission to be known to Israel was accomplished (Exodus 6:7; 8:5, 10; 14:4, 8). In the same vein, through the ten plagues to Egypt, which did not affect the Israelites, and the Red Sea crossing, God revealed himself to both Israelites and Egyptians. There are several passages in the Scripture that indicate Israel and other nations' acknowledgement of the majesty and sovereignty of God (Ezekiel 11:12; 33:29, Psalm 46:10). Therefore, the participation of the Israelites in making other nations to acknowledge who God is, was participation with God in the *missio Dei*.

In addition, the exodus redeemed Israel from various forms of enslavement such as political, economic, spiritual, and social enslavement (Wright, 2010:99–102). When God set the Israelites free from Egypt, they were free from all the above forms of enslavement. Thus, from the exodus narrative, one can identify God's redemption purpose, namely of not only redeeming Israel, but also not to leave them. Instead, He aligned them to worship Him alone, contrary to the Canaanites who God wished to be displaced from Canaan, to make way for

Israel. Taking Israel to Canaan is both an act of caring for the redeemed people, and the fulfilment of the covenant made to Abraham (Genesis 12:7).

The exodus and the cross of Christ indicate the same principle, namely the redemption plan of God to his enslaved people (Wright, 2010:102). In the same way that Israel was redeemed from all the challenges from Egypt, the Christians are redeemed from sin and all its effects. This sets the Old Testament and New Testament on the same footing, namely that the Israelites' redemption from Egypt and Christians' redemption from sin, set both free from all that was burdening them, regardless of the nature of the enslavement. Reflecting on the missional hermeneutics of Luke 24:25–27 and 44–48, it is deduced that the historical redemption of the nation of Israel, was pointing at Christ's absolute redemption of all the nations of the world (Kreitzer, 2009:3).

3.1.4 Missions in different dispensations

To reiterate, the mission of God is to reveal Himself to the peoples, so that they would all know Him. Thus, the mission of God begins with the people He calls, who in turn become agents for making Him known to other peoples. Reflecting on Luke 14:25–27 and 44–48, the *missio Dei* can be traced back to the creation story, which is part of the 'Law' referred to by Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25–27). The climax of the creation narrative is the creation of man in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27). This was followed by God's command to man, to 'be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth' (Genesis 1:28). After the fall and its consequences (Genesis 3–11), God called Abraham and bless him, so that he become a blessing to all the peoples (Genesis 12:1–3). The, 'Go ... be a blessing', indicate that Abraham had a mandate to participate with God in applying the blessing which God gave to him, not to keep it to himself, but also to pass it to all the nations.

This passage indicates both the grace of God and the faith of Abraham, which are the two themes that run across the whole Bible. In this regard, Wright (2006:212) appraises that 'Genesis 12:2 ... is the launch of the redemptive mission. The imperatives to Abraham "Go ... be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1–2) equate those in Matthew: Go and make disciples (28:18–20)' In further explaining of the two passages, Kreitzer (2009:3) describes 'the people of Israel as a people involved in God's mission ... lead to the Messiah, and from him to mission of the new covenant children of Abraham, including both Jews and other peoples, in Christ.' This argument underscores that the Abrahamic blessings were applied to other nations, resulting in the blessing of the Gentiles, hence was missional. Accepting that the blessings of Abraham got its fulfilment in Jesus as a descendent of Abraham, is also accepting the participation of the children of Abraham in the redemptive plan of God, which is the heart of the *missio Dei*.

Even though, the missions of the Jews and the apostolic church are different in how they were executed, the redemptive purpose is emphasised in both – setting peoples free from various forms of enslavement. In the same vein, the mission of the church today is different in form, but the redemptive purpose remains – setting nations free from sin and all its effects, to worship one true God, Jehovah. The key to participate well in missions during all times, is to understand the purpose of God with humanity – that they may know Him. The first place where 'know' was used, refers to Adam in that he knew his wife (Genesis 4:1 & 25) and she conceived. The following place is about Cain that he knew his wife (Genesis 4:17) and conceive. It is clear from these examples that 'know' refers to an intimate relationship. The intimate relationship between God and the people is embedded in his salvation plan which in the Old Testament looked forward to its fulfilment in Christ and the present church is looking backwards at its fulfilment in Christ, who is King of the redeemed peoples. The two dispensations articulate missions in different ways, that would address the hearts of the concerned people in each dispensation. Thus, missions are dynamic, hence, to effectively communicate Christ to the dynamic world and culture, it is critically important to utilise the available opportunities and resources in each context and time (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:96–97). Thus, the present church describes the *missio Dei* in a way it can best be understood as it applies to the present dispensation but drawing from the same guiding principles from the entire Bible.

4.   CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Vast literature has been devoted on leadership, both in the general world and the church. In each case, various perspectives of what leadership is, are brought forward. Nevertheless, the variations in the definitions of the Christian leader, the exclusion of authority should run across them all (Weems, 2010:1; Wright jr, 2000:2). The point here is not suggesting that the church leadership do not have the power to move the people in the direction of God. It is an indication that all the things the church does and should do, have been put in place already, hence the leadership has only an implementation function. This principle of leadership is explained by Jesus Christ as He castigated the disciples who expected a hierarchical structure of leadership. This follows that the church already has Jesus Christ as the leader and head of his body, with the entire Christian body constituting different parts of that body. The body imagery highlights that each Christian has a part to play in making the body to function properly, just as it is with the human body. Thus, the leadership is in a relationship with the other body parts, which they influence towards enhancing church health. Nevertheless, the process needs multiple gifted members to help the ordained leadership in effectively

transforming the body of Christ, in contexts in which they find themselves (Engstrom, 1976:20; Wright jr, 2000:2).

Thus, the other models of leadership such as classical, transitional, and visionary, which seem to point at some form of structural leadership (Avery, 2004:18), are not appraised in the present study. However, the aspects of these models are used in the organic model. The Triune God has a vision for the world, which is then the purpose of the church in the world. In this regard, the vision of God is the same as that of the church. The leadership clearly urges God's vision in the most understood way in their various contexts. Organic leadership involves multiples leaders, whose responsibility is to identify members, empower and release them then to service. These leaders are called by God to help the church 'to move from where they have been into a new place to which they are being called' (Weems, 2010:2). In the same vein, Gelder (2007:6) alludes that the main responsibilities of the ordained leadership are the identification of members' spiritual gifts, cultivate them for effectiveness and then allocating them to appropriate ministries.

Organic leadership is the model given in the Bible and is greatly dealt with in Acts and the apostle Paul's epistles (Acts 6:1–15; 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1–16; Titus 1:5). Multiple leadership differentiate the organic leadership model from the other three, since different leaders are involved in various ministries that are align to their gifts, influencing the members to become Christlike. The desired direction is shaped by God's vision for the church; hence the visionary aspect is shared in the multiple leadership and is articulated in the way that it is fitting to each group. Therefore, the present study's model of leadership utilises aspects of the visionary leadership in which the leadership helps to ground the vision of the Triune God in the context of various denominations and congregations. Thus, saying a visionary leader in the present study refers to one who is effective in helping the church to grasp the vision of the church as ordained by God. This is accomplished by making the vision relevant and owned by the entire congregation, in specific times and contexts. In this regard, Niemandt (2012:9) points out that these visionary leaders discern where the Spirit leads in all times for the effectiveness of the missional ecclesiology. This makes the missional leadership relevant during all times and places.

A visionary leader in an organic context is also a missional leader in line with the vision of God with the nations. Such a leader is effective in helping the entire congregation to be influential both in and outside their congregations and thus transforming their communities with the gospel. Participating in the mission of God results in church growth. This follows that God's mission in his special revelation – the Bible and Jesus Christ – aims that all peoples be saved,

from Christians' neighbourhood to distant places (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). The saving of all peoples leads to the growing of the Christian family – the church.

4.1   Church (*Ecclesia*)

Church is a family of the peoples who were redeemed through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross as a fulfilment of God's plan of salvation to the world. The word *family* points at the unity of church even though it comprises peoples of different languages, cultures, races, and other differences (Oborji, 2006:202; Stackhouse, 2003:139–140). In the same vein, the family imagery points that of the various members therein, each is having specific functions to keep the family united and growing. On the other hand, the image of the body (1 Corinthians 10:16–17) and of the vine (John 15:1-9), highlight that the church's being and continuity rests with the Lord Jesus Christ. The members in this united family are dependent on Jesus for their being and doing. Thus, the appropriate ecclesiology is one where all the members of the church are given equal opportunities to serve, according to the gifts of the Spirit each one has. It stands to reason that the three images, namely of family, vine, and body, indicate the organisms that have potential to grow.

The church should therefore participate with its head, Jesus Christ, in growth activities which are a product of missions. The need for church growth was understood in years past, and McGavran (1970) took a stance to explain it through what is known as the church growth movement. The emphasis of the church growth movement was on the effectiveness of evangelism that results from the Great Commission (Hong, 2004:2). The church growth movement, which was rather skewed towards quantitative than qualitative church growth, was further articulated and refined by Peter Wagner, McGavran's student. Wagner (1989:114) expands the components of the church growth movement, to include church planting, multiplication, church health – all under the praxis of the Great Commission.

No doubt the 21st century church still appraises the need for church growth in a refined ecclesiology, in which the organic church promotes the entire membership participation in gifted ministries, to enhance both qualitative and quantitative growth (Cole, 2007:9; Stackhouse, 2003:141). Under this ecclesiological model, evangelism is further expanded to refer both to the message and the messenger, through which the messenger lives the Word proclaimed. Further, the witnessing of Jesus Christ is done in the communities where the church is, and in other places. This points out that a Christian's entire life is a witness of the love of Jesus Christ. It is not limited to outreaches or distance evangelism trips. Evangelism is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit, who enables the church to witness both in word and in deed, and He also convicts people of sin, compelling them to repent.

The church is therefore the Kingdom of God under the Kingship of Jesus Christ, which is to be consummated at his second coming (*parosia*). In Matthew 3:2 and 4:17, it follows that by turning away from sin to Christ by faith, believers begin a new way of life – a life totally different from the former. It stands to reason that this new life qualifies the believers presently as members of the kingdom of God through Christ. Though not fully established, being in Christ and having the seal of the Holy Spirit, is an assurance of continuing in the Kingdom eternally (Ephesians 1:13; John 1:12; 3:16). In this regard, Jesus echoed the message of John the Baptist, which begins with the command to repent from sinful life in order to enter the reign of God that comes through the redemption of sin. The repented turn away from sin to live as God's children in Christ. Their life is controlled by the Word of God and the Spirit. Even though they are still in the world, they are not of the world. This follows that their life is no longer influenced by the world, but by the Spirit of God.

The organic ecclesiology is the one appraised by the present study, in which all believers are encouraged to actively participate in the body of Christ, to enhance church health.

5.   AN OUTLINING OF SCHWARTZ'S NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The Natural Church Development (NCD) model is consistence with the present study, in determining leadership gaps that is affecting church growth in the RCSA. It is in the interest of the present study to describe the NCD, to show how and why it is used in various articles that constitute the whole study for establishing various leadership flaws.

The NCD, which comprises of eight quality principles (Schwartz, 2006:24–38; 1996:22–37), was established by Schwartz in 1996, and further described for more clarity in 2006. The NCD is a product of the empirical research carried out over a period of two years, from 1994 to 1996. It makes use of a 'sufficient large data base to make scientifically significant accessions' (Schwarz, 2006:5). Schwartz's study involved 1 000 churches from 32 countries and in each church were 30 participants (Schwartz, 1996:18; 2006:20). The use of countries and churches across the globe, indicate the applicability of the NCD in the world over, after adapting it to the contexts. This follows that in all the countries that the NCD was used in the two years, it was successful. As a result, the NCD was rated as being successful in different parts of the world (Schwartz, 2006:15).

This success is indicated by its implementation in 45 000 churches and 70 countries. In addition, the translation of Schwartz's book into 40 different languages (Schwartz, 2006:13) is an indication of the fact that the NCD principles are widely used, as Schwartz assets above. If the NCD was not effective, not so many churches could invest their resources on it. Thus,

its widely use is an indicator of its effectiveness, which is also seen in the translation of the book into 40 different languages to enhance a better understanding of the model. The NCD is applauded for transforming churches positively in both quality and quantity 'by an average of 51%' (Schwartz, 2006:3). This shows a percentage above the halfway mark. If all churches could attain that increase, church growth will be realised.

Schwartz's (1996:13; 2006:15) argument for the success of the NCD is that it was drawn from a triangulation of different sources, namely empirical research, observing nature and studying Scriptures. He stresses that all observations should align to Scriptures to be regarded as absolute principles. Nevertheless, Schwartz is criticised for his inaccurate exegesis of biblical verses (Day, 2002:15; Lutterhill, 2008:1). He equated the natural growth of plants as the responsibility of God, not man (Matthew 6:28; 1 Corinthians 3:7). The criticism on the agricultural metaphor is that plants grow natural (Mark 4:1–9; 26–29; 1 Corinthians 3:7) and cannot be equated to the church. The present study identifies that even for the plants to grow natural, God use human beings to administer the seed and water the plants, but He causes them to grow. In the same way God sends human beings to spread the Word through which the Holy Spirit convicts a sinner to repentance. In addition, the church is commanded to teach everything that Jesus taught them, to make the converted to being disciples of Jesus as quality Christians. Furthermore, the present study has a say on how man cooperate with God in what He does:

Human beings cannot cause growth to happen, but they execute their roles of disseminating the whole truth (seed and water) through the power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the transformation of men and women to become new creatures. Taking it from this explanation, the natural aspect of church growth is established.

On the other hand, the criticism (Ramunddal, 2014:319–322) is that the NCD is built on the traditional principles that Schwartz seemed to be criticising. This does not discredit the NCD's biblical foundations, or its effectiveness as a model. It indicates that Schwartz has failed to distance himself from what he criticised. Ramunddal established that the whole NCD principles used the church growth movement principles. Nevertheless, the present study is not focusing on the debate of source of the NCD, but their application.

The biblical foundations of the NCD are confirmed by Ashby (2006:8), who points out that six out of the eight quality principles are drawn from the New Testament, although the wording is different. If the six out of eight quality principles are relevant and effective, there is a greater possibility that the church is transformed through the implementation of the NCD quality

principles. The six quality principles that are extracted from Scriptures, are the following (Asby, 2006:8):

i.   Empowering leadership aligns to the biblical principles in Ephesians 4:11. The empowering of leaders capacitates them to fulfil their calling 'to equip the saints for the work of ministry'.

ii.   A gift – oriented ministry ties well with the above principle, in which the empowered leadership can discern the spiritual gifts and develop them before allocating members to serve appropriately. The apostle Paul emphasised the effectiveness of the principle for building the board of Christ (1 Corinthians 121–123).

iii.   Passionate spirituality is the resource that compels the church 'to live committed lives and practice their faith with joy and enthusiasm'. This is appraised in Scriptures (Romans 12:11; 2 Corinthians 9:2; 2 Peter 1:5; Revelations 3:14–19).

iv.   Functional structures are necessary in enhancing effective and multiplication of ministries. Acts 6:1–7 presents a perfect example in which the apostles and deacons have distinctive structures that were effective for church health.

v.   Holistic small groups are necessary for building the bond that is necessary for church growth and is effective for teaching the Word and cultivating love among believers. Thus, the small groups should not be limited to the Bible Study, but be extended to fellowship, caring, sharing, and giving each other the necessary advocacy. An example is presented in Acts 2:42–47. The products of small groups indicated in these verses, are the marks of a healthy church.

vi.   Loving relationships present the theme that ties the whole Bible and are presented in the existence of the Triune God and their relations to men and women. Love is the principle that summarises all that the church needs to do. The apostles Paul and John devoted many passages on love, emphasising its centrality for the church (Ashby 2006:9).

Although Ashby left out two of the eight quality principles (i.e. inspiring worship service and need oriented evangelism) as having no direct biblical references linked to them, he is not discarding their applicability.

vii.   Even though these two NCD principles are not explicitly stated, it can be implied that inspiring worship service flows from the members' Christ–like character that derives

them to a worship that comes from the heart and which expresses gratitude to the grace, love and mercy of God. Looking closely, one can deduce that inspiring service is a product of one's passionate thinking about God above. This is expressed in worshiping Him as He is worth thereof. Furthermore, inspiring worship should not be narrowed to church services, but should be conducted in all areas of life where the church serves God in one way or the other (1 Corinthians 10:31–32; Colossians 3:17).

viii. The present study affirms that Need–oriented evangelism is indicated in the way the apostle Paul was doing his mission in different peoples, to enhance the maximum understanding of the good news (1 Corinthians 9:19–22). Thus, evangelism should be done while considering the context and language of the various target groups.

Therefore, the two quality principles, (vi & vii) above, can be added to the six that were substantiated by Ashby (2006:9–10), guided by the implied meanings above. The eight NCD principles are used in the various articles. Articles three through five indicate how the NCD principles can affect the church positively if implemented, and vice versa.

6. CONCLUSION

The description of the key terms allows the reader to better follow the five articles that make up this thesis. The limitations justify their use. Delimitations highlight the coverage of the study, and the explanations of the NCD quality principle, and how they are necessary for the present study. Thus, the articles do not dwell much on these concepts, hence their application are generic for all the articles.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

PROPOSED TITLE AND KEYWORDS

1.   PROPOSED TITLE

Biblical leadership and healthy church growth. Perspectives from the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

2.   ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between leadership and church growth or decline particularly within the congregations of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Leadership is crucial in healthy church growth although it has not always been taken seriously in many church growth studies (Macchia, 2003; Reeder & Swavely, 2008:144). It should be clear that any turn–around and subsequent church growth can only be realised if the leadership is supportive to church growth (Reeder & Swavely, 2008:149-150). This study aimed to investigate how the Reformed Churches in South Africa can, while experiencing a prolonged time of numerical decline, turn the situation around, and through biblical leadership, become a healthy church denomination (Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 4:13-16). Biblical leadership principles, as given in both the Old and New Testament provide foundational and essential guidelines for healthy church growth (Macchia, 2003:19), and will be proposed as the keys for fostering healthy Reformed Church congregations. The study is presented in different independent articles, each addressing one specific aspect.

Key words: healthy church growth; church decline, reformed; biblical leadership; missiological

3.   BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.1.   Background

The church as the body of Christ exists for the purpose of articulating the *missio Dei* which is characterised by healthy church growth (Cole, 2007:9; Hill, 2012:153; McGavran, 1990:6; Wagner, 1984:13). The mission of God is rooted in His purpose with the whole world. The mission of God is the same with His people in different dispensations. Three aspects of the *missio Dei* are identified from the Old Testament through the New.

- God has a plan for the whole world that is spelt out in Genesis 12:2 and Matthew 28:19-20.
- God called people to Himself whom He made a covenant with.
- God blesses His covenant people and send them into the world to be a blessing to other nations.

In both dispensations God tasked His covenant people to bring the people of the world to him (Niringiye, 2014:21–22; Peters, 1972:22; Wright, 2006:29; 2010:23-24). This point is made more vivid by Keiser (2000:22) that Israel's call was not for her privileges and blessings but has a responsibility to serve other nations. Israel had an obligation to both God and other nations. Israel's participation has its full expression in Jesus Christ who was the fulfilment of the purpose of God through whom all the peoples of the world have salvation. The Israelites were expected to abide by the covenantal stipulations which obligated them to pass on God's blessings to other peoples of the world. This is the same responsibility that the church has today (Kreitzer, 2006:1-2). The similarities with both the nation of Israel and the church is that both were called out of God's own will and purpose to participate with Him in His plan with the world. Nevertheless, the way each participated with God was not the same, but the core of their calling remains unchanged – blessing of nations. In both the Old and New Testaments, God calls a few people whom He uses to proclaim the gospel to others. The following diagram shows that the mission of God in both the Old and New Testaments is the same.
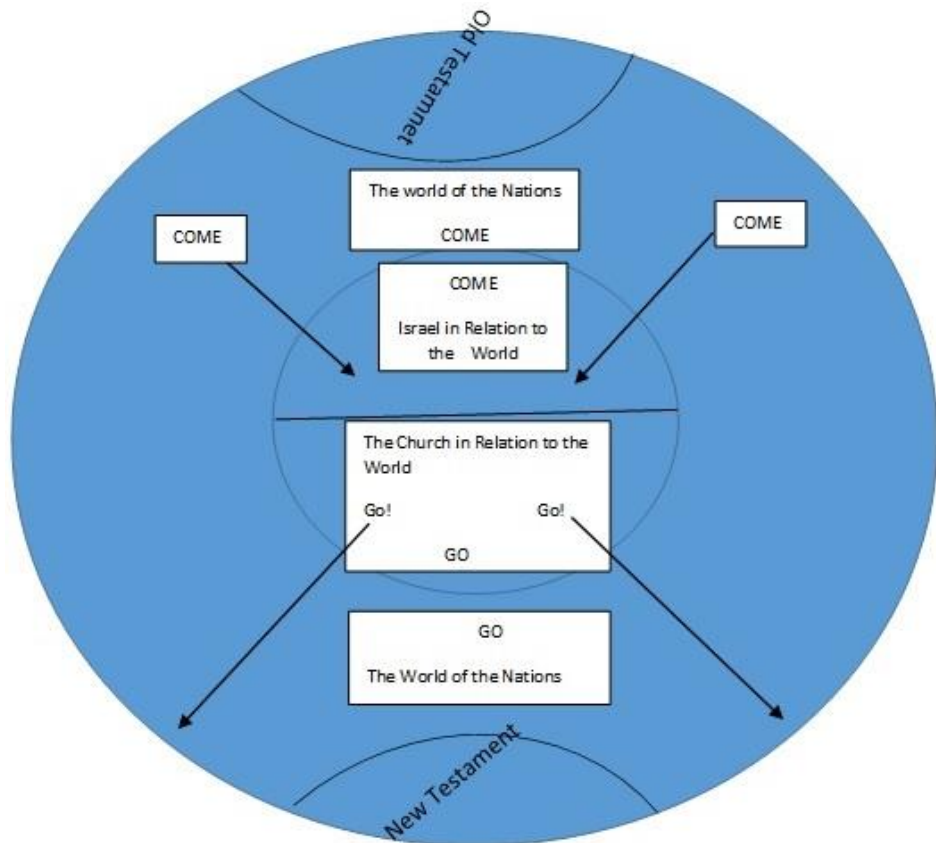
Figure 1:   Mission trends in the Old and New Testaments

Source: Peters (1972:22)

The *missio Dei* is the same in both dispensations, and the difference is the mission methods used in the two dispensations. The focal point of the mission is bringing different nations to God though employing different means. Israel was the "mediator between God and the nations" and it invites the nations to Jerusalem (Kreitzer, 2009; Peters, 1972:23). The church is the witness of Jesus Christ in all the earth. The church goes to the people rather than inviting them to their location. Old Testament mission was centripetal, where nations were to come to Israel. The church's mission method is centrifugal, where it must go out to the peoples over the face of the earth with the Good News. In both cases, the mission of God is clear that the chosen people are responsible of mediating between God and the world. The obedience of Israelites and Christians make other nations become part of God's Kingdom family – the church, under the rulership of King Jesus.

The church is meant to grow, and for certain churches this is the case. However, research in the Western world has identified church decline in most of the Southern Baptist Churches within the United States of America (Stoll & Petersen, 2008:251). This condition is replicated

in other mainline Protestant denominations in the USA as well (Symlie, 1995:207). The *missio Dei* emphasises the growth in the people called of God as the church includes other nations in the family of God's people. The image of a body (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Colossians 1:18, 24; Ephesians 3:6; 4:15; 5:23; Romans 12:5) and Jesus' explanation of building the church on the rock (Matthew 16:18), indicate that growth is imminent. Under normal circumstances, the body must grow and the building also from the foundation rock to different levels. If the building does not grow, the builder would have stopped the work. However, Jesus who owns the church establishes His plans to build His church. Thus, the church is designed to grow in fulfilling the *missio Dei.* The decline in the Protestant churches in the West, is an indicator of a 'disease' in these churches, which made them fail in God's purpose for them (Mutavhadsindi & Meiring, 2014:2; Niemandt, 2012:12; Jenson & Stevens, 1981:9). A diseased church cannot participate in a missional church, which is a product of a missional leader. Failure to give an expression of Christ in the world (Niemandt, 2012:4–5) is a sign of qualitative decline even if the church may have many congregants. This follows that a church that lost its taste as salt, can no longer serve its purpose and its existence is not recognised. Numerous reasons are given for church decline with most of these pointing at the ineffectiveness of church leadership (Hybels, 1998:1–3; Mutavhadsindi & Meiring, 2014:2&7; Pearse, 2011:101–108). Research has shown that congregation leadership, which is not effective, will find their churches declining without exception (Greenway, 1999:35; Flett, 2010:37; Kirk, 2000:32).

The Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) seemingly have also fallen into a period of decline. According to a report to the Deputies for turn-around strategy of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (2015:492), this has been a trend for more than two decades. This situation was first noted formally in 1994. Real efforts were made to rectify the situation through a group of deputies who were appointed specifically to spearhead a turn-around process (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:92–494). The Reformed Churches in South Africa thus embarked on a prolonged turn-around strategy. In their turn-around and growth efforts, the deputies carried out research within the structures and congregations of the RCSA. They engaged in the following activities as reflected in one of their reports to the RCSA Synod (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:494–510):

- Consulted extensively with local churches.
- Reviewed articles and books on turn-around and church growth.
- Produced and distributed research and training material which demonstrates turn–around and church-growth strategies for local churches.
- Reported their findings regularly to the synod of the RCSA.

- Suggested further and continued research to the Synod.

The research into turn-around and growth also extended to visiting churches in other countries such as Australia and Brazil. The churches chosen for this visitation were able to realise turn-around and church growth within their specific contexts (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:500). The mentioned deputies visited these churches to acquire first-hand information on how these situations were able to turn-around and grow their respective congregations. This research provided the deputies much-needed information and insight which can be adopted and adapted to benefit the RCSA.

It is, however, unfortunate that despite of the information gathered and presented to the RCSA churches since the beginning of the 21st century, decline continues and the closure of several RCSA congregations are imminent. It is therefore critically important and urgent to find new answers and devise novel strategies to implement a real turn–around within the RCSA

The present study focused specifically on facets of leadership that ultimately plays a pivotal role in any form of change endeavour within any organisation. This is also true of the Christian church. However, suggestions and inputs from the RCSA deputies of turn-around and church growth can only be implemented if the leadership is positive towards its application. It is therefore of the utmost importance to investigate the various facets of leadership within the RCSA and attempt to align the leadership with the biblical principles that will lead to church health and growth.

## 3.2.	Problem statement

Research has shown that there are several reasons for church decline. One of these is ultimately related to church leadership. The question needs to be answered, is: What is the relationship between church leadership and church decline? The answer will also shed light on the relationship between leadership and church growth.

The problem statement for the present study can be formulated as follows:

In what way does the leadership in the Reformed Churches in South Africa contribute to the continuing decline of its churches the past 20 years?

## 4.	RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

### 4.1.	Research questions

The following questions will provide an answer to the problem stated above:

- Can church decline in the Western world and in the RCSA be substantiated?
- Can leadership affect church growth or decline in these churches?
- What does the Bible teach on leadership and church growth or decline?
- What practical guidelines and strategies can be implemented for a real turn–around and healthy church growth within the RCSA?
- How can leadership gifts be developed as the basis for real turn-around and healthy church growth in the RCSA?

4.2. Research aim and objectives

4.2.1. Aim

The main aim of the present study was to investigate ways through which the leadership of the Reformed Churches in South Africa can contribute to church decline or growth.

4.2.2. Objectives

The following objectives are embedded in the aim:

- Substantiate the characteristics of continuing church decline that is occurring in the Western world and in the RCSA.
- Determine the role of church leadership in church decline or growth.
- Research and develop biblical teaching on leadership and church growth.
- Provide practical guidelines and strategies for leadership that could be implemented for a real turn–around and church growth within the RCSA.
- Ascertain what needs to be done to equip church leaders, thereby facilitating church growth.

5. CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of the study is that church leadership plays a decisive role in the growth of a church.

6. CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

This study will be of the utmost importance for the RCSA in its efforts to turn-around a prolonged time of constant numerical decline within this denomination. Such research will also help other churches reflect deeply on leadership, church growth and church health.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1. Introduction

A literature analysis was used to help answer the research questions. This method involves the following two forms of analysis (Bowen, 2009:27; Straussberg & Engler, 2013:109–115)

i. **Document analysis** is the election of relevant documents that provide the most appropriate data in a valid and reliable way (Booth *et al.*, 2003:69; Straussberg & Engler, 2013:154). The process involves the engagement with data from varied sources and make sense out of them. This is done in a systematic way by "finding, selecting, appraising, and synthesising data in documents (Bowen, 2009:28). The researcher should read beyond the written marks to come up with an objective meaning of the data in the various documents.

ii. **Content analysis** entails "examining the message embedded in a text" (Straussberg & Engler, 2013:110) to extract meaning. From the relevant documents, both printed and electronic, the researcher critically examines their content to unearth possible related detail (De Vos et al., 2011:381). The research of RCSA deputies since the beginning of the 21st century makes a valuable contribution since it provides an overarching view into leadership issues and church decline within the RCSA.

There are basically three different methods involved in content analysis (Hsieh & Shanoon, 2005:1279–1285). These are the following:

- **Conventional content analysis**: "This is implemented (with study design that are meant to describe a phenomenon" (p. 1279) such as the present study on leadership and church decline. The approach allows the researcher to gain insight from the data analysed, and thus preventing the researcher's preconceived perspectives. Nevertheless, the approach calls for a deeper understanding of the data, lest the data might misrepresent the truth.

- **Directed content analysis**: This is appropriate in a design that is intended to articulate or complete a specific theory. Thus, the content to be consulted should be relevant to add more value to the already existing theory. The existing theory influences the research questions that would align to it well. In any case, the data from the directed content analysis should either support or discredit the existing theory, giving convincing

evidence for each. The directed content analysis' major limitation is that "the researchers approach the data with ... strong bias" (p. 1283).

- **Summative content analysis**: The approach requires the researchers to analyse the content with the aim of understanding its contextual use. It is relevant not in inferring meaning but in exploring usage. Thus, the core of the approach "is on discovering of the words or content" (Babbie, 1992).

Bowen (2009:31), Straussberg and Engler (2013:110–111) state the following advantages of content and document analysis:

i.   Allows the researcher to manage and summarise larger volumes of data more easily than through other methods.
ii. Reduces the researcher's bias since the analysis is done on existing data, rather than eliciting the data from participants directly.
iii. Focuses on existing data collected over extended period thereby providing valuable historical information for the research problem.
iv. Less time consuming and therefore, more efficient than other research methods. It requires data selection, instead of data collection.
v.   Many documents used are in the public domain, hence readily available for the researchers.
vi. Less costly than the other research methods.
vii. The documents are not affected by the research process

The method provides more valid and reliable data if the study uses rather public documents than personal and official ones. The reason is that the latter documents are not easily accessible, and information may not be readily available for research (Cresswell, 2003:188; Jupp, 2006:79). Validity is also enhanced by examining previous research on the same issue.

7.2. Reformed missiological focus

The present study on biblical leadership and church growth study was done from the perspective of the Reformed tradition. Every point or argument is biased towards the RCSA hence the traditions in other Protestant churches might not apply. The best way to understand the study is to have a clear understanding of the RCSA church order. This means that the biblical guidelines on church leadership will eventually determine the relevant response to the research questions and objectives. These guidelines will also be the primary focus for the development of training material and the envisaged suggestions for future strategies on church growth and enhancing health. This study also started off from the premise that the missional

task of the Christian church is foundational to its ministry in this world. Therefore, this task must also influence any deliberation on the leadership issues relevant to this study. The findings of this study will benefit the field of Missiology by focusing on the particulars of the intensive and extensive growth that should be the characteristics of a healthy missional church.

7.3. Methods used

The following methods were used to answer different research questions and corresponding objectives:

i. **Objective**: Describe and substantiate church decline in the Western world and in the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

- *Method*: Document study of the following major sources: research done the deputies for a turn-around strategy and the Deputies for church growth-: Church Order, Articles 1-86; Vorster (1999:4-149); and Reformed Church Order Commentary De Moor (2010:20-136) together with related literature (Cole, 2007; Greenway et al., 1991; Jenson & Stevens, 1981; Kube, 2013; McGavran & Arn, 1981; McGavran, 1990; McNeal, 2009; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011; Wagner, 2012) and several other publications and articles.

ii. **Objective**: Establish how church leadership affect church decline or growth.

- *Method*: Research in the above-mentioned major sources provided valuable insight as well. Including secondary related books and articles that aligned to leadership. (Berkley, 1992; De Moor, 2010; Drummond, 2001; 2008; Fanning, 2009; Green, 2001; Cole, 2007; Grobler, 2007; Jenson & Stevens, 1981, Morrison, 2014; McNeal, 2009; Paas, 2015; Piper, 2010; Reeder, 2008; Reeder & Swavely, 2008; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011; Vorster, 1999; Wagner, 2012)

iii. **Objective**: Provide biblical teaching on leadership and church growth.

- *Method*: Literature study is done to determine how the biblical leaders in both the New and Old Testaments articulated God's will and purpose through their calling (e. g. Moses, David, Paul, and the master Leader, Jesus). Investigate the role that women played as servant leaders within the covenant community. Analysis of both related Scripture and literature to provide the principles of biblical leadership. Additional literature consulted on missional church leadership (Jenson & Stevens, 1981; Kube, 2013; McGavran, 1990; Cole, 2007; McNeal, 2009; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011; Wagner, 2012) and many more related books and articles

iv. **Objective**: Establish practical guidelines and strategies that could be implemented for a real turn–around and church growth within the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

- *Method*: Research of the deputies for a turn-around strategy and the deputies for church growth and literature study used to highlight the gaps between biblical leadership and the leadership in the Reformed Churches in South Africa and how it can be narrowed or closed. Osmer (2008:140) suggests that a proposed guideline is the "task of forming and enacting strategies that influence events in ways that are desired." The analysed data from literature and research of deputies provided the foundation on which the guidelines for healthy church growth are developed and backed by leadership examples of Jesus' leadership and other biblical leaders (Moses, David, Peter, and Paul.

v. Establish the needs of church leadership that are necessary for enhancing their spiritual gifts for effectiveness in church growth.

- Method: The deep study of Ephesians 4:11–16 established the leadership spiritual gifts as the means for church growth. The relevant literature and other related passages of Scripture highlighted that the ministers of the Word are responsible for church growth if they are effective in their spiritual gifts. Church decline is an indicator that the leadership has problems to execute their functions. Turn-around and church growth can only be realised if the leaders are empowered for effectiveness.

vi. **Objective**: Draw conclusions, make recommendations, and summaries of answers to each question.

- *Method*: Use the overall results of the study to make recommendations to the RCSA. The focus is contributing to the field of leadership in the RCSA.

7.4.   Osmer's hermeneutical spiral

This present study focused specifically on the four tasks of Osmer's hermeneutical spiral (Osmer, 2008:4). In addition, further insights were considered such as the notion of prophetic integrity and cruciform praxis model by Kritzinger and Saayman (2011). Each of the four tasks according to Osmer was dealt with in the present study as follows:

i. **Descriptive–empirical**: *What is going on*? The need is gathering information for an improved understanding of specific episodes, situations, and actions that are taking place, in this case within the Western church, as well as the RCSA.

ii.   **Interpretive**: *Why is this going on*? Engaging in dialogue with the social sciences to determine why the prevailing situation occurs. In the case of the study, this provides diagnoses of the cause for the cause of decline within the RCSA.

iii. **Normative**: *What ought to be going on*? (Osmer, 2008:135) explains: "Prophetic discernment is the task of listening to the Word and interpreting it in ways that address …" the present decline in Protestant churches and the RCSA.

iv.   **Pragmatic**: *How might we respond*? This is the "task of forming and enacting strategies that influence events in ways that are desired" (Osmer, 2008:140). In this case the focus was providing a model that leads to turn-around in the RCSA.

8.   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study utilised primary sources. Thus, no human participation was employed to gather information. Care was taken in the interpretation of the data from the sources that the information was presented clearly as it is. Therefore, the study did not pose any ethical risk.

9.   CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The following concepts are central to the present study:

Healthy Church: Church composed of Christ-like congregants. The members, through the work of the Holy Spirit displays the fruit of the Spirit in a Christ-like manner.

Church leadership: Those people leading, formally and informally, in various capacities in the church structures.

Qualitative growth: Christians who lead their life in the various dimensions, according to the biblical principles. Their quality of life is displaying a growing and deepening faith.

Quantitative growth: The numerical increase of the church.

Responsible Christians: Flowers of Christ who are determined to live an obedient Christ–like life.

Church growth: Numerical increase as well as spiritual development of congregants.

Church decline: Numerical decrease as well as spiritual degeneration of congregants.

Missional leaders: Leaders who participate actively in the God's own mission to bring all peoples to Himself.

Missional church: Followers of Christ whose actives go beyond their congregation.

10. CLASSIFICATION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: A comparative investigation of church decline in the West and in the Reformed Churches in South Africa: measuring more than numbers

Chapter 3: Leadership problems within the Reformed Churches in South Africa which is hindering growth.

Chapter 4: Biblical teaching on leadership and church growth.

Chapter 5: Practical guidelines and strategies for a real revitalisation and healthy church growth within the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Chapter 6: Summary of the four articles considering Ephesians 4:11–16

Chapter 7: Summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2:   ARTICLE 1

CHURCH DECLINE:
A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION ASSESSING MORE THAN
NUMBERS

1.   ABSTRACT

Studies on church growth and decline were done in different parts of the world. This article explores church decline that is continuing in the world's mainline Protestant churches and is also affecting the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA). It is done from a missiological framework, and the description goes beyond numbers in establishing decline to focus more on quality of believers. Membership quality is all that the church strives for in all believers, and failure to reach that goal, leads to decline. The study utilised only primary sources to describe the decline realised in these churches; thus, no human subjects were involved. The various reports of the RCSA deputies for turn-around and church growth as well as the relevant literature provided the data required for the present research. The numerical data explain the trends of church decline that is taking place in Protestant churches globally and locally which includes the RCSA. These findings are substantiated by the definitions of church decline and church growth as well as indications of church health highlighting 'what happens' to the church in a specific context. The explanation of key concepts and Schwarz's (1996) Natural Church Development (NCD) benchmarks provided the lenses to evaluate the membership statistics of Protestant churches including the RCSA. Through the application of these key concepts and benchmarks, it became evident that the ongoing numerical reduction in membership, which began in 1994, is proof of church decline in the RCSA.[1]

2.   INTRODUCTION

Based on the testimony running from the Old Testament through to the New Testament, God chose a specific people whom he tasked as his messengers in the world to take part in the *missio Dei* (Kaiser, 2000:10, 22; Peters, 1972:160). Israel was called in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament as the agents making God present to the world. This

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[1]   RCSA Deputies are elected men who are tasked to spearhead a project or ministry. Deputies for turn-around and church growth are responsible to guide the church towards new strategies in this regard.

makes the church responsible for reaching out to different nations and lead them to Christ (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus gave the 'marching orders' to the church with his command that the believers must reach out with the Good News to all peoples. Three aspects in the Great Commission are worth noting:

i. Jesus has total authority in heaven and on earth to accomplish the *missio Dei* through the church in the world.

ii. The church is sent to all peoples with the Gospel and to incorporate converts into God's kingdom family, which results in growth.

iii. Christ promised to be with the church all the time while fulfilling the Great Commission.

These three aspects make church decline a missiological problem, as under usual circumstances growth should be realised instead. The Great Commission provides both the goal and emphasis of the church's outreach to the world. When the church participates in the Great Commission, disciples of Christ are made from all peoples on the face of the earth (Conn, 1976:61–62; Cross, 2014:93; Peters, 1972:188; Shenk, 1983:99). The *missio Dei* is constituted of two aspects that are revealed in Jesus' command to the church (Matthew 28:18–20). Firstly, the kingdom family is meant to grow in quantity, as the world is led to Christ through the witnessing of the church. Secondly, the converted peoples should be fed with the Word to become disciples of Christ and 'grow in quality'.

The purpose of this article was to describe the ongoing church decline in Protestant churches globally and locally. Further attention was paid to the decline occurring in the Western world, South Africa, and especially, in the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA). Central to this article is the description of decline based on the missiological foundations of the church that is anchored in the quality of members or disciples of Christ (Matthew 20:20). Membership's statistical reflection collaborates with their quality to determine what is going on in the church. In this regard, the study used research question 1 of Osmer (2008:4): 'What is going on?' This query, called 'priestly listening' by Osmer (2008:34), formed the basis for discussing the context of the present study: situations in Protestant churches globally and in the RCSA. This research question also provides the boundary to the study. Thus, only information was gathered that reflects the mentioned context of the study. The gathered information is presented in tables and the trends for the various contexts compared and discussed.

A further aim was using the definition of key concepts and the Natural Church Development (NCD) quality principles (Schwarz 1996) to validate the numerical data that are presented for

the Protestant churches. The definition of church growth and decline in accordance with the NCD principles is used to explain the statistical trends of the Protestant church and thereby establishing whether there is indeed decline. The premise is that church decline and growth is not only measured by the quantity of members, but also their quality. The NCD does not make up the core of the present study, seeing that these guidelines are only used to describe the life of a biblically oriented church.

Therefore, statistics and accompanying explanations are important to investigate the quality and quantity of members in congregations before concluding whether church growth or decline is taking place. Overall, scholars agree that aspects of church growth or decline are understood better through clear definitions of the two key concepts and by providing relevant figures (Chung, 2014:35; Roxburgh & Boren, 2009:118; Wagner, 1998:22–23). Defining qualitative and quantitative growth provides better insight into whether the numerical trends among churches show growth or decline. The NCD principles and key concepts establish parameters that are used to establish whether there is church decline in Protestant churches globally and locally in the RCSA. The numerical data of churches are presented below.

3.   THE TRENDS IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES ACROSS THE WORLD

3.1. Church decline in the world

Research on membership trends shows an ongoing decline in membership within Protestant churches in different countries worldwide. Thus, the focus of the present study is what is ongoing in the mentioned churches, hence growth in the denominations that do not fall under Protestant churches is not considered. Protestant churches in the Western countries indicate the largest figures of membership decline in the world (Krejcir, 2007:7). Table 1 presents the figures for church decline compared to the global average as well as the decline in South African Protestant churches.

Table 1: **Countries that indicated higher than global rates of Protestant church decline (2005–2012).**

Country	2005 (%)	2012 (%)	Reduction of members (%)
Global average of total population	77	68	−9
Australia	52	42	−10
Canada	58	46	−12
Ecuador	85	70	−15
France	58	37	−21
Iceland	74	57	−17
Ireland	69	47	−22
South Africa	83	64	−19
Switzerland	71	50	−21
United States	73	60	−13
Vietnam	53	39	−23

Source: Krejcir, 2007:7.

Table 1 above indicates that the identified countries reported high rates of membership decline in various parts of the world. Such reduction numbers indicate that churches globally are having to deal with numerical decline. However, dealing with numerical decline is possible when the church first attend to membership spirituality. These high reduction figures are taken during a period of seven years (2005–2012). The Western countries comprise 77. 7% of global reduction, while the other parts of the world, combined, indicate a reduction of 22. 3%. South Africa is the only African country among the 10 with the highest decline rate, implying that it is at the top of the list of membership declines in Africa as a whole.

3.2. Protestant Churches decline in the Western world

To show further membership decline rates in the Western world, Bendavid (2015:3) provides the following graphic illustration of the percentages of Christians in specific European countries. This graph is presented in Figure 1.

Christians in selected European countries–2002 to 2012
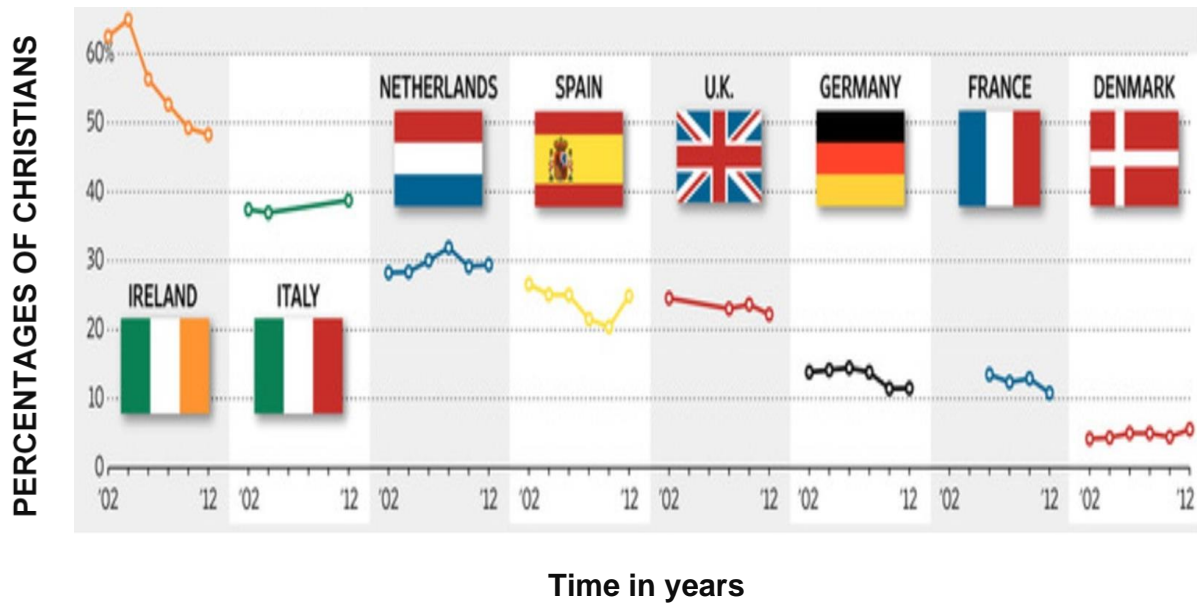
Figure 1:   Protestant Christians in selected European countries (2002–2012).

Source: Bendavid, 2015:3.

The graph above shows decreasing percentages of members who profess to be Christians in the European countries under investigation. Ireland indicated the highest Christians membership of 60% in 2002 which declined to 49% in 2012. This is a membership decrease of 11% over a period of 10 years. The rest of the countries indicated that less than 40% of their population were Christians in 2002, which, in most cases, implies a further percentage decrease during the period under study. Despite Italy's steady increase in Christian percentages over the 10 years, the highest percentage was 39%, which still indicates a low membership. Spain shows a decrease from 28% to 20%, and thereafter a slight increase to 25%. Nevertheless, this increase does not enhance its Christian membership. Regarding the percentages in these selected European countries, Bendavid (2015:3) concludes that even though the churches did not close their doors, the pews were empty. In other words, the membership declines warranted closure of churches, but officials decided to continue with mostly empty pews.

3.2.1.   Discussion of church decline in the Western Protestant Churches

The data from Table 1 and Figure 1 validates the findings by Meacham (2009:3) about a sharp decline from 1999 to 2009 in Protestant membership in the Western world with a subsequent rise in the number of people who consider themselves non-Christians. Seemingly, the

commitment to Protestant Christianity was overridden by following a non-Christian way of life. In the same vein, figures of people in the West attesting to be atheist increased rapidly from 1 million to 3. 6 million (Meacham, 2009:3). This concurrency in the drop of Western Christian membership and the rise in professed atheists may lead to the deduction that members who left the Protestant churches affected the increasing growth rates of atheism in the West. The reason is that church decline result from members who are spiritually immature (McKee, 2003:22), and these can be part of the atheist cohort by virtue of their spirituality.

Krejcir (2007:1) notes that American Protestant churches declined by 5 million members (i.e. −9.5%) from 1990 to 2000. He adds that half the churches did not add new members for two years preceding 2007. The result was the continuous decline of membership. For example, in 1995, the mentioned American churches had lost between one fifth and one third of its total membership (Johnson, 2004:13). From 1980 to 1989 there was an average of −10% decline in membership and it increased to −12% from 1990 to 1999 (Krejcir, 2007:1). The scholar adds that although the average was found to be −12% from 1990 to 1999, certain congregations indicated a membership decline of up to −40%.

A similar scenario of ongoing decline in American Protestant churches is also found in the European countries as shown in Figure 2.1 above. Bendavid (2015:4, 7) argues that the high decline rate in Europe led to the closure of certain congregations. The scholar points out that numerous of these former church buildings in Europe currently have been turned into galleries, clothes shops, bars (pubs). Thus, the 'white elephant' church buildings were sold off for other uses. Mabry-Nauta (2015:22) reports that on average, nine churches close their doors daily in America due to the high decline rates as shown in Table 1. Similarly, UK church attendance was halved and in Germany, 50% of the population attest that they do not believe in God. Van der Walt (2009:253) points out that in Europe, 35 000 church members exit church life every week, and in England 1 500 left the church during the same period. The decline in membership in Protestant churches globally indicates a church that is not fulfilling God's purpose in church growth (Nel & Schoeman. 2015:22). Growth is not possible in a church that does not have full expression of its intended purpose in its community.

3.3. Church decline in South Africa

Christianity in South Africa has been on the increase since the missionary era. South Africa was known as a Christian country whose governance was aligned to biblical principles (Elphick & Davenport, 1997:277). Being a Christian country meant that Christians had an advantage in national matters. Such a context may have influenced 'outsiders' to become part of the Christian family. The motives would not be their love for Christ, but to pursue individual

interests. Those who became church members for personal gain were in the church and not of the church. Notwithstanding the motivation of adherents, the membership numbers were on the increase in South Africa.

This trend for Protestant churches only changed since the 1980s when it shifted from growth to decline, which is ongoing (Goodhew, 2000:358). As is the case with the West, South African Protestant churches are continuously losing members, which leads to the closure of certain congregations (Elphick & Davenport, 1997:397). Goodhew (2000:355–366) argues that decline in mainline Protestant churches in South Africa is affecting all groups of people in varying degrees. Nevertheless, it seems that black people record the highest percentage of membership decline. Hendriks and Erasmus (2001:39) point out that the black people constituted 54.4% of the total membership for the Protestant churches before 1991. However, the black population in these Protestant churches was reduced by 44%: from 54.4% to only 10.4% active members (Hendriks & Erasmus, 2001:39). Such a decrease affects the quantity of membership in the different Protestant denominations. Table 1 indicates that the South African membership decline rate raised above the global average. Church membership is positively or negatively affected by the context in which the church is found. Nel and Schoeman (2015:98–99) point out that the politics, education, health, economy, social and cultural aspects affect church membership in South Africa.

The membership decrease is also occurring in the RCSA. In 1930 the RCSA had a Christian membership of 48 806 which increased to 116 053 in 1987 (Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid Afrika, 2018:1). The synod of 1994 noticed membership decline in the RCSA (Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:428–432). In 1994, the RCSA membership figures had dropped by 2993 to 113 060 members, which implies a decline of 2.6%. In this regard, Hendriks (1995:41) found that during this period, membership decline in South Africa increased by 14.4% to 17%, highlighting why South Africa was the only country singled out from Africa with the highest Christian decline rates as was indicated in Table 1.

Table 2 provides statistics for decline in membership of white people and people of mixed race in different Protestant churches alongside their black counterparts. The reduction in white and mixed-race membership indicates that decline affects congregations across races. The liberal democracy observed by Van Zyl (2011:337) may have affected church quality for all races, which is influencing the quantity of members from the various churches.

Table 2:   Percentage decline in South African mainline churches for white- and people of mixed race (1985–1995).

Denomination	Decrease in white population (%)	Decrease in mixed race population (%)
Afrikaans Reformed	3	17
Anglicans	36	34
Congregational	24	24
Lutheran	28	15
Methodist	19	32
Presbyterian	30	−37

Source: Hendriks, 1995:41.

Table 2 shows that both the mixed race and white congregations experience membership reduction in varied percentages.

Goodhew (2000:355) points out that although all denominations in South Africa are experiencing decline, the Protestant churches are affected the most. He adds that the different Reformed church denominations are showing the highest percentage of decline in membership. These denominations plunged from 34% of the total Christians in 1911 to 15% in 1996: which explains their high decline rate of 19% (Goodhew, 2000:366). In the same vein, a survey, carried out by Khaya (2010:1), shows that Reformed church denominations were also heading the list of membership reduction in South Africa. The study established that these denominations recorded a decrease of 15% from 1996 to 2001.

Table 3 below indicates the decline rates of the RCSA and its sister denominations, namely the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (*Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk* [NGK]) and Dutch Reformed Churches in Africa (*Nederduits-Hervormde Kerk* [NHK]).

Table 3 shows the decline trends in the RCSA and the sister denominations from 1990 to 2007. The figures for the NGK indicate that from 1990 to 2000 there was a membership reduction of 39 976 and in the following seven years (2000–2007) the reduction was 29 013. The reduction in the same period for the NHK amounted 10 760 and 9 138 respectively. The RCSA indicated a membership reduction of 3 677 from 1990 to 2000 and 4 727 from 2000 to 2007. All three denominations show a growing membership reduction if the decline figures are compared for the period of 10 and seven years respectively.

Table 3:   Church decline in the Reformed Churches in South Africa compared to its sister denominations.

Year	NGK	NHK	RCSA
1990	958 736	131 697	78 629
2000	918 790	120 937	74 952
2005	894 429	112 756	70 660
2007	889 777	111 799	70 225

Source: Van Helden, 2013:7.

NGK, Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa; NHK, Nederduitsch Reformed Church in Africa; RCSA, Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Table 4:   Membership decline in the Reformed Churches in South Africa and the sister denominations.

Number of years	RCSA (%)	NGK (%)	NHK (%)
10 (1990–2000)	4. 7	4. 2	8. 2
7 (2000–2007)	6. 3	3. 2	7. 6
Difference	2. 6	1. 0	0. 6

Source: Van Helden, 2013:7

RCSA, Reformed Churches in South Africa; NGK, Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa; NHK, Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk in Afrika.

The RCSA indicates a higher rate of decline for seven years than during 10. This implies a 2.6% increase in membership declines in seven years compared to 10 years. The indication is that the rate of membership declines in static churches increase with time. Thus, figures are showing a continuous rise in membership decline in the RCSA. On the other hand, both the NGK and NHK had a lower membership decline for seven years than for 10 years. They both indicate lower percentages of membership reduction. The difference in membership reduction over the 10 and seven years are as follows: NGK 1% and NHK 0.6%.

Table 5 provides a more detailed reflection of the membership reduction in the RCSA. The decline is provided in intervals of varying years, namely 10, two, five and one. The figures indicate that the RCSA had a membership reduction of 16.72% from 1990 to 2000. This gives an annual average reduction of 1.7%. The decline from 2000 to 2002 was 1.7%, which gives

an annual average of 0.9%. These figures indicate a reduced percentage in membership declines. However, the years 2002 to 2007 recorded an average of 4.8%, which translates to an annual average of 1%. The percentage of membership reductions began growing again. Seemingly, the increase in membership reduction occurs annually, which is evidenced by a further annual reduction of 2% from 2007 to 2008.

Table 5:   Membership decline in the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Year	Declining trends
1990s	90 000
2000	74 952
2002	73 748
2007	70 225
2008	68 842

Source: Van der Walt, 2009:253.

Considering the previous exposition, Table 6 presents the figures for the RCSA membership from 2007 to 2019.

Table 6:   Statistics of Reformed Churches in South Africa membership (2007–2019).

Year	Classes	Congregations	Ministers	Adults (confessing)	Children (baptised)	Total
2007	27	296	238	70 225	19 854	90 079
2008	26	299	234	68 842	18 988	87 830
2009	27	301	273	77 068	23 761	100 829
2010	26	390	274	77 130	24 598	101 728
2011	27	389	277	76 621	25 058	101 679
2012	27	390	278	77 036	24 762	101 798
2013	27	397	276	75 287	24 135	99 422
2014	27	396	275	73 690	23 247	96 937
2015	27	394	273	71 588	22 521	94 109
2016	27	393	270	69 507	22 170	91 677
2017	27	389	265	67 945	21 622	89 567
2018	27	388	265	66 508	21 239	87 747
2019	27	388	254	64 572	20 593	85 165

Source: Administration Bureau, 2019:1.

Table 6 indicates both membership increase and reduction. The years 2007 and 2008 were added to this table in order to indicate an acute shift from membership declines in these 2 years to a marked rise in membership numbers in 2009. This increase in membership only occurred from 2009 to 2012 and the decline trend continued again from 2013 to 2019. Although the membership quantity reflects an increase from 2009 to 2012, the Administrative Bureau (Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid Afrika, 2018:1) stated that the rise in membership numbers was due to the unification of Synod Midlands classis Capricorn and Potchefstroom. In addition to the unification leading to the increase in membership figures, the Administrative Bureau reports that over the four years (2009–2012) (indicated in the table with bold face), certain black churches provided inaccurate information of membership. This error was realised afterwards and was corrected to reflect the actual membership. Nevertheless, there was neither numerical growth as such in this membership migration, nor was there evidence of spiritual growth. Numerical growth is accounted for in two ways as prescribed in the Bible (Genesis 12:2–3, 17:10; Matthew 28:19–20):

i.   Conversion of peoples from far and wide with the Gospel of truth (Matthew 28:19–20) which is also regarded as a blessing to all peoples (Genesis 12:3c).
ii. When believers' children commit themselves to the Lord (Genesis 12:2; 17:10).

This is discrediting the migration or transfer of members from one congregation or denomination to the other. In this regard, there is no evidence of new converts brought into the RCSA during the above-mentioned years except through unification, which involved those from the two sections who were RCSA members already. From the information provided by the Administrative Bureau (Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid Afrika, 2018:1), it was evident that the rise in membership numbers was not growth as such, as no new converts were identified.

The statistics from Table 6 shows membership reduction from the unified Synod Midlands classis Capricorn and the RCSA Potchefstroom from 2013 to 2019. This finding indicates that church decline continued in the RCSA even though the figures increased rapidly from 2009 to 2012 after the unification process. The figures show a membership decline of the unified church in both the members confessing their faith and those who were baptised. The reduction in the baptised and confessing members affects both the present and future of the RCSA. The reformed tradition upholds the sacrament of baptism. The baptised members are covenant children who are expected to be full RCSA members when they are adults. Reduction in baptised membership indicates reduced membership in the following years. The increase in baptised people points towards growth, whereas a decrease shows decline. The reduction in baptised members in 1994 seemingly affected the figures of those confessing their faith in the following years.

From 2013 to 2019, the figures of people confessing their faith decreased by 14.2%, which amounts to annual average decrease of 2%. The baptised members decreased by 24% in the same period; thus, an annual average decrease of 3.4%. The grand total decrease of the confessing and baptised members was reduced by 48.2%, which is an average decrease of 5.4% annually. The decrease of 48% over these seven years nearly halved the RCSA membership in the stated period. However, the figures show a slight decrease in annual membership reduction from May 2018 to May 2019 where numbers of confessing congregants decreased by 2.9% and those of the baptised members to 0.7%. Thus, the grand total decrease was 3.6% during that period. This amounts to 1.8% difference in annual membership reduction from 2013 to 2019 as well as between 2018 and 2019. Although this reduction is lower than average for the seven years (2013 to 2019), it is higher than the previous years (2007 to 2008), which entailed 2.5% membership decline.

Although membership reduction seemingly indicates decline in the Protestant churches, more information should be gathered. Thus, the collected data helps to describe whether the decline of membership can be considered as church decline or not. The statistical trend indicates membership decline against God's purpose in calling for church growth (Genesis 12:2–3; Matthew 28:19–20; Nel & Schoeman, 2015:20). If all other factors that might affect numerical decline are under control, these statistics indicate real church decline. Thus, real church decline indicates both qualitative and quantitative decline of membership. Therefore, it stands to reason that church decline and church growth goes beyond the numerical figures to include the quality of Christians.

3.4. Definitions of key concepts

Based on the conclusion above, clear delimitations are necessary to help understand the context of the research. The definition of key concepts sheds light on the relationship between the quantity, and especially quality aspects, which enhances all believers to be missional. It is a missiological concern that believers be an expression of God in their varied communities (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88) to transform them to be Christians. Relevant Scripture verses emphasise that the followers of Jesus Christ should both increase in number and exhibit the Christ-like character in who they are, what they say, and what they do to become his disciples (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 2:42). These Scriptures indicate the increase in numbers and in the knowledge of Christ. Therefore, it is untenable to substantiate church growth or decline only referring to membership numbers without considering the quality of the members comprising the congregation (Booth, Colombo & Williams, 2003:328). Without clear and articulate definitions describing the correlation between member's quantity (numerical) and quality

(spiritual), research would fail to describe the ongoing situation in the Protestant churches accurately. As explained, church decline or growth reaches beyond the membership numbers.

3.4.1. *Church growth*

Wagner (1998:75) defines church growth as a 'science which investigates the planting, multiplication and health of Christian churches, in response to the Great Commission'. Wagner concurs with McGavran (1990) on the importance of membership increase in church growth. He goes further to point out that the converted members should also live as healthy Christians. His argument is based on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) where the two dimensions of church growth, quantity and quality, are emphasised.

Numerical growth is an important biblical theme as demonstrated throughout the Scriptures. (e.g. Genesis 1:28; 12:3; Deut 2:34–35; Isaiah 11:9; Matthew 18–20). All these verses describe God's eternal plan that the whole world should come to know him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The inclusion of the whole world increases the numerical figures of the church. Nevertheless, mere increase in numbers cannot be used as exclusive measure of church growth. As the body of Christ, the church is expected to grow in both dimensions to be a healthy institution. There can be no quantity without quality. Numerical growth without quality is deformed, which is dangerous to the body of Christ. The reason is that numerous Christians in such a church are spiritually undernourished and unhealthy. Thus, they hampered from doing what is expected from the church of Christ (Costas, 1983:98). Mere increased numbers of members in a church who have not experienced an intimate relationship with Christ, result in superficial growth. The deficiency lies with members who do not reflect Christ's teaching about his church according to Matthew 28:19–20, namely being his disciples and imitating him.

Based on the discussion above, only spiritually mature members can fulfil the mandate of the church. All church members should be active parts of the body of Christ, reflecting his light into the world through their daily lives as suggested in the biblical testimony (Proverbs 4:18; Matthew 5:13a, 14; Romans 2:19; Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15).

In Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus emphasised the need for spiritual growth of all the members who are converted. Two out of three verbs πορευθέντες [going] and βαπτίζοντες [baptising] in Matthew 28:19 are participles. Only μαθητεύσατε [making] disciples is the main action verb pointing to the importance of the spiritual growth of converted members. Furthermore, Matthew 28:20 focuses on teaching the converts that Christ had taught. Such a command also aims at the spiritual growth of all converted members. In Acts 2:41–42, Luke indicates clearly

that those who were converted and added to the Early Church were devoted to the apostolic teaching. The latter teaching transformed the converted into disciples of Jesus and thereby accomplishing both numerical and spiritual growth of the church. The quality of members is therefore central in determining the state of the church. Thus, quantitative decline is a response to qualitative decline of members who are not missional to continue in the church or influence their communities to Christianity. The correlation of the two dimensions that comprise true biblical church growth is derived from Chaney and Lewis (1977:13) as explicated in the three postulates to follow:

Qualitative growth should produce quantitative growth unless its quality is suspect: Quality that does not lead to quantity is counterfeit and not genuine. Counterfeit quality occurs when members profess, but their lives do not testify of this claim. According to Luke 6:46 and Matthew 7:22–23, Jesus explains that he does not engage in a relationship with followers who lack quality. Without a relationship with Christ, church members are unable to transform other people, as they are not renewed themselves. They cannot give others what they do not have themselves.

Quantitative growth makes qualitative growth possible, as many people are converted (quantity) and then discipled, and thereby producing quality: Qualitative growth can only take place after quantitative growth. The reason is that the church can only disciple the converted people in their churches. Therefore, introducing new converts to churches provides the opportunity to develop quality in these members. Quantitative growth is the entrance-point to church growth which is destined to generate qualitative growth.

Quantitative growth that is not aimed at qualitative growth is unsustainable: Quantitative growth needs its qualitative content to increase if the growth is to be sustained. During latter growth only quality members remain in the church where more members can be led to Christ. This latter growth process naturally influences quantity.

3.4.2. Church decline

Reduction in church membership is often used to justify church decline, because such a decrease is not considered a trend for the church of Jesus Christ. Several scholars point out that a church is expected to grow and when there is reduction in membership, decline can be presumed (Chung, 2014; Goodhew, 2000:353; Hitchens, 2000). Although the mentioned scholars' argument is partially correct, it cannot be used as the cutting edge to define church decline. Membership reduction is a sign that processes occur that is not typical of being the church. Further investigation is necessary to determine the reasons for membership reduction.

A precise definition of church decline should focus on the relationship between the quality and quantity of members as growth takes place (Matthew 28:19–20).

A biblical standard of the church is realised when it functions as a united body of Christ. This is characterised by brotherly and sisterly love, unity and diversity of various members as enacted by the Apostolic church (Acts 2:42, 44). Four characteristics in the Apostolic church makes it grow in terms of the two dimensions of quantity and quality: κοινωνία [fellowship], προσκαρτεροῦντε τῇς διδαχῇ [devoting themselves to apostles' teaching], κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου [breaking of bread], and προσευχαῖς [prayer]. These church activities result in quality Christians who can transform their communities proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Membership service in the church leads to growth.

The life of the church, as mentioned above, fulfils the unity in the body which enables every member to serve; thus, growth is realised. Both unity and diversity are important for members to serve effectively in the body. When a number or all these attributes of a biblical church are absent, decline occurs. The case may be that a spiritually filled church loses members due to other reasons such as relocation to other areas. In such instances, a church cannot consider to be in decline, because the few remaining members possesses the required attributes. Real church decline occurs when quality is absent among members or when both quality and quantity have decreased.

After examining the two dimensions closely, it can be concluded that in most cases, spiritual decline precedes the numerical one. The reason is that a church with spiritually immature leaders and members conform to the standards of the Word, which are in opposition to the will of God for the church (Romans 12:2a; 1 Peter 1:14; 4:2). Members who have deviated from the guidelines provided in the verses above, can be considered in spiritual decline. As a result, exiting members leave the church without new members being incorporated.

Members whose spirituality has declined, are not able to influence numerical growth through biological numbers, transfer and conversion; instead, they leave the church of their own accord (Goppelt, 1970:34; Reeder & Swavely, 2008:64; Stoll & Petersen, 2008:252). The argument is that as the members are unable to impact any one of the three dimensions of growth, the church is failing its mandate and the result is church decline. If a church deviates from God's purpose for its reason to exist, it ceases to influence its community. As a result, the members' holiness, love and communion deteriorates and eventually become non-existent (Costas, 1983:100). In other words, a church that has deteriorated spiritually, does not participate in the missional duties of a healthy church.

A deteriorating church does not attract new people or influence their family members to follow Christ; thus, no numerical growth occurs. Eventually, such a church becomes unhealthy (Jenson & Stevens, 1981:17–19) – neither leading other people to Christ, nor retaining its own members. Such a church becomes irrelevant to both the community and the members themselves who would leave it at a certain stage. Membership continue to decrease, because no new converts are introduced into the church to replace those who had left (Goppelt, 1970:34; Reeder & Swavely, 2008:64). A spiritually declining church affect both the mature Christians and those who have conformed to the standards of this world. The mature Christians leave the church, because they cannot see themselves being part of a deteriorating church culture, while the other group leaves, because they have lost their love for Christ.

A stagnant church reflects the members' spiritual coldness, which cannot lead to growth. McIntosh (2009:71) provides the following characteristics of a church in spiritual decline that manifests in membership reduction or stagnation:

i.   Members are without the knowledge of salvation by grace. Lack of adequate knowledge about this vital doctrine, inevitably leads to spiritual decline.
ii.   Members' character is not aligned with Christian ethics.
iii. Converts are led to the church without true repentance, and their lives remain unchanged.

Therefore, a stagnant church only moves in the direction of decline when members die or leave the church for one reason or the other. A church that does not participate actively in its community by reflecting Jesus' character, has ceased to practice its faith. This is an indicator of declined spiritually, which would also lead to numerical decline (Costas, 1983:104). Becoming a stagnant church is the first turning point from growth to decline.

3.4.3. Church growth

Numerous scholars point out that meaningful church growth focuses on church health where all converted members are led to become disciples of Jesus, (McKee, 2003:17; Reeder & Swavely, 2008:31; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:118; Stetzer & Putman, 2006:25). A healthy church will lead as many people as possible to Christ and endeavour to make them disciples of Jesus as in the case of members who are committed already. Such transformation is reached when converted members adhere to the biblical principles in their daily lives, being led by the Spirit of God. The members' desire would be to glorify God in all aspects of life as articulated by Paul in his letters (e.g. 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17). Based on the Reformer, Calvin's view, Christ is testified as King in all areas of life and should be revered in

these spheres. According to this belief, Christ rules in the members' congregations, families, workplaces and other multiple areas of their lives. Having an intimate relationship with Christ is the only channel that allows his followers to function effectively. Applied to a congregation, such relationship amounts to church health. Church health thus entails the growth of its members' quantity as well as quality. Therefore, a church that indicates no growth in these two dimensions can be considered as dead. The reason is clear: as a body of Christ, a church must grow, unless it is diseased on a spiritual level (Jenson & Stevens, 1981:19). It is therefore best to measure a specific church's effectiveness in terms of its spiritual health status rather than membership numbers and ostensive size of the congregation (Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:118; White & Ford, 2003:39). Church growth, based on biblical guidelines, means continually introducing new members and teaching them to obey Christ's teaching. A healthy church thus follows the Jesus model of church growth according to which converted people should all be made his disciples (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). This model was used successfully by the apostles in planting healthy churches.

A healthy growing church is a missional one whose members present themselves in the communities where they live and applying the love of Christ to all people (Costas, 1983:102). Such a church aims to spread the gospel of Christ globally, leading as many people as possible to Christ. Missional congregants are not confined to the four walls of their church building but are launched beyond the congregation. Such a church implements processes to ensure the converted members to receive adequate discipleship training and to help them mature spiritually. The aim is that all members who are affiliated to this congregation become true disciples of Jesus striving to glorify God in the various spheres of life (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Two important aspects regarding a healthy church can be highlighted:

i.   It incorporates *quality members* who will remain in the church.
ii. These quality Christians participate actively in the *Great Commission* where they lead others to become disciples like them.

3.5. Insight gained from the definition of terms

The quantitative and qualitative growth of members are the two determinant factors that indicate church growth or decline. These dimensions are important to shed light on 'what is happening' in the church (Osmer, 2008:4). The quality of members affects the quantity in the direction of growth or decline. If the members are spiritually mature (quality), their quantity increases. If the quality of the members is weak (spiritually immature), the quantity is reduced.

The reason is clear: The members cannot influence other people to become Christians and even the spiritually weak members would not remain in the church. The quality dimension is important for church health. In this regard, quality members are the light and salt of the world (Matthew 5:13–14). Their daily lives are characterised by the love of Christ that attracts other people to their congregations. Such members' deeds witness Christ in all aspects of life (Conn, 1976:62).

Applicable benchmarks can be established for biblically based quality in congregations implementing Schwarz's (2006:21 & 1996:19) NCD quality principles. These quality principles are generic and can lead to spiritual growth of the concerned members in congregations. It follows that the wide range of nations and peoples involved in the project, represent the various population groups on the face of the earth. The fact that in all the 1 000 churches across the world, the NCD principles proved effective, is enough testimony of their effectiveness and applicability to all nations. Schwartz's (Schwartz, 2006:13) further elucidation on the wide use of the NCD principles and the translation of the model in several languages of those using it, indicates at their effectiveness. The fact that six out of the eight NCD principles were directly taken from the Bible (Asby, 2006:8), further support their relevance in church growth. The fact that the NCD principles are aimed at developing the Christ–like character among believers, makes it relevant to the church, which has the mandate to reflect the light of Christ in the world (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88); the light that has the power to influence numerical growth. The eight NCD quality principles are discussed below:

i. **Empowering leadership:** The minister of religion concentrates on developing the ministry of the congregation by identifying, developing and mentoring the leadership 'to become all that God wants them to be'. (Schwarz, 2006:24 & 1996:22). The empowered leadership can influence quality in ministries of their various congregations as they equip the believers appropriately.

ii. **Gifted-oriented ministry:** The empowered leadership helps the congregants discover their gifts and develop them. Thus, the believers are enabled to serve actively in the body and thereby building the quality of members, which is characterised by commitment of faith–being missional.

iii. **Passionate spirituality:** Quality believers' lives are committed to 'practice their faith with joy and enthusiasm' (Schwarz, 2006: 27 & 1996:26). A church that is committed and enthusiastic to its faith, fulfils the Great Commandment – loving God totally and the neighbour unconditionally (Matthew 22:36–40). For the concerned believers, their wholehearted devotion to God and others compel them to be Christ-like.

iv. **Functional structures:** The structures of the church tend to promote rather than inhibit active participation of congregation members. The more the members are motivated to serve in the congregation, the larger the number of people introduced into the church and who are discipled.

v. **Inspiring worship:** Believers are inspired by true worship that let them gaze at the face of the Lord: engage with the Word, prayers, music in such a way that congregants experience the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Regarding such worship, Schwarz (2006:30 & 1996:31) argues that when "worship is inspiring, it draws people to the services 'all by itself'".

vi. **Holistic small groups:** The membership's cohesion deepens their love, which is the essence of church health. New members are introduced and discipled more readily in small groups than at congregation level.

vii. **Need-oriented evangelism:** The focus of this principle is to develop bridges that help share the gospel by meeting the felt need of the people to be evangelised. The developed relationship between the church members and the target population creates an interest in non-believers to listen to the gospel, which is the Holy Spirit's instrument for conversion.

viii. **Loving relationships:** Members' commitment to others connects the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Full commitment to others and to God lead the members concerned to introduce other people to the church and disciple them.

Therefore, the absence of, or minimising the NCD principles, impacts the quality dimension negatively, which also affects quantity. Schwarz (2006 & 1996) argues that these NCD principles are the basis for church growth without which the church declines. It falls outside the scope of the present study to research specific church activities in order to determine whether Schwarz's NCD principles are realised. Nevertheless, the trends of membership seem to point at a lack of the quality dimension in the church. The quality of the RCSA membership that is portrayed in the deputies for turn–around and church growth, indicate the quality of members that cannot stand for God in the world (RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:492–495).

4.   CONCLUSION

Most studies on church growth and decline attribute membership decline (numerically) to church decline. The present study pointed out that actual church growth and decline goes beyond membership numbers. The starting point in describing 'what is going on' in Protestant churches globally and the RCSA was by clarifying the key concepts: church growth, church

decline and healthy church growth. Such clarification and the NCD quality principles helped to give meaning to the membership statistics, which require external criteria. Schwarz's findings showed that the NCD quality principles for church health work similarly in various contexts. Thus, it can be concluded the absence of NCD quality principles may result in a spiritually immature congregation (compromised quality) that leads to decline in membership (quantity).

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CHAPTER 3:   ARTICLE 2

LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD PROTESTANT CHURCHES AND THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA ARE CONTRIBUTING TO CHURCH DECLINE

1. ABSTRACT

Studies on church growth or decline and leadership were carried out in different parts of the world but not much was done on how leadership incapacity negatively affect growth. Church leaders influence both church growth and decline depending on how they perform their functions. The present study describes how incapacity of leaders affect both the quality and quantity of members. However, quality is presented as core in determining decline in the present study, since it influences quantity. Thus, it is important to explore how problems in leadership act as obstacles to membership quality. To establish that the identified[2] leadership gaps affect the quality of membership, Schwarz's Natural Church Development (NCD) quality principles were used as benchmarks for determining members' quality. Findings from the Deputies of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) and those from other studies were used to indicate present leadership problems that affect their functions. These leadership problems flow from the ministers of the Word who are not trained to be trainers in their congregations. Thus, they cannot empower the elders, the deacons, and the membership for active service in their congregations. Discussions on how the World Protestant Church leadership affects church growth and decline is described briefly while that on the RCSA in more detail

Key words: leadership problems, servant leadership, theological education, church decline, church growth, Reformed Churches

2. INTRODUCTION

The church, like any other organisation needs leadership in its various ministries and structures to lead it towards its envisaged goals (Weems, 2010:15). In this regard, the leadership of the Protestant Churches is responsible for guiding believers in the direction of God. Herein, the leadership effectiveness leads to church growth which fulfils the purpose of

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[2]   Loopholes in the leadership that affect the way they should execute their functions effectively

God with his church. Church growth is realised firstly if members are transformed from worldly to being disciples of Christ who live according to his will and purpose. The growth aspect can be seen in various dimensions:

- Members who are converted to Christ and would lead new lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ add up to the Kingdom of God, that is people who are governed by the biblical principles – quality growth (Niemandt, 2019: 6; Guder, 2015:104). Looking at the parable of lost items in Luke (15:1–32), the celebration over one repented sinner is a good example of the joy when people move from darkness (world) into the light (Christ). The Great Commission, Matthew (28:18–20) commands believers to reach out to peoples and make the converted to being disciples of Jesus Christ. This command and its emphasis on Acts (1:8), underscores the need for church growth.
- Members of the Kingdom of God on the face of the earth, awaiting its consummation, live the life that is capable of transforming peoples for Christ. Their being salt and light in Christ is the testimony that lead people to Christ (Niemandt, 2019:6), thereby influencing the numerical increase of membership. The church growth process needs effective leadership that can discern the purpose of God with his church always, and act accordingly.

Thus, leadership effectiveness is the leaders' abilities to influence the members to embrace the purpose (mission) of God with the world, owns it and move towards it. God's mission is that all the nations of the world are filled with his knowledge (Hebrews14). The church is his agent through which He works his mission in the world. Thus, the church is to cooperate with God in his mission, making the purpose of the church missiological. It is missiological, because all the activities the church does are geared towards the mission of God, hence are mission that are derived from his grand purpose: *mission Dei* (Cole, 2007:9). It is therefore the calling of the church to participate in the mission of God, unless it is disobedient. This implies that the church reaches out to several nations with the gospel, which transforms them for Christ. The church leadership should prepare the church in such a way that the life of members reflect the message they proclaim (Cole, 2007:9; Niemandt, 2019:6; Stackhouse,2003:141), to be a true expression of God in the peoples they are witnessing to.

Nevertheless, membership decline in Protestant Churches globally and in the RCSA locally points to leadership failure in accomplishing its calling: to guide the church towards growth (Morrison, 2014:56). It follows, that membership decline is not what the church is striving for. The present scenario indicates leadership loopholes, that are barriers to church health, thus contributing towards decline. The reason is that the leadership was given various gifts by Jesus Christ that are necessary for transforming believers to be Christ–like, thus qualitative

growth. Problems in various leadership offices produce members who lack the qualities of Christ. These members are not the light that can dislodge the darkness in the world, and that is qualitative decline. Along the same lines, a church that fails "to give expression to God's purpose for humans", ceases to exist for its call (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88). The leadership for such churches is seemingly unable to align the membership to the will of God, to whom the church belongs. The argument is that the church leadership's calling is to help members move in the direction of God. The leadership does that by controlling several variables that might cause church decline (Niemandt, 2012:9). This makes the leadership hold a central position as God's agents in enhancing church growth. Nevertheless, this central position bears fruits when leaders have capacity and church decline is an indicator of lacking such capacity.

Such incapacity was demonstrated by the RCSA's leadership inability to harness church decline in a period exceeding two decades: 1994 to 2020 (RCSA Deputies for ministers training, 2018d:971-972; RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:428–431). Such a prolonged period of church decline shows leadership failure to implement its main task: spearheading membership transformation from what they had been to what God wants them to be. Paul articulates that the role of the leadership is to develop quality members (Ephesians 4:12–16), who can contribute towards the growth of the body of Jesus Christ. When all members actively participate in the church, growth is imminent. This follows that church growth is from Jesus Christ who gave members and the leadership the gifts that are necessary for building the body of Christ (Cole, 2005:9). From this argument, church decline is clearly falling back from the purpose of God with his church, because the body of Christ is not growing as it is intended. To reiterate growth, is a product of leadership capacity to influence the quality of members which in turn affect the quantity.

The present article establishes that church growth is not happening, because the leadership did not develop members to be quality Christians, who are real disciples of Christ and are also capable of making disciples of others. The church can only influence its communities, if its life in all that is done, reflects Christ (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88). Thus, membership quality is a product of discipleship from the leadership, without which the church cannot grow in any way. Discipleship includes teaching the church to observe everything that Christ taught (Matthew, 20:2a), which urges members to embrace the Word, and thus being Christ–like (John 14:21–24). Central to this study, is the investigation of various leadership functions to identify obstacles in making Christ-like members, who may be able to fulfill God's call for the church.

Schwarz (2006 & 1996) provides the eight Natural Church Development (NCD) quality principles, that are ideal for membership quality. These principles were drawn from the Bible and were tested in several churches across various parts of the world, where it proved to be

effective in each case (Dadisman, 2008; Jiao, 2009; Scwartz, 2006 & 1996). The emphasis is that quality of members naturally happens, when the eight NCD quality principles are implemented. The present study interprets 'natural' not to mean without the input of man but emphasises that church growth remains with Jesus Christ (Cole, 2007:9–10). The called leadership has their obligation of descending the signs that might humper growth, and work on them (Niemandt, 2012:9). From the verses, Schwartz derived the natural aspect of church growth (1 Cor 3:7; Mark, 4:1–9 & 26–29), they highlight the responsibility of man in broadcasting the seed and watering the plant, though God causes the growth of plants. In other words, the leadership had to influence the members to embrace the whole truth of God as the Spirit of God leads them. It is the God who give the members grace to be converted to being real new creatures who express God everywhere they are. Thus, God calls the leadership to cooperate with Him in what He is already doing in the World. God chose to use man in his mission, though He has the capacity to do his mission without man, hence man cannot choose to be passive in the mission of God but has an input in that which God is already doing. Thus, the leaders must play their part in the *missio Dei* that will enhance quality of members, as described by Scwarz (2006 & 1996). As such, under-passing any one of these, affect the membership quality of the membership in one way or another. When quality is affected, the quantity is affected also, because it is the Christ–like Christians who can influence other for Christ is leading to numerical increase (Cole 2007:7–9) The present study used the NCD quality principles as benchmarks, to determine the presence or absence of membership quality. Thus, without quality members, quantity is neither influenced nor sustained – thus the church declines (Chaney & Lewis, 1977:13).

The aims of the present study are therefore the following:

i.   To establish the reason why the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA are experiencing a continuing decline.
ii. To indicate the missing NCD quality principles that affect membership quality.

The present study endeavours to provide possible leadership gaps that cause church decline in World Protestant Churches and the RCSA. The various reports of the RCSA deputies on the trends and membership of the RCSA unveils the quality that is lacking among members, which causes those trends in membership. These provide answers to Osmer's (2008:413) research question 2: "Why is this [church decline] going on?"

Although the various leaders are important in guiding the church towards growth, the present study identifies the minister of the Word as the key player of the congregational leadership in the RCSA. The reason is that he receives formal training in the ministry of the Word, which is

foundational for church existence and health. This training is meant to equip the minister of the Word to empower the other congregational leadership, so that together, they can spearhead church growth. Furthermore, certain ministers are called to teach at the seminary as professors in several fields of theology. Again, their previous training affects the way they teach in the seminary. Therefore, shortcomings in the ministry of the Word affect church revitalisation and healthy growth in various ways. The leadership problems are discussed next.

3. LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS IN WORLD PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Leadership problems are the factors that stand as obstacles in enhancing the spiritual (quality) growth of members. Spiritually immature members cannot voice the expression of Christ in the World (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88). Their lives do not exhibit much difference from the world if they lack the quality of a new creation in Jesus Christ. A lack of membership quality attributes to leadership incapacity to influence believers, and this is causing a membership decline in Protestant Churches globally (Morrison, 2014:56). The argument is that the church leadership are ordained to help members to move to wards the will of God with his church (qualitative and quantitate) growth (Niemandt, 2012:9–10; Weems, 2010: 7–10). This stands to reason that obstacles to leadership capacity to help the members, result in both qualitative and quantitative decline. The reason is that the membership could not be all God wants them to be, which is a product of the leadership's intervention through their God given gits (Ephesians 4:11–16). Various leadership issues were identified in Protestant Churches and as well in the RCSA. These problems include a lack of commitment to the missional call of the church, ineffective leadership functions, ineffective theological education and numerous leadership functions (Hirsh, 2006:14; McNamara & Davis, 2005:33; Reeder, 2008:64; Sweet, 2004:12–13). These authors allude that underperforming in the identified leadership aspects causes the failure of the church to be all that God wants with his church. Each of these leadership flaws is discussed to indicate how they seem to contribute to church decline, rather than curtailing it. The church is called to participate with God in his mission, which would result in church growth. The leadership's core responsibility is to guide the members towards this growth agenda of the church, and failure of aids leads to a decline in members. In this regard, the growth or decline of the church points at the leadership capacity to lead the members towards the destination of God. It is because the leadership has the mandate to discern the needs of the church that influence members to be spiritually mature (Mutavhadsindi & Meiring, 2014:2; Niemandt, 2012:9). A lack of discernment obscure leadership from enhancing transformation in the membership. Leadership problems include the following aspects:

3.1. Ineffective theological education

The professionalisation of ministers' work has influenced Protestant church leadership to lose the primacy of Scriptures. They rather focus on studying to obtain higher degrees (Elliston, 1988:204; Fanning, 2009:2&210; Krejcir, 2008:1). Loosing the primacy of Scripture is failure to embrace and implement that which the Lord called the leadership for. The primary source for leadership guidelines is the Bible, which is understood by anyone who studies it in humility and with the ear waiting to hear what God is saying. This if the work of the Spirit and not degrees of higher learning. The curriculum is taught in a vacuum without the cultural context of the trainee ministers of the Word (Werner, 2011:8; Niemandt, 2019:4). The result is that the congregations have ministers, with adequate academic knowledge but lacking the desired practical aspect of the ministry. The RCSA ministers of the Word graduate with a Master of Divinity, but the church decline trend continues. This is testimonial that the Master of Divinity they acquire from seminary, is not impacting the church to revitalisation. These ministers could not transform the elders, deacons, and members to fulfil the purpose of the church, which is key in transforming their communities. The seminary focus should be the Triune God as understood best in a different context that the church aligns to His as He is the one responsible for church growth (Cole, 20007:7 –9). The principles such as multiple church leadership, love and care, and the dependence on God for church growth are embedded in the Bible but understood differently in various contexts. Missing or under passing these leaderships principle, result in leadership that cannot guide the church towards the destination of God.

Though, the RCSA applauds multiple leadership, their presence does not produce desired products because they lack capacity to move the members to God's vision, as they are expected to (Weems, 2010:2). Thus, having multiple leaders who cannot articulate their calling, does not bear fruit. These leaders are useful to the church if they cooperatively move the church to be the salt and light. Nonetheless, for the church leadership to be effective, there is need for capacity building through appropriate theological education curriculum, and the methods of delivery. Irrelevant training in seminaries produce ministers of the Word who cannot enhance the church to be salt and light in the world (Niemandt, 2019:6; Wagner, 1984:47). The reason is that the curricula used in Africa, are adopted from the West and are not meeting the needs of the African leadership and the church (Werner, 2011:3 & 8). The argument is that the African theological education thought is purported to be relevant, but the textbooks are mostly in English or translated from English to the local language, though originally it was not written with that context in mind. Thus, the curriculum is irrelevant for the African context and cannot equip the ministers for the ministry in African churches. In addition, most of the curriculum are taught in English, which further affect understanding, as a second language is not easy to grasp all what is taught and cannot positively impact the leadership.

The reason is that a curriculum becomes effective when it is developed to convey the biblical truths, to meet the spiritual needs of a particular people, in specific dispensations. As a result, ministers cannot lead their congregations towards healthy church growth, because the curriculum and mode of delivery leaves much to be desired for the African church, rather decline is realised.

It follows that insufficiency of theological education contributes towards the other three leadership problems identified above. It can be reasoned that a well-trained minister of the Word can empower, motivate, and demonstrate to the elders, deacons, and all members the missional call of the church. Nevertheless, without such training, the ministers become stumbling blocks to the purpose of the church, within itself and in the community. Inadequate capacity compels these ministers to focus on methodology of church growth that are seemingly divorced from the purpose of the church described in Scriptures – to be salt and light to the world (Matthew 5:12–16). Ministers' training regrettably lacks the context, practicality, and centrality of the Word for the church of Christ (Fanning, 2004:210; Werner, 2011:8). Deficiency in this supreme ministry of the Word is devastating to congregations. Theological education that does not build ministers' capacity to care, transform, shepherd, feed, and commit themselves completely to the congregation, is antagonistic to the *mission Dei.* As a result, such training is rather seemingly aiding church decline, than otherwise. A relevant curriculum that equips the leadership is presented in Chapter 5, article 4.

3.2. Lack of commitment to the missional call of the church

A church is a body of believers in Christ who are called, and should be equipped, and sent into the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (Niemandt, 2012:2; Stetzer, 2006:12). This definition is important at the outset, to establish whether the church leadership's engagement with the members reflect the purpose of God when calling the church into being. The process requires the leadership that invests their time with the congregation, identifying members' gifts, and develop them for active service in the congregation, as appraised by the apostle Paul (Ephesians 4:13). Furthermore, the image of a church as a body of Christ, indicates that each of the members in the body of Christ has a function to perform in the body, and the function of each member affects the total being of the body. This calls for the leadership that works with individual members enhancing each to fully function in the church.

Nevertheless, leaders of the Protestant Churches globally are not investing adequate time with the membership, because they are engaged in other things besides the congregations (Stoll & Peterson, 2008:250). This is a loophole in leadership that is expected to be with the congregation regularly, identifying needs, teaching and demonstrating the purpose of God with

the church, to the members through word and deed. It is through the leadership's active engagement with the membership that they are led to spiritual maturity. Stoll and Peterson (2008:250) establish that the church leadership gets entangled with the busy daily schedule. The result is that members are not meeting with the leadership and with each other often, contra to the unity portrayed by the body imagery of the church (Ephesians 4:12). The body imagery emphasises the unity and diversity in the church, which is realised when members meet regularly in worship, for teaching, and sharing food and ideas, as was demonstrated by the apostolic church (Acts 2:42). A congregation which is not involved in such healthy fellowship, neither reflects the church that Jesus anticipated, nor can it serve its purpose in the world. In this case, the society neither views Christ in the congregation's daily life, nor in the proclamation of the Word (Krejcir, 2008:3). Protestant congregations lack the missional aspect, which is the reason for their existence. The institutional leadership model that is perused in protestant churches, is not conducive for church growth, as it "serves to distorts the organic nature of the church" (Engel & Dyrness, 2000:112–113). The hierarchical structure of leadership makes the leaders the source of what and how the church should go, with the rest of the members being delegated what to do. Nonetheless, this traditional leadership model in which the leaders considers mission as sending missionaries to mission fields, with the rest of the congregation not involved in the mission agenda locally (Sielaff, 2019:3). This misconception of mission is affecting growth in the Western Protestant Churches, and in other parts of the world (Krejcir, 2008:2). Participation of the entire church is supported by the organic model of leadership that is appraised in the present study. Organic leadership helps all the members of the body of Christ to participate actively in the mission of God. Such missional members are involved with mission among people across their streets, rather than viewing mission as sending a selected group to far away places (Mutavhadsindi & Meiring, 2014). The organic church's Christ–like life shines in their communities and beyond, transforming peoples, resulting in church growth. On the other hand, nothing more than decline is expected in a church that does not give its intended expression within itself and in the community, thus being missional. The leadership that focuses or defines mission as sending members to far away places, are missing the missional call locally, thus failing to faithfully cooperate with God in transforming peoples around them and beyond, to follow Jesus.

On the other hand, some of the non-missional leaders are not concerned about reaching out with the gospel, rather they find ways of keeping the members who are already in the church (Mutavhadsindi & Meiring, 2014:1–2). Instead of establishing missional congregations, the leaders are concerned about maintaining the members that are already in the church. They have no plans to go beyond the borders of their congregations (Mckee, 2003:37).

Nevertheless, the maintenance is not successful either, because the members do not have the quality of believers that compels them to remain in the congregation. At some point, they leave their congregations, affecting the quantity of members as well. Without membership quality, quantity can neither be realised nor maintained (Chaney & Lewis, 1977:13), hence membership decline is imminent in Protestant Churches globally, resulting in the closing of many congregations (Morgen, 2002:1). Next, the ineffective leadership functions, as obstacles to church growth, is discussed.

3.3. Ineffective leadership functions

The church was established by God and his Word is the source of all that the church leadership should use to fulfil its calling (John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16–17). This calls for effective teaching and preaching of the Word that will convert non-believers and feed the converted to be Christ-like. Nevertheless, the teaching and preaching done in the Protestant Churches globally, do not transform members to be disciples of Christ, who can serve the purpose of the church in the *missio Dei* (Niemandt, 2019:2; Reeder, 2008:64). Preaching is central in communicating Jesus Christ and Him as the crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). This power of preaching is evidenced by the apostles where after preaching, several people were converted, as shown in Acts. In Jesus' priestly prayer, He mentions that Christians are made holy by the Word of God (John 17:17), which is mainly shared through preaching. Effective preaching "is the most important, tool to change the hearts of people" (Mutavhadsindi & Meiring, 2014:1). It stands to reason that if the ministers in the declining Protestant churches were effective in preaching the Word, revitalisation would have happened. Membership declining is indicating that the Word was not preached in a way to transform people. Even though, the transformation of humans is the work of the Holy Spirit. God chose human beings as agents of communicating the whole truth, through which the Spirit acts. In Africa, this is magnified by the Western theological training curriculum for ministers, which was transposed without contextualisation (Werner, 2011:8). The argument is that though the theological colleges claim to make their curricula locally, the worldview reflects the Western curriculum. Several theological colleges still use the greater number of theological literature from the West. This is an indicator of how the African theology is affected by the Western theology. Even though some books are in the African languages, many of them are translated from the Western books with the Western theology (Niemandt, 2019:2; Werner, 2011:3). It is regrettably that even the books written by African theologians, are mostly in English, making it difficulty to understand. It is pathetic that "Western patterns and concepts of theology continue to be exported throughout the global South ...". Such theological training does not empower the RCSA leadership for their functions. The curriculum is irrelevant to the African contexts, even though the material is biblical sound,

its worldview is divorced from the African church. It follows that the biblical doctrine is the best understood and applied, if they are designed with the users' context at heart (Niemandt, 2012:10). Such a curriculum communicates the Biblical truth in a way that motivate the student to embrace the doctrines and concept being taught, as they are relevant to them in every sense. To have effective leadership, there must be an effective, relevant, and practical leadership curriculum.

Ineffective preaching is also a problem in the Western Protestant churches, as some members who left American churches, identify a lack of satisfactory preaching that did not meet their needs, as the reason for exiting these Protestant Churches (Sielaff, 2019:3). Failing to preach in a convincing way, is failing the heart of the ministry of the Word, which in turn affects all other ministries. The Word is central in and for the church, thus, it should be correctly and faithfully taught and proclaimed (2 Tim 2:15). Moreover, leadership that is not effective in the Word, cannot effectively implement what the Word prescribes for the church. The church must care for the flock entrusted to it. Caring for the flock, includes feeding the sheep, not only with milk, but also with solids – true biblical doctrines (Hebrews 5:13), so that the sheep could mature and be able to reproduce (transform other people's lives for Christ through word and deed). This is not possible with the Protestant Churches globally, because the leadership cannot create an atmosphere conducive for membership effectiveness. The problem is that the models of leadership pursued (Avery, 2012:6; Niemandt, 2004:18) does not enhance the active involvement of the church membership. This results in congregations where only the leadership is active, while the members are passive consumers of what the leadership prepares (Mckee, 2003:22). This is not the Lord's purpose with the church, but rather that every member of the body should actively participate in his or her congregation (Ephesians 4:13). This gives birth to missional members who can articulate the mission of God with Him. Again, failure to involve all the members in a congregation, leads to leaders overloaded with responsibilities, which are obstacles for the effective performance of their functions.

3.4. Numerous leadership functions

While having excessive leadership functions, leaders fail to effectively do what they are expected to do, resulting in organisational discord (Morrison ,2014:271–283). This is because the congregational leadership is involved in multiple functions daily. These responsibilities result in the leadership failing to perform some of their most important functions that are necessary for membership quality (Sweet, 2004:12–13). Even those functions they perform, are not extensively done, because they are overwhelmed with tasks and responsibilities. The overwhelming responsibilities include house visitation, pastoral care, teaching, counselling, various administrative roles, and many other functions that may differ according to

denominations and congregations. All these activities cannot successfully be done exclusively by the leadership, because these are too many and too demanding.

The excess leadership functions in congregations, weigh heavily on the leadership, thereby weakening their efforts to influence healthy churches (Startup & Harris, 1999:118). The weakening of leadership efforts poses two problems that stand as obstacles to church growth. The first obstacle is that even if the leadership is highly gifted in various functions, their efforts are limited by the hours in every day – only twenty-four hours. The twenty-four-hour day cannot accommodate the many activities that are involved with the congregational leadership, resulting in mediocre results in all the activities (Sweet, 2004:13). The result of their efforts does not lead to a turn-around or church growth. This follows that the leadership efforts are thinly spread in various tasks, and thus making no positive effect in any of them in the end. The second negative effect of involving the leadership in all congregational ministries, is that the leadership is not the star and superman in all congregation ministries (Avery, 2004:18; Wagner, 2012:28). They are finite human beings with limitations according to their gifts. Their leadership is by God's design, through their gifts and not by choice. As a result, ministries that they are gifted in, are likely to excel, while the rest are affected. This traditional model, where the leader is regarded as the source of all that the church must do and be, is unbiblical, as it ignores the gifts of the rest of the church members that are necessary for church growth. Thus, few ministries that are aligned to the leadership thrives, while the rest suffer. Therefore, ministries that are limping, provide loopholes for church decline. Church growth happens when all ministries are doing well, thereby inspiring members to actively serve in the church.

4.   LEADERSHIP GAPS IN THE RCSA

Like the leadership in Protestant churches globally, the church decline in the RCSA is also attributed to a lack of quality among members (Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:428–431). Membership quality occurs when the leadership transforms members from their old life, to become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). God's purpose for the church is realised when all members reveal Christ in all of life. However, the RCSA membership described by the Deputies for turn-around and church growth, indicate a spiritual immaturity (Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:431). This immaturity of membership points at leadership inability to embrace the Word that brings desired change in membership (Matthew 28:20; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 2:15), lest they remain worldly. In other words, church decline shows leadership failure to move the church from where it had been, to where God wants it to be (Niemandt, 2012:4; Weems, 2010:8). The church that is not moved positively, either remains stagnant, or moves in a negative direction towards church decline.

Membership decline was for the first time on the RCSA synod agenda in 1994 (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:492), and possible remedies were provided by the Deputies for turn-around and church growth. Notwithstanding the guideline given by the Deputies, membership decline remains in RCSA congregations. The reason is, that church growth strategies, and structures for turn-around and church growth did not work. The result aligns to what Stetzer and Putman (2006:46) allude, namely that by focusing on the methodology of church growth, and not entirely in the Word, bears no positive results. These methods and strategies cannot achieve the mission of the church, that is embedded in the Bible. Thus, turn-around and real church growth flows from leadership capacity, to align and realigning the members to God's purpose in creating the church (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:87; Niemandt, 2012:9). Fulfilling God's purpose with the church, leads to missional congregations which are growing and vice versa. Missional church is a product of missional leaders who appraise that the church is the body of Christ, in which all the members must serve in their spiritual gifted areas. Leadership must identify the gifts of members, empower them, and allocate them to appropriate ministries (Sanders, 2012:147–150; Schanabel, 2008:384). When all members are accurately placed in appropriate ministries, they influence the quality of each in the various ministries and the entire church. The result is quality members, who fulfill their calling as a church.

The mentioned Deputies identified leadership capacity as fundamental in enhancing believers' quality for turn-around and church growth to occur (RCSA Deputies for turnaround and church growth, 2015:476 & 501; 2018:1052). It follows that the task of Christian leadership is to enhance the church get to where God requires it to be. If the church is not influenced to being Christ-like, the leadership has failed its mandate, hence leadership empowerment was recommended by the Deputies of the RCSA. Even though leadership training for effectiveness was appraised in the 2009 synod of the RCSA, it was not implemented, and was presented as an unfinished assignment in the 2018 synod. Taking such a length of time before implementing such an urgent matter of training the leadership, might also point at the mentioned Deputies' lack of capacity to empower the leadership. It follows that after the identification of leadership training, as crucial in the turn-around and church growth, it takes more than a decade before the RCSA implemented it. The outcome is the continuous decline of membership in the RCSA congregations. Continuous decline is a response to church failure to address the identified growth loopholes. The training in congregations is the responsibility of the leadership, hence the leaders are to blame for failure to adopt the successions that would affect church growth positively.

Nonetheless, in their quest for turn-around and church growth solutions, the mentioned Deputies' delegation (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:435) visited overseas Reformed congregations that had turned around from decline to growth. However, continuing decline in the RCSA is indicating that the visits did not bring answers to turn-around the RCSA either. It stands to reason that real church growth is affected by the context of the members concerned (Nel & Schoeman, 2005:95, Niemandt, 2012:6). What works in one congregation, cannot be replicated in another, even though the two might have almost similar circumstances. This assertion is seemingly correct, since the RCSA did not turn-around, despite the Deputies presentation of what caused the Brazilian and Australian Reformed churches to turn-around. Again, strategies and methods cannot develop quality members who are missional (Van Aarde, 2017:2). The only generic way for all the congregations in the world and RCSA, is to return to the biblical basics with the church. These basics are aligning the church to the purpose of God, in creating it which results in quality members who shine the light of Christ in the world, the power in converting peoples to Christianity (Matthew 5:14-16). The heart for turn-around and church growth is the Word, which is faithfully handled and practised by the leadership, to influence spiritual maturity in members (2 Tim 2:15; Tit 1:9; 2:1). Spiritual mature members remain in the church all their life, during which period they lead peoples to Christ. If the leadership of spiritual mature church uses the organic type of leadership model, where leaders in the various ministries and sub–ministries are helping members to be what God wants them to be, church health is realised.

Real church growth flows from quality members. Leadership's main task is to develop quality in members, and failure leads to decline. Spiritual growth of membership can be realised, when Schwarz's (2006 & 1996) NCD quality principles are implemented in congregations. These principles are empowering leadership, gift-oriented, passionate spirituality, effective structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships (Adams, 2009:13; Dadisman, 2008:9; Folkenberg, 2001:47; Schwarz, 1996:18). Although the eight principles above are not arranged in order of priority by Schwarz, the present article takes the first one (empowering leadership) to be the key for the rest. The motivation is that the other seven flow from the leadership capacity, in effectively serving God and the members. Leadership with capacity can influence the members to be disciples of Christ, who can in turn, make disciples. The Deputies for church growth–Training elders (2018:1054–1061), emphasise the importance of building leadership capacity for church growth to occur. Like in any organisation, church leaders are responsible for ensuring that the church of Jesus Christ meets his purpose. In this regard, the ministers of the Word are the apex of the RCSA leadership, by virtue of their theological education. The latter is the instrument to enhance members for turn-around and church growth to happen. Nevertheless,

deficiencies in theological training, can affect the other congregational leaders and all the members. The present study identifies the following leadership challenges that affect membership quality in the RCSA, resulting in a decline:

  i.   Challenges in theological education and training
  ii.   Challenges in enabling congregational leadership
  iii. Challenges in functioning leadership

5.   CHALLENGES IN THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

Deputies for ministers' training (2018:970–972) identified deficiencies in the training of ministers, which is affecting congregation ministry. Like the other Protestant Churches globally, theological education is not preparing ministers of the RCSA, to be equipment officers of their congregations, resulting in seemingly dysfunctional congregations. Theological education is not contextualised to meet the needs of congregations (Niemandt, 2019:7; Werner, 2011:3 & 8), hence the failure to be relevant in congregations. The result are congregations that are not functioning, as they are designed by God who created them. The gaps in theological education were identified in the curriculum, training strategy and professors. Each of these is described below to indicate how it affects leadership effectiveness.

5.1. Professors as trainers of ministers of the Word

Professors at the Theological School Potchefstroom (TSP), comprise of qualified ministers of the Word, who are called from congregations. There are also other males and females who have the necessary qualifications, but without congregational exposure. Professors have the responsibilities of capacitating ministers for congregational ministry. They have supreme functions of training ministers of the Word, and the effects of this training flows to the entire church. What the ministers are and do in congregations, also point at the training they received from the seminary. This justifies Elliston's (1988:210) argument that the method of teaching and curriculum affects the way a graduate, from any institution, does his or her work. Although the present study does not buy everything that Elliston suggests in his curriculum, the point that the curriculum reflects the worldview of the planners, is valid. There is no way a curriculum and the way it is implemented is divorced from the planners' worldview. This is the reason why Werner (2011:8) argues that the Western theological curriculum used in Africa, does not meeting the needs of Africa. He further highlights that the embedded worldview for the American, in the curriculum remains even, if the college might claim to produce their own curriculum, as it continues to reflect the Western theological patterns. Effective curriculum

takes into cognisance, the biblical truths, the context of the users, and the time it is implemented. Elliston made a valid point that was an eye opener to the RCSA, to evaluate the appropriateness of its curriculum for effectiveness in the 21st century. Therefore, the ineffectiveness of the ministers of the Word in congregations, is pointing at possible loopholes of either the curriculum and teaching methods, or professors, or both. Nonetheless, the ineffective training at the seminary (TSP Curators, 2018:470), is affecting membership quality directly. This is because the leadership should directly influence the members towards spiritual growth.

The deficiencies at the TSP begins with the identification of the professors. Hiring lecturers without congregational experience, is an obstacle on how these contribute in empowering the ministers. Such professors cannot come up with a study guide to effectively address the needs in congregations, as they have no practical exposure therein. Thus, the lack of congregational experiences, obscures the way the concerned lecturers can equip ministers for congregational ministry, because they have not experienced it themselves. Such a curriculum lacks two of the three key aspects of an effective curriculum (context and relevance to time) (Niemandt, 2012:9; Werner, 2010:7–8). It only has the biblical truth, which cannot be effective if given in isolation of the other 2. Furthermore, their teaching is based on theory, which does not profit the ministers for effectiveness. The reason is that the ministry of the Word is geared to Practical Theology (De Moor, 2010:112). in which effective teaching is possible with lectures who were once ministers. The training of ministers is abstract for those without congregational exposure. Thus, their contribution leaves much to be desired, resulting in the production of ministers who are ineffective in congregations. The identified lecturers become black sports in the training of ministers, whose functions in the congregation is supreme for accomplishing the mission of the church. This follows that wholistic training is possible. where all the lectures are effective. Ineffectiveness from those without congregational experience, affects the total outcome of the training process of ministers of the Word.

5.2. Imbalance of theory and practice during the training of ministers

Successful theological training utilises the marrying of theory in the seminary and real practice in congregations (Mwangi & De Klerk, 2011:1). The integration of theoretical and practical training empowers ministers for the ministry of the Word. Consequently, the present imbalance has further crippled the training that is already compromised by the professors who lack congregational experience. The practical aspect is not dealt with in ways that allow ministers to function well in congregations. This imbalance anomaly was identified as leading to the production of ministers who cannot influence quality in congregation membership (TSP Curators 2018:470). Consider candidate ministers who spent a total of six years of training in

the seminary. but practiced in congregations for only two and four weeks in the 5th and 6th years of training respectively (Reformed Churches in South Arica Church Order Articles, 8 and 18). This scenario is counterproductive in equipping them for real ministry which takes place in congregations while they do not have enough exposure during their training.

Even though the TSP Curators (2018:470) identified this imbalance and appraised the need to increase the practical aspect, limiting this to weekends does not resolve the identified imbalance. Such practical training on weekends does not involve the several dynamics of the ministry of the Word. Under-emphasising the practical aspect during training is seemingly aiding church decline, because such ministers are ill prepared to enhance church health. It follows that the ministry of the Word is a practical one and the missional church is also practical. Thus, making the practical component of ministers' training exceedingly important for church health. Nonetheless, minimising the practical component during the training of ministers compromises their functions.

In addition, the TSP does not involve the ordained ministers of the Word in several congregations as mentors of graduate ministers (RCSA Deputies for training of ministers of the Word, 2018:977–979), to prepare them for congregational ministry. Thus, the graduate ministers might not be relevant to the congregations they serve. The ministers go to congregations with academic knowledge, which they cannot translate to benefit the congregations they serve. The reason is that the ministry of the Word is a practical domain that is done in a practical way, and under-passing practice affects their congregation effectiveness. The probation period under a gifted minister of the Word, could improve the graduate minister's effectiveness in his congregation.

Such training that under–pass practicing in congregations, fails to appraise the apostle Paul's two important aspects that the seminary should nature the ministers in: (*διδακτικόν)* "able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2) and (*ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου)* "holding firmly the faithful word as it has been taught" (Titus 1:9). Thus, ministers must uphold the taught doctrines and be able to disseminate them to the congregational leadership and members. Effective teaching of the Word is the key that unlocks the heart of man through the Holy Spirit to spiritual growth. In this case, the ministers of the Word must be grounded in these truths, in order to disseminate it to the church in the most effective way. If this is not done, the training misses its target. Nonetheless, findings of the Deputies for ministers' training (2018d:972) established this short fall, which is affecting membership quality. This follows that if the ministers are not equipped to empower congregational leadership, the quality of Christians is not realised (Schwarz, 1996:39–40). Inability to "equip, support, motivate individual leaders and members to become all God wants them to be" (Getz et al., 2000:1-2), make leaders

become agents of church decline. Thus, ministers' failure to equip the congregational leadership for competence in their various ministries, directly contribute to membership decline (Reeder, 2008:141–145).

Deficiencies in the ministry of the Word, affect all the congregational leaders and the members causing decline. Seemingly, the principle, "enablement of leadership", ties up all other principles together, since the leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing the church achieving its calling (Mutavhandsindi & Meiring, 2014:2). In the same vein, Elliston (1988) argues that:

> The leadership crisis facing the entire church today is a result of inappropriate theological training in which ministers of the Word are proving to be incompetent and the congregations they lead are dysfunctional. (pp. 203–204)

Thus, theological training that does not aim at producing the leadership and members who are disciples of Christ, fails its purpose for existence.

5.3. Centralisation of ministers' training

The centralisation of ministers' training at the TSP seemingly magnified the minister to congregational ratio in the RCSA. Deputies for training of ministers of the Word (2018d:971–972) argue that the closure of the Hammanskraal campus came with the reduced number of trainee ministers of the Word in the RCSA. Such centralisation led to a reduced number of student ministers that enrolled each year. The result was a limited number of ministers trained each year. This situation increases the number of congregations without ministers of the Word. The result is that the RCSA are having 121 vacant congregations – that is 31.1% are without ministers (RCSA Deputies for training of ministers of the Word, 2018d:972). This scenario affects the black congregations more than the white congregations. These have 61 vacant congregations out of 129 which is 47.3% of the total number. This is almost half of the total congregations being vacant. As the number of candidate ministers was reduced due to the centralisation of training, the number of vacant congregations increased. Such an inverse proportion is causing ministers to be less effective in influencing the quality in members. Ineffectiveness results in the fact that several ministers are responsible for more than one congregation, making it impossible for them to adequately minister to them. Notwithstanding the shortage of ministers, from 2007 to 2017 only 21 ministers entered service, and 18 ministers retired from service during the same period (RCSA Deputies for training of ministers, 2018d:972). The difference in the numbers of new ministers and those retiring is three. This means that in the indicated ten years, only three congregations out of several vacant ones, got ministers. Such a state remains an obstacle to ministers' effectiveness to enhance quality in believers. This situation adds to the problem of excessiveness of responsibility for ministers,

that cripples their effectiveness. In this situation, the GKSA falls short of meeting Schwartz's (2006 & 1996) principles of small groups, which are ideal in developing quality in members. Having two congregations per minister, makes the small group principle impossible to implement. Without the small groups, the quality of members cannot be fully realised (Cole, 2007:98; Green, 2001:47). In any case, the small groups can only be realised if the minister to congregation ratio is dealt with.

5.4. Excessive minister roles

Several of the RCSA ministers are responsible for more than one congregation, each with several leaders and membership. Such a situation evades the ministers from executing their functions effectively. Their effectiveness is possible if they deal with a smaller and manageable groups of people (Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:116), which, however is impossible with the multiple congregations under their care. These ministers can neither prepare the congregational leadership for their functions, nor influence the active office of believers, resulting in a congregation whose presence in the world is opaque.

6. CHALLENGES IN ENABLING CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The RCSA identify three congregational leadership offices, namely ministers of the Word, elders, deacons and, or deaconesses (De Moor, 2010:20; Vorster, 1999:15). The present research adds the office of a believer, as it is the reason for the existence of congregations. However, the state of the believers' office depends on congregational leadership. An effective congregational leadership transforms the believers to being disciples of Christ, while unsuccessful leadership aids membership decline. However, the effectiveness of congregational leadership rests with the capacity of the minister as a trainer of congregational leaders.

Even if there is no hierarchy in church leadership in Protestant Churches (Selby, 2012:85), the ministers of the Word are responsible for enabling the congregational leadership for effectiveness. Ministers undergo theological training to equip them to influence the other leadership and the members to meet God's purpose with the church (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:89). Nevertheless, identified loopholes in the training of ministers stands as obstacles to that. Such ministers could not guide the members towards quality.

6.1. Challenges in empowering elders, deacons, and deaconesses

The ministers' position in congregations fits Elliston's (1988:210) argument that "Teachers teach as they are taught. Leaders lead as they have been led", and curriculum and worldview

mirror the developers. Thus, the training of elders, deacons, and deaconesses is jeopardised. As a result, they assume the office with extraordinarily little or without any form of training for their responsibility in the new offices. Unfortunately, taking up congregation leadership offices without being equipped for the task, results in that the leadership is incompetent in performing them. Only well-trained elders are capable of leading various congregational ministries towards church health (Schindler, 2008:6). Without capacity, there is no difference between the leadership and believers' offices. Such a state between the leadership and the members points at congregations that fails their purpose. In such a congregation, both the leadership and the membership lack a Christ-like character, which indicates qualitative decline.

Elliston (1988:203), Jenson and Stevens (1981:168–170), Prill *et al.* (2011:87–88), Reeder (2008:44), and Reeder and Swavely (2008:152) concur that relevant theological training is an important component for church leadership at various levels. Relevant training (Werner, 2011:2–8) is one that have the biblical truth prepared for a specific context in a specific time. Such training is indispensable for all church leaders, not only ministers of the Word. This is important in capacitating the leadership for effectiveness. The reason is that although office-bearers are called by God, they still need proper training that boosts their leadership gifts.

Even though formal training might not be possible for the elders, deacons and or deaconesses (Reformed Churches in South Africa Church Order, Article 25) some form of capacity building is prerequisite for enhancing effectiveness. Nevertheless, no mechanism is in place presently to train them through either Theological Education by Extension (TEE), or the professors from the TSP (Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:106 & 110). The result is having congregational leaders who are blind shepherds, who neither care for, nor guide the sheep. The blindness is due to a lack of capacity, not by choice. In any case, the effect is devastating to the church. Such a state of leadership defines decline, since the leadership without capacity cannot influence the members in any positive way.

6.1.1. *Effects of not training of elders and deacons on the membership quality*

Under-passing or under-emphasising the training of elders, is a hindrance to perform their basic leadership roles that are prescribed by their liturgical form of ordination (Ephesians 4:11–13; Titus 1:7a). Elders are responsible for the spiritual growth (quality) of God's people under their care (De Moor, 2010:135–136; Vorster, 1999:44). These are crucial responsibilities that enable the congregation to attain its calling. However, without the necessary capacity, elders cannot influence their congregation towards church health. They cannot fulfill their roles of guarding the confessions, and to ensure that the faith being professed is lived by the members (Vorster, 1999:44). They cannot uphold the confessions and the other reformed doctrines that

are necessary for membership's spiritual growth. Failure to do these important functions, is as good as not having the elders at all, because their presence does not cause the leadership to move towards God's mission goals. They cannot influence quality principles of 'passionate spirituality' and 'inspiring worship' (Schwarz, 2006:28; 1996:26 & 30), which are vehicles to quality membership. Passionate spiritual and inspiring worship result from the church that has been disciples to be Christ–like, thus desiring nothing less than living to glorify God in all areas of life. This is a result of effective teaching and preaching, which is found to be necessary in Protestant churches, the RCSA inclusive. Failure to attain the Christ-like character, points at a spiritually declining congregation.

Furthermore, deacons and deaconesses in Protestant churches (RCSA included), lack training not only in the issue of caring, but also in other important ministries, including the ministry of the Word (Berkley, 1992:150). On the one hand, the diaconia is a means of salt and light in which the church meets the physical needs of peoples, in addition to the spiritual ones, a shown in Acts, 6. The diaconal ministry should find its expression in the community, where the church dispenses the love of Christ through giving to those in need – both Christians and non-Christians (Eurich, 2020:2; Janos, 1995:3; Niemandt, 2019). Thus, the expression of the church is living the love demonstrated by Jesus Christ and the apostolic Church. Jesus healed the sick and delivered people from various forms of enslavement, in addition to preaching the Word. On the other hand, the apostles' suggestion to have a separate office of deacons that would meet the physical needs of people, while they were meeting the spiritual needs. Act 6 indicate the importance of the deacons' office in building the church of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, these deacons should be empowered to effectively perform this important ministry in their context and working in harmony with other denominations and Christian organisation that are involved in the diaconal ministry, in the same community. The present study suggests that the deacons and deaconesses be empowered, to meet both the spiritual and physical needs of the people they reach with their ministry. This follows that the ministry of the Word is central for all ministries, and if it is under-emphasised in any one ministry, the whole congregation is affected somehow. Witnessing is the responsibility of all believers (Niemandt, 2019:6), hence each ministry should find space for that. The RCSA office of deacons and deaconesses is limited to the caring work in and outside the congregation (Vorster, 1999:47). The deacon office should be extended to also embrace the proclamation of the Word, as indicated in Acts 6:8 and Acts 8:4–16, 40. These texts indicate how deacons may contribute towards church health in a more diverse way. The reason is that the Great Commission is an imperative for all Christians and for an ordained office, to omit the active proclamation of the Word, is being disobedient to God. A combination of sharing the Word and meeting the needs of people fulfils the mandate of the church, which comes with church

growth. When deacons share the good news to those whom they care for, they can contribute greatly to both the quantitative and qualitative growth of the church. Nonetheless, congregational leadership that is not well equipped, under-performs their functions, and does not contribute to church health

7. CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONING

The leadership that under-passes or under-emphasises its core functions, cannot lead the congregation to the purpose of God. These leaders lack the ability to engage all the members of the church to be active participants. As such, they cannot transform members to become disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19–20), who can influence numerical growth. Unequipped members of the body of Christ handicap the whole congregation. Like in the human body, a defect in one part affects the whole body. Thus, handicapped parts (inactive members) become chasms for church decline that affects the whole congregation.

8. INACTIVE OFFICE OF THE BELIEVER

The believers are all the followers of Jesus Christ whom He saved through his sacrificial death on the cross (John 1:12 & 3:16). Through his death, He opened the door for all believers to gain access to Him as priest, with Him as the High priest (Mark 15: 38; Hebrews 9:11–10:18). As priests, believers are ordained to do the following:

- Approach God though Christ the higher priest.
- Proclaim the Word of God through Word and deed, as an expression of their faith and priesthood.

Along the same lines, Engel & Dyrness (2000:116–118) and Muthiah (2002:179 & 188) say that the priesthood of believers is centred on witnessing and confessing to one another and to the world. This is a calling that all believers have an active function to play in the church. The office of believers is fulfilled when the leadership identify, empower and allocate them to relevant ministries, as per their spiritual gifts. Their active participation leads to a healthy body of Christ.

Thus, church growth or decline is determined by the quality and quantity of believers. Either of the two (growth ore decline), is influenced by the leadership functions in congregations. It follows that leadership is necessary for guiding, shepherding, and transforming the members to become Christ-like. This is the heart of church growth (Chaney & Lewis, 1977:13; Niemandt, 2012:8–9). Nevertheless, deficiencies that were identified in leadership training, are affecting the way the leaders perform their functions. They cannot identify gifts of members and nurture

them till members reach their full potential of service (Ogden 1991:20). However, the adoption of this traditional and stereotype leadership, in which the ordained leaders are involved in several ministries of the congregation, is a barrier to church growth.

Such a state leaves the believers as consumers of what the leadership prepares and offers them. Failure to involve members as equal partners in congregations, is due to a lack of leadership capacity, or under-passing the believers' office, and it weakens the church. It is an obstacle in fulfilling the obligation of the church, where congregants should actively serve in the body of Christ as members therein (Ephesians 4:12). The apostle Paul is espousing the need for leaders to identify the gifts of the members and to nurture them for participation in congregations. Minimising the 'gift-based ministry' (Schwarz, 2006:25 & 1996:24) retards the congregation's efforts to develop membership quality. Such members can neither attract people to Christ, nor continue in the church themselves.

Ignoring the office of a believer, magnifies the problem of leadership overload with responsibilities that is retarding the effectiveness of Protestant churches globally (Berkley, 1992:150–151) as well as in the RCSA locally. God gave all the believers gifts that are necessary for healthy church growth. These gifts allow the leadership and members to share roles in the body of Christ and to work as a united team towards the destination of God with his church (Grundy, 2014:19; RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:502). As in the human body where all the parts are necessary, each member has an important function in the congregation. Thus, dysfunction of members affects the whole congregation, no matter how effective the others could be. As a result, minimising membership involvement retards the congregations' potential to grow. The reason is that the leadership has not used the gifts from the greater pool of the congregational believers (Van Aarde, 2017:9). The ordained leadership is not the source of everything that the congregations requires. The leadership needs the believers, as much as they need each other, if church health is to be realised. Failure to fully utilise membership gifts in congregations, creates loopholes for church decline, because no one can stand on behalf of someone's gifts. God has purposely placed each member in a specific congregation, and their input is crucial for the congregation at large. Therefore, minimising the participation of believers is a barrier to church health. Believers are the reason for the church's existence; hence their active participation lead the congregation to be the salt and light that the church is meant to be.

Notwithstanding the fact that the RCSA have identified the need to nurture all believers to being Christ-like (Identified Deputies reports from 1994 to 2018), the following two aspects are reiterated as barriers for making this possible:

i. **Limited number of ministers for the congregations:** The RCSA has fewer Ministers of the Word than it has congregations. As a result, they cannot adequately attend to individual congregations and or congregants under their care. As such, the RCSA ministers of the Word with more than one congregation, are unable to meet the needs of individual congregations or members, to influence their faith in Christ (RCSA Deputies of turn–around and church growth, 2015:502, 503 & 505). They do not have enough time with congregational leadership, let-alone the members, both as individuals and corporate to groom them in the direction of God. This is a stumbling block for membership's spiritual growth. Pastoral care and other functions of the minister are compromised in this process, because they cannot be expansively dealt with. Even though ministers could work tirelessly hard, they can truly not efficiently equip both the members and the leadership in their multiple congregations. Pastoral care and related functions that are under-emphasised, affect the development of several NCD quality principles, such as the gift-oriented ministry, functioning structures and loving relationships, where members of the same gifts come together and develop one another for active service.

ii. **Incapacitation of elders:** Even though the RCSA elders could help to reduce the minister and congregation ratio by manning some congregations, they do not have the capacity for that responsibility. They cannot effectively serve congregations, because they are not empowered for such services (RCSA Deputies for the turn–around and church growth, 2015:462). Without training, RCSA elders cannot lead the members to become Christ-like. Therefore, elders who are responsible for vacant congregations, are not doing any justice to the body of Christ. Therefore, their efforts are not conducive to the health of the church, but this situation rather contributes to church decline. The key is not having an elder in a vacant congregation, but one who could disciple the congregational members to become all God wants them to be. If this critical aspect of making disciples of Christ is not met, the purpose of a leader in a congregation is defeated.

Unless the minister–to–congregation ratio is addressed, the call for ministers to empower members and elders, would remain a good proposal which cannot be put to practice. The minister plays a pivotal role in guiding and equipping both the congregational leadership and the members. Effective preparation of members for service is possible, when the minister of the Word has a manageable number of elders and deacons that he can train as trainers of their congregations. They in turn, become instrumental in guiding the members.

9. BARRIERS TO QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE GROWTH

A missional church focuses within its congregation and beyond the congregation boundaries (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88). Its life is an expression of Christ in the world. This expression influences both the biological and conversional growth of the church. However, identified gaps in congregational leadership affects both biological and conversional growth. The argument is that the minimising of these two aspects of church growth, is abortive to the purpose of the church. This is because the church is meant to grow by incorporating children of believers and the other nations, as ordained by God (Gen 12: 2–3; 17:10; Matthew 28:18–20). Nevertheless, the decline in quantity and quality of members (RCSA Deputies of turn-around and church growth, 2015:428 & 431) is testimonial that biological and conversional growth were not appraised. On the one hand, the covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen 17:7 & 10) that is inclusive of believers' descendants, is under-emphasised. On the other hand, Matthew (28:18–20) underscores conversional growth through the inclusion of 'all nations' in the body of Christ. However, both methods are possible with the leaderships that take leading roles in guiding the congregations towards church growth.

9.1. Challenges to biological growth

Deputies for youth and Christian education are ministers of the Word, who are appointed to spearhead the growth in RCSA youths. They must be gifted and skilled to effectively design youth activities that motivate them to be Christ-like, lest their effort might be unproductive. Having no mechanism to effectively teach the gospel to the covenant children, is being disobedient to God, and results in the decline in membership (Conn, 1976:143; Moser & Nel, 2019:3). Such a church risks reduction in the youth numbers. When a church is left with mostly elderly people, continuing membership decline becomes the only option, as the elderly die or leave the church. Furthermore, the spiritually immature youths cannot remain in the church, nor can they lead others to Christ.

Having ineffective programmes for its covenant youths, is an obstacle to biological church growth in the RCSA (Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:431). A healthy church is made up of believers and their children all the time. The inclusion of believers' children fulfils the biological growth of the church (Gen 17:7 & 10). However, the reduction in baptised children (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:428), is an indication of a decline in biological church growth. This drop which was noted in 1994, is currently affecting the RCSA youth and adult membership. It follows that presently those baptised during 1994 are constituting the RCSA adult membership. Furthermore, the same Deputies 'identified lack of parents' commitment in teaching their children the Word of God,

as contributing towards the decline in RCSA youths. Parents were ordained by God to teach the covenant children the Word (Deut 6:7), and minimising this command, lead to children who are not transformed for Christ. Along the same lines, research by Bruce and Glendinning (2010:108) establish that parents play a pivotal role in transmitting their faith to their children through diligently teaching them. The decline in youth membership for the RCSA and other Protestant churches, is an indication that children of protestant churches are exiting their parents' denominations (Moser & Nel, 2019:2). On the contrary, parents should impart the truth of the gospel to their children, which make them embrace Christ and remain as part of the body of Christ. This is not possible, because the parents are not well equipped for that by the leadership, hence their teaching is not effective. The parents can effectively teach if they are really transformed to being Christ–like, the quality that is conducive in teaching their children. Nevertheless, failure to diligently teach and train the covenant children in the Word of God (Deut 7:7; 11:19), is affecting the quality and quantity of youth membership in the RCSA. The result is that the churches have spiritually weak youths, who are not grounded in the Word.

Youths who are not grounded in the truths of the Word, may view the church as irrelevant to them, and they do not continue as members in the church (RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:428–431). Minimising the teaching of children in the fear of the Lord, points back to the earlier loophole, namely that the leadership lacks capacity to enable congregational ministries. They cannot empower members to be better teachers of their children, due to a lack of time and a lack of capacity. Such deficiencies negatively affect how parents are teaching the Word of God to their children. As a result, their teaching has little or no effect in influencing their children's faith.

What's more, to parents' non-fulfilment of the teaching of the Word of God to their children, the church is also lacking the means to impart the reformed doctrine to the RCSA youths (Van der Walt, 2009:257). Therefore, the teaching given to RCSA youths is not enhancing spiritual growth among them (RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:431). Such teaching is unable to convince the youths to embrace the reformed doctrine, and as such they might leave for other denominations, or not affiliating to any denomination at all. Whatever is the case, the extremity is that their moving out leads to membership decline in the RCSA.

Moreover, inappropriate implementation of youth programmes by the leadership without capacity, does not influence their spiritual growth even though the programme might be superb. The RCSA catechism, though well designed and relevant for developing quality in youths, is failing to transform youths to be all what God wants them to be, because of the way it is implemented (RCSA Deputies Catechism, 2015:240). Like other theological curricula,

youth curriculum should be contextualised for youth in different times and places (Gerner, 2010:2 & 8). Thus, failure to constantly revise the guides to make them relevant for different age groups and times, was identified as compromising their effectiveness. The dynamic in youths over the years, requires dynamic catechism guides that can impart the truths of God accordingly.

It seems that the church has failed to meet the needs of youths that would enable them to be where God wants them to be as covenantal children and members of the body of Christ. The decline in South African youths (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021:6) and American youths (Moser & Nel, 2019:2) mirror each other. These churches are losing youths at varied rates, but the bottom line is the same – the decline in youths. In America, only one fifth of the youth in the 20s are active in church. This is indicating that only a handful of youths remain in the church, and this is not healthy for the church, which is left with mostly adult adherences. When these adult persons pass on to eternity, the churches are left with fewer people and this might be the reason why churches are closing in both the RCSA and America (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021:3 4). Youth ministries that do not effectively teach the whole truth, are the source of problems among youths. The observation made in youth meetings that much of the time is spent on activities that are meant to entertain youths, rather than rightly equip them with the truth of the gospel, is a loophole to the youth ministry (Moser & Nel, 2019:3). Although the teaching of youths is done in the most interesting way, the focus should not be on amusing them, but to make them grasp the gospel truths through ways that activate them.

Thus, effective teaching of youths emphasises the use of the most appropriate method and media, according to the context and time. The South African setting of villages and towns calls for different teaching methods and media for each setting. Though the gospel content is the same, the town youths would learn the best through modern technology, which probably cannot benefit one from the village. On the other hand, using the hard copies and simple media, does well in villages and not in the towns. The church should be sensitive on how to teach youths, in a cultural, technological, and contextual relevant manner (Moser & Nel, 2019:3).

Furthermore, the deputies for church growth (RCSA 2018c:497- 498) found that in the public schools which several children from the RCSA parents attend, God's authority is denied. In this regard, the school curriculum becomes an agent for distorting the Christian worldview that parents and the church are endeavouring to teach the youths. This is a serious youth problem, given that the RCSA do not have their own Christian schools that would inculcate the reformed doctrine to their youths. Learners from the RCSA are exposed to opposing worldviews emphasised in these institutions (church and home and school), where they are a part of. The

home, church and school play active roles in building the youths' worldview. The different worldviews to which the RCSA youths are exposed to in homes, church and schools, affect their faith. Developing the Christian worldview is key for the quality of the RCSA youths (Goodhew, 2000:361; Vorster, 1999:40). Nevertheless, while these youths, spend more time at school than at the church and at home, it results in them getting more influence from the school than from the church and the home. In this regard Bruce and Glendinning (2010:116) argue that learners affiliate to the doctrine of their schools where they spend more time being taught by qualified personnel. Therefore, the Christian quality of youths is compromised. As a result, graduates of different schools exhibit their schools' worldview during their school days and after.

Public schools are becoming thus barriers to the Christian faith of the RCSA youths. It stands to reason that public schools' curricula are not putting God at the centre, in direct contrast to what the church and their homes teach. The Department of Education (2003) proposes that all religious groups in South Africa were to have full expression in public schools. This proposal is on its own a distortion of the monotheism they are taught in the church and home. Their perception for the one and all-powerful God who rules over every area of life, is obscured if they are told of other gods, being worshipped in other religions, which are given the same footing with God in public schools. Thus, "According to the State, its cooperative model was reaction against both apartheid 'theocratic model', which tried to impose religion in public institutions" (Maitumeleng & Nieuwenhuis, 2015:5). It is a misconception from the State to equate theocentricity to apartheid, but it was an endeavour by the previous government to nature the young South Africans in the ways of God the creator who rules over all. Though the State claims that this policy does not force other religions on learners, equating Christianity to the other religions, diminishes the God the Christian children are taught about at home and church. The Christian learners who are taught that God is Supreme and the ruler in every area of life, are exposed to a situation where all the religions are supposedly portrayed as the 'truth'. This worldview distorts their view of the infallible and inerrancy of the Word of God, as they are taught at home and at church. As such, being exposed more to the worldview and ideas of the schools, may result in the youths to shun the Christian worldview, and thus spiritual decline.

Despite the RCSA leadership support for private schools as an option for their youths, the following obstacles still stands as barriers for these schools, to help in solving the problems in public schools:

  i. **The number of private schools in contrast to the RCSA youths**: Only fifteen private schools are found across the entire South Africa with enrollments ranging from

25 to 400 students (RCSA Deputies for Christian education, 2018b:497–498). This is too small a number to accommodate the RCSA members' children. The numbers which can be accommodated in these private schools, cannot effect much change compared to public schools. Furthermore, these private schools do not craft and implement the curriculum to meet the needs of the RCSA youths. Therefore, the problem of Christian education is not addressed by private schools, because "Private Schools do indeed not offer a steadfast rock that could limit the impact of the changing religious and political arena on the education of our children" (RCSA Deputies for Christian education, 2018b:142). These schools cannot offer all that the RCSA wants for the faith of their youths. The reason is that private schools have their own worldview, which might not perfectly match the Christian worldview. Thus, private schools are not an answer to the needs of the RCSA youths. A well-designed Christian educational curriculum and teachers that enhance the quality of youths, are the answer.

ii. **Private schools are not a substitute for RCSA Christian schools:** Unlike private schools in general, Christian schools focus strongly on inculcating the desired reformed doctrine to the learners, through both the curriculum and how it is being delivered. The curriculum in Christian schools and how it is taught by Christian teachers, are key in building quality in youths. By having their own Christian schools, the RCSA can craft the curriculum that is relevant to the needs of their youths. Youths can grasp the Christian doctrine well, if it is taught at home, church and school. The establishment of Christian schools would enable the triad institutions (home, church, and school) to work together in harmony towards the same goal. Christian schools would supplement the teaching done by parents and the church, leading to spiritual growth through the church, school, and home. They will focus on the same objective, namely Christ-like youths. A study carried out in Zimbabwe and Zambia, established, for example that graduate students from various mission schools, continue to subscribe to the faith of their former schools throughout their life (McGavran, 1970:2 242). The same findings are echoed in the findings by Maitumeleng and Nieuwenhuis (2015:9), where a school principal attributed the positive morals learnt in Christian religion during school days, as affecting her present life as an adult. This is indicating the magnitude the school curriculum has on the learners' present and future life. Therefore, the Christian schools can effectively supplement what the church and home are imparting on the RCSA youth in a positive way. This argument confers that Christian education can have a great impact in translating the Christian faith. Overall, Christian schools are effective in inculcating the Christian faith in youths, because of the following reasons:

a. They have a well-designed curriculum that meets the intended learning outcomes, within a specific context and time.

b. The curriculum is effectively taught by well-trained Christian teachers, who appraise the authority of God over everything.

This result in effective biological church growth, which augments conversional growth which occurs through the effective proclamation of the Word to the peoples.

9.2. Under–emphasised conversional growth in the RCSA

Evangelism is a process through which the church witnesses Christ through proclaiming the Word of truth and through their lives. Thus, the Christians must live what they preach, as an expression of God wherever the Christian are found. Therefore, evangelism can be summed up in a few words: it is the witnessing of Christ through the message and the messenger to people near and far (Mutavhadsindi & Meiring, 2014:2; Stackchouse; 2003:141). Evangelism is a branch of the *misso Dei* that leads people to conversion, hence the calling of all believers.

The church is commissioned to participate in the Great Commission, unless it is disobedient to God and his Word (Wagner, 1998:279). Evangelism is a key to bring peoples to Christ (Schwarz, 1996:12; 2006:14), and it is the responsibility of every Christian. In addition, the converted must be fed in the Word to become mature Christians who can shine the light of Christ – quality Christians. The leadership has the mandate to enable members for effective evangelism, and failure to participate or under-emphasising the Great Commission, leads to church stagnation and decline (RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:428–431). Leadership that does not come up with successful evangelism, do not lead new peoples to Christ. Their congregations are static and declining in membership – an indication of a church's lack of missional call. A missional church reaches out to all peoples with the gospel of Christ, which convicts sinners to repentance, resulting in church growth. Conversion growth fulfills the Christians' missionary call to be a blessing to all the peoples of the world (Gen 12: 2–3). To emphasise the importance of conversional growth, Jesus Christ reiterated this to his followers (Matthew 28:18–20). In this regard, the word and deed are both vital in communicating the love of Christ to peoples. Therefore, evangelism requires effective leadership that takes a leading role in the proclamation of the Word and to Christ-like living. Teaching the whole truth and meeting the needs of the target groups are powerful for conversion of people. These can be implemented by the leadership that is conversant in its ministry. The leadership that cannot successfully implement the NCD quality principle of evangelism, experience continuing membership decline. The continuous decline in the RCSA since 1994, indicates loopholes in the evangelism process.

However, certain evangelism methods were proposed for the RCSA such as dissemination of literature and compact discs in varied languages of South Africa (RCSA Deputies for media, and publication, 2018e:173). These proved to be ineffective, since the decline rate continues to increase instead of dropping. This method lacks several aspects of effective evangelism, namely proclamation, living the Word, and meeting the needs of the target group (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88). These deficiencies in this triad evangelism does not lead to church growth. This method falls short of the espoused need-oriented evangelism (Schwarz. 2006: 30; 1996:29) that is capable of convicting nations through the Holy Spirit. The need-oriented evangelism is effective because it is incarnational in the world, reflecting what they proclaim through their lives, in ways relevant to different peoples they reach out to with the gospel. Jesus commanded the church to 'go' (Matthew 28:19–20) and He highlights the model in going, starting with the immediate communities of the membership (Acts 1:8). The mandate to 'go', can never be substituted for any other means of evangelism for effectiveness. The model of Christ requires quality Christians, whose life transforms their families, neighbours, workmates, and many more. Thus, the literature and discs could be supplementary to the incarnational evangelism, but not the core. Disobeying the Great Commission 'to go', undermines church growth through conversional means. The RCSA cannot increase its membership if it does not 'go' to different peoples and proclaim the gospel of Christ.

To recap the RCSA's lack of twofold evangelism in its congregations, the following summary is provided:

i. **The RCSA is not reaching out to different peoples with the gospel of salvation.** Unsuccessful evangelism is resulting in continuous shrinking in membership that dates to 1994 (RCSA Deputies of turn–around and church growth. 2015:431). Turn-around and church growth could be realised if the RCSA reaches different nations with the Gospel, which is power in transforming them for Christ. A church that takes the gospel to all people grows without a doubt, because that is what the Head of the church commanded the church to do, and He promised to be with his church in the process. Being with his church as it 'goes' results in growth and is thus fulfilling the mission of the church. However, the gaps in empowering the leadership for spearheading evangelism, are obstacles to conversion growth.

ii. **The members lack quality that enhances quantity.** Spiritually weak members cannot shine the light of Christ to the unconverted. Such members are showing a compromised state of Christianity, which cannot transform their communities and beyond, since they are not transformed themselves. Members who lack a Christ-like character are on the margin and cannot attract others to the church. Instead, they exit

the church themselves at some point. Their quality does not enable them to remain in the church. Therefore, without quality, quantity is not possible. The quality members are 'the coming and seeking kingdom' that is the real light to the world.

9.3. Suggested evangelism model for the RCSA

The present study describes the evangelism as a major activity in the *missio Dei*, having its origin in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). Evangelism is a means of bringing the good news to the peoples of the world, so that they may have salvation in the Lord and King, Jesus Christ. Understanding the limitations in movements of people due to obstacles such as the COVID-19 pandemic, work commitment, diminishing in funds earmarked for missions in the RCSA, add to the decline in membership for more than two decades now. Though a variety of models can be used to reach out to peoples in various circumstances, present study suggests an organic model of evangelism. This model appraises that a believer's entire life should witness the love of God in Christ to peoples they cross paths within various contexts and situations. This aligns to what Bosch (1980:19) emphasises that the message of the cross and the messenger who is bringing it should communicate the same Christ. Thus, the entire life of believers should be an expression of God in all his communicable attributes. This points back to the quality of the RCSA members that must be transformed, to be consistent with the message they are sharing or willing to share (Moyor, 2012:47).

The present study sees the influx of immigrants to South Africa as God's plan that the church in South Africa reaches out to them with the gospel in an organic way. These immigrants are working with Christians and some work for Christians, including members of the RCSA. Taking the gospel message to these multiple immigrants and the native South Africans, could lead to the happening of a turn–around and church growth. If the life of Christians in all their life, namely in work, family, neighbourhood, social gatherings and others, is an expression of Christ, the words just confirm that what the people already portray with their life. Nevertheless, the context and the people one approaches, requires the discernment of the Holy Spirit through prayer and the Scriptures, to the most appropriate method to witness (Bosch, 1980:19; Greenway & Mashau, 2007:10–11). Different groups of people understand the truth of the gospel in different ways, which the RCSA Christians should discern to implement the most appropriate means for each group of peoples in the various walks of life. It stands to reason that what works for one group of people, is not a master method for several other groups (Schanabel, 2008:401).

10.   CONCLUSION

The present article concludes that leadership flaws are the loopholes to the quality loss of membership in the RCSA and the other Protestant churches. These leadership flaws begin with theological training that fails to empower ministers for both effectiveness in their functions and to be trainers in their congregations. As a result, these ministers cannot demonstrate or empower the congregational leadership for effectiveness. The congregations that are led by the leadership without capacity, cannot grow in any way. Thus, several problems in the Protestant churches and the RCSA are products of leadership's inability to lead and guide the church to growth, and instead decline occurs.

10.1. Relationship between RCSA leadership and global Protestant churches

This article established that actual membership decline is happening in Protestant churches globally, and the RCSA locally. Both cases identify leadership deficiencies to be negatively affecting membership quality and quantity. These leaders do not have the capacity to enhance quality in members. This is influenced by many factors, including not being equipped for effectiveness during training, having too many responsibilities, and failure to engage believers in their gifted areas. All these factors are hindrances to church growth.

10.2. Leadership flaws affect the quality of members in the RCSA

Empowering leadership for their offices, is given as the first NCD principle by Schwarz (2006:41 & 1976:39), and it is a key quality principle for the present study. The reason for such conclusion, is that when the leaders have no capacity in leading the congregation towards its purpose, they cannot influence membership for quality. Under-passing this first NCD quality principle, 'enabling leaders' stands as an obstacle to developing members to become disciples of Christ. Empowerment of the leadership is not limited to the ordained leadership, but all the gifted leaders should also have the capacity to help the church to move towards the desired direction of God. Other causes, such as secularisation, postmodernism, cultural barriers, and many others, can be dealt with, if the leadership is empowered in their functions. The reason is that the process of moving members from where they have been, to where God wants them (Weems, 2010:2), is dependent on the leaders' capacity to influence and motivate the entire church towards the desired direction. When the leaders have no capacity, their functions are doomed to failure, hence they cannot implement the other NCD principles. This follows that the leadership can only give what they have. If they don't have capacity themselves, they cannot enhance capacity among the membership. The leadership capacity enhances them to transform the church to be t an expression of God, using all the possible tools relevant to their time and context. A transformed church reflects the light of Christ that is key for leading people

to Christ's saving grace (Niemandt, 2012:9), which is the fulfillment of its calling. Nevertheless, without empowered leadership, all the other efforts have no one to help congregants through, and as such, bear no fruits (Mutavhadsandi & Meiring, 2014:2). The result are spiritually immature members that is qualitative decline that manifest in continuing numerical decline of membership. Failure to empower the leader, is an indicator that the other NCD principles which are benchmarks to quality members, could not be implemented. The other NCD quality principles can only be implemented profitably by the leadership that is conversant in its calling with the church of Jesus Christ. The seven NCD quality principles that were affected by leadership's lack of capacity, are the following:

i. **Gift-oriented ministry:** The identification of gifts, nurturing them, and delegating leaders and members to appropriate ministries. require expert leadership. This was not possible with the incapacitated RCSA leadership. These could not utilise membership gifts that are ideal for church health. Under-utilisation of members' gifts leads to a dysfunctional congregation, which cannot grow, but declines.

ii. **Passionate spirituality:** This quality character is realised when members live in love for each other as commanded in the Word of God (Schwarz, 1976:27). The members can achieve this quality principles when they are transformed to be Christ-like more and more, through discipleship. This requires effective teaching of the Word, to make disciples of Christ from members, it is, however, not possible with the leadership whose training did not prepare them for this.

iii. **Inspiring worship:** This is a result of effective preaching, Bible studies, and any other forms of worship that transforms the life of members. These are a God-centred form of service that only comes from leadership with capacity.

iv. **Holistic small groups:** These are appropriate for discipleship, during which important doctrines can be taught. This is possible in holistic small groups that include age, profession, neighbourhood, sex and any other that enhances members to be disciples of Christ. The needs of all the members are easily fulfilled in these. However, with multiple congregations under the ministers, this is impossible.

v. **Loving relationships:** This is enhanced also in small groups and is realised in love shown by members in various ways, including solving disputes that might arise. This is done in love in such a way that the concerned members feel that justice has prevailed.

vi. **Need-oriented evangelism:** This is achieved when evangelism encompasses the proclaiming of the Word and meeting the needs of the people, just like Jesus did. The proclamation of the Word is not stereo typed, where the same method is used for everyone. The proclamation is contextualised to meet the audience. This is possible

with gifted and dynamic leadership, not by those who cannot influence their members, as was indicated in the present chapter.

vii. **Functional structure:** This NCD seems to summarise the other six. The leadership that is not conversant in his office, cannot come up with functional structures in congregations. These would handicap certain ministries. Like in a human body, the defect in one part, affects how the entire body functions. In the same vain, dysfunctional structures disable the entire congregation. The result is that the ministries and structures are not aligned to develop quality among members, which is a clear indication of church decline.

The above NCD benchmarks were not effective in the RCSA, because the leadership was identified as being incompetent to implement them. The ineffectiveness of the leader flows to the entire church, leading to members who are in the church, but their quality does not match the church of Christ. The result is that members without quality can neither continue in a church, nor lead other people to Christ, resulting in continuous membership decline.

The present study did not involve congregational leadership to establish the missing biblical leadership principles that might be absent in them. This is because the study was limited by finance, time, and human resources. Therefore, the study recommends that a further study be carried out to investigate the generic biblical leadership principles that are effective for the leadership of the church.

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CHAPTER 4: ARTICLE 3

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH GROWTH

1.   ABSTRACT

Church leadership is ultimately responsible for the 'health' of a church. Several studies were carried out on both church growth and decline and how the church leadership is responsible for each. The present study is focusing on how biblical leadership provides the standard principles for church leaders that will enable them to guide their churches to 'healthy' church growth. To establish how the leaders in the Bible set precedence for the church leadership, leadership in both the Old and New Testaments was investigated. The common leadership principles exhibited by leaders in the entire Bible serve as guidelines on what successful church leadership ought to be and to do. It includes how God called and empowered certain individuals from his people to participate with Him in his mission. This makes the Bible the primary and chief source of data. In addition, relevant literature on biblical leadership was also consulted to further explain the biblical principles that should bring qualitative and quantitative growth and success. The presence of Schwarz's (1996) Natural Church Development (NCD) quality principles in leadership functions, authenticates the success of the biblical leadership principles in enhancing membership quality. This study will not only contribute to a practical-theological discussion about church leadership and 'quality membership', but ultimately wants to strengthen a missiological focus on 'church health' that must lead to 'quantitative growth', through the church's calling to be part of God's *missio Dei*.

Key words: biblical leadership, servant leadership, *missio Dei*, church health, church growth.

2.   INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of rapid church decline in the Western world and exponential church growth in the Two Thirds world, this study wants to focus on the role that church leadership plays in this regard. The present study investigates how God called some individuals from his people whom He empowered to lead his people in specific areas. The called individuals displayed the same principles that are necessary for the leadership of God's people (biblical leadership) in all times (Smit, 2010:185; Wright, 2006:327-350). The investigation indicates how the leaders came into their leadership positions and the methods they implemented to guide the followers towards the destination of God. They were called and empowered by God to influence followers to be all that God wants them to be. The empowerment of leadership is key in the execution of their functions. This enabled the leadership to transform members

accordingly. In this regard, Schwarz's (2006 & 1996) Natural Church Development (NCD) quality principles were used to show how these leaders were able to instil quality in the followers by guiding them according to the biblical principles. The presence of the NCD quality principles in leadership functions, point at their (leadership) ability to cooperate with God in the fulfilment of his will for his people. The NCD principles are the instruments that are used by the leadership to enhance the members to cooperate with God in the *missio Dei.*

The following were the aims of the present study:

i.   Identify the common biblical leadership principles that enables the church to achieve church health (and ultimately healthy church growth).
ii. Establish the importance of the identified biblical leadership principles for leadership success.

The leadership of God's people that begun all the way from Adam to reach its climax in the leadership of Jesus Christ, who passed it on to the apostles, are investigated. God's people refer to both Israel and Christians as given in the Old and New Testaments respectively (Genesis 12, 17; Dt 14:2; Colossians 3:12-22; 1 Pet 2:9). These verses show consistence of God in choosing the people who should join in his purpose. The choosing of Abraham and his descendants is the same with that of Christians in Christ. These chosen people are his children who join Him in what He is already doing in the world. Both were chosen not because they had done something to sacrifice that, but it was out of grace to choose them as his people. After choosing both the nation of Israel and Christians, God made a covenat with them. This indicates that the leadership of God's people have the same standard for both Israel and the church today namely, to cooperate with Him in the *missio Dei.* The purpose of God remains the same, namely that the called leadership guide his people towards his destination. The key to their leadership in the different dispensation was "reading the times and sings" (Niemandt, 2012:9), to guide the people of God in relevant ways that is appealing to each dispensation. As a result, all biblical leaders present the same principles necessary for the successful leadership of God's people. This follows that the purpose of the leadership was basically the same for all the leaders in the Bible: To make Israel and the other nations know God as the Lord, who is majestic in power over all creation and worldly powers.

The functions of these leaders and God's response to them were all ways of making Him known. On the one hand, success stories of Noah (Gen 6–10), Abraham (Genesis 12–25), David (1 Samuel 17–1 Kings 2), Peter (Acts & his epistles), Paul (Acts 10 & his epistles) and Solomon (1Ki 3–10) to mention a few, present the leadership principles necessary for God's people. Although these leaders are regarded as presenting good leadership, they erred in one

way or the other in their leadership functions, but that did not affect the purpose of God with them. However, the key principle is drawn that Christian leadership success depends on God alone and not the called leadership. God works his purpose even through man who might fall off from their calling to achieve his purpose. In all this, God reveals to the Israelites and the reader his grace and mercy over his people and that his purpose is never thwarted by the leadership's mistakes. The grand principle that leadership success is not dependent on the leaders, but on God, is indicated here. Thus, God's purpose with his people – church growth (Cole, 2010:8–10), is realised despite the leadership flaws. The dependence on God should not be misunderstood to mean carelessness of the leadership, but appraising the leadership to align to God's purpose, because He is the source of leadership success. Looking at the Kings such as Ahab, and the Kings of the Northern tribes (Israel), Saul and Eli, it shows that to fail in taking the instructions of God (the Word), results in leadership failure.

Notwithstanding the sin of David, his repentance (Ps 51) after God warned him through Nathan the prophet, indicates the need to repent and realign to the will and purpose of God. The Kings of Israel and some kings of Judah were warned by the prophets of God but did not repent and as such their leadership were not successful. Thus, paying attention to God's Word brought David into good terms with God, while the disobedience of the Kings of Judah lead to the devastating circumstance to both the Kings and Israel. Only the leadership of Jesus Christ, who was the absolute revelation of God on earth, presents perfect leadership principles for Christian leaders. Throughout his earthly leadership, Jesus Christ, indicates the importance of total dependence on God, which He did up to his death on the cross (Philippians 2:8). The salvation that He brought through his sacrificial death, resurrection and ascension, fulfills the mission of God with the nations – good news. Through Christ (John 1:12 & 3:16) God is drawing nations to his Kingdom which is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ now, and through to eternity. The church is thus belonging to the Kingdom of God, which is expressed on earth and will be fully accomplished eschatological. The leadership of Jesus Christ is a blueprint for the Christian leadership and is anchored on dependence on the Father in total obedience. Jesus demonstrated these principles through his prayerful life and pointing that what He was saying, He heard his Father saying it (John 3:38) and what He was doing, is what He saw the Father was doing (John 5:19). Jesus, the absolute revelation of God and God the Son, reflected a life of prayer and relying on the Father's Word. It stands to reason that the Christian leadership should do everything the Word of God instructs them, if they are to transform the members. The principle of obedience to the Word of God and its repercussions is emphasised, when the disobedient Kings of Israel and Judah were sent into exile.

Jesus Christ as the God the Son, the Saviour and the King demonstrated to the church leadership the basic leadership principles necessary of success. Furthermore, Jesus Christ has come to accomplish the mission of God through his sacrificial death on the cross (John 3:16; Hebrews 9:12; Matthew 16:24; Philippian, 2:6–8). Through his death, resurrection and ascension, He made a way for those who received Him back to the Father – thus the mission of God was accomplished. Therefore, the leadership that embraces his style of leadership succeed in their functions. The apostles followed Jesus' principles and were successful in enhancing church growth among all nations. The present church is no exception, if it follows in his leadership footsteps.

Throughout the leadership of God's people, important principles are indicated that profit the Christian leadership today. Thus, the description of biblical leadership principles serves as a benchmark for the present leadership of God's people (the church). The identified biblical leadership principles will answer Osmer's (2008:135) investigative question: "What ought to be done" by the leadership of God's people for church health to occur.

Church leadership that does not pursue biblical principles leads to failure, which manifests in church decline (Reeder, 2008:155; Reeder & Swavely, 2008:16). The reason is that they fail to follow in what God is doing, to meaningfully participate in the *missio Dei*. As a result, a clear description of these leadership principles is necessary to give directions to the present leaders of God's people – the church.

In an endeavour to capture several leadership principles, leaders of God's people in the Bible were identified, and principles presenting from them, are discussed to show how each one of them was important in leadership success. Leadership success is the ability of a leader to accomplish God's purpose with his people. Some examples of leadership that did not cooperate with God in the *missio Dei,* are also highlighted. These leaders strayed from the biblical principles and were unsuccessful. This indicates that neglecting to embrace the identified principles, leads to leadership failure. The study attempts to show the continuity of the biblical leadership principles, by presenting examples from the entire Bible.

3.   DEFINITION OF A BIBLICAL LEADER

A biblical leader is one who guides, motivates, directs and influences followers to the defined mission (Jensen & Stevens, 1981; Reeder & Swavely, 2008; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:151). In the same vein, Sanders (2007:27) defines a biblical leader as one with the capacity to influence men and women to a common purpose. However, these leadership definitions are not through coercing the followers, but helping them to transform to be what

God wants (Weems, 2010:2). The leaders' character should inspire the members to rally behind. This aligns to what the apostle Paul appraises, namely that the leaders were gifted to influence the membership to achieve their full potential of service (Ephesians 4:11–16). As such, everything that the leadership does should enable members to move steps towards the will and purpose of God. Leadership is therefore, nothing less than "the God-given responsibility of leading his people from one point to his intended destination", through the gifts given to them by Christ (Prill *et al.* 2011:67). These definitions emphasise that being a biblical leader is in God's design, hence the leaders are assigned responsibilities to fulfil in the *missio Dei*. The various gifts of leadership are meant to inspire the believers into service in which believers work with each other in the areas of their gifts. This calls for the leadership to empower gifted members to lead ministries of their gifts, and thus an organic leadership model is realised (Avery, 2004:18; Gelder, 2007:6; Weems, 2010:2). These scholars concur that the important task of ordained leaders is to guide and focus the gifted followers to participate with them towards the purpose of God. The model excludes hierarchy in leadership structures but empowers each of the multiple leaders to play a necessary function that impacts the whole church. No one leader is a master from whom the whole church is influenced towards God's way. This was emphasised by Jesus Christ when correcting the disciples' perspective of Christian leadership where they wanted a hierarchical one (Matthew 18:1).

Thus, effective Christian leadership is possible if the leaders closely aligns to the effective utilisation of both believer's and leadership's gifts. The reason is that the entire leadership process rests with the eternal God, who remains the overall leader and He works his leadership through the gifts in the church. What the leader is and does, comes from God who calls, empowers, and allocates each to a specific task in the *missio Dei*. The main function of a leader is also indicated as serving the followers. The definition underscores humility and servanthood as major attributes of a biblical leader. A summary definition of a leader, is therefore a believer who is Christ-like, called from among God's children according to spiritual gifts, and empowered for effectiveness in the given assignment, within the mission of God.

4. LEADERSHIP IN THE BIBLE

The eternal God has a purpose with nations (Genesis 12:2-3; Matthew 28:18-19) which He accomplishes at his appointed time. However, He purposely choose certain individuals from his children through whom He works in his purpose. It is according to his decree to use humans to cooperate with the Lord in all respects, in guiding members towards the assigned mission. A clear distinction is presented in the Bible between the biblical leaders, who are committed to faithfully align their roles to the will of God, as they serve their followers, and unbiblical (bad) leaders, who lead God's people away from his purpose.

The Pentateuch shows how Abraham and Moses served their followers faithfully in love and humility. This is also emphasised by Jesus in Mark 10:43–45 and John 12:12-17. On the contrary, both Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:25–33) and Ahab (1 Kings 16:29–34) led the Israelites away from the purpose of God, by contrasting their leadership to the will and purpose of God. The difference between these two sets of kings, is their reactions to God's instructions. Those who reacted positively were successful, and those who ignored his message, failed. Thus, only people who are loyal to God align with Him by pursuing his mission, while those who are not, are opposing his purpose and thereby divert followers away from the destination of God. Those who contrast God's purpose, are not the ones He called, but they came to leadership positions through other means (1 Sam 8:4-5 & 19–20).

Different individuals were called for different leadership assignments, and achieving the missional goals is regarded as being successful leaders (Reeder, 2008:15–16). In other words, to establish leadership success, one looks at the extent to which the leader meets the expected missional goals through cooperating with God is his mission. Moses' mission was to deliver Israel from bondage; Nehemiah's was the building of the walls of Jerusalem; Jesus' was to restore all humanity to God; the apostles were to influence church growth among all peoples – both qualitative and quantitative growth (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). The bottom line was not the assignment one was called for, be it to lead the war, give God's message to his people, guiding the people in any way, and many more. Any assignment that the leadership of God's people is assigned to, is made possible by the leaderships closely following of God's instructions and how He intervened where necessary, to contribute towards his mission. Even through disobedient leadership such as Ahab, Jeroboam, Saul and several others, the character of God was displayed. It was an important principle to the leadership to relate to God in their functions, in ways that attract his judgement towards the leadership and the followers. In each case, the fulfilment of the mission is only realised when the leadership achieved the desired outcomes.

The apostles' assignment outcomes were almost the same as that of church leaders today – to tell the good news to all nations. On the one hand, the apostles did the foundational work by bringing the good news to all the nations, peoples and languages. This replaced the former worship that was anchored in the law and was only for the nation of Israel (Matthew 28:18–19; Acts 1:8). The present church leadership are building and extending on the foundation laid by the apostles. They are ordained to participate with God in articulating the Great Commission in their respective roles. The apostles embraced the same principles used by the rest of the biblical leadership for their success, being sensitive to the instructions of God (Yount, 2008:50). It is a guarantee that if the present church leadership is sensitive to the

instructions of God, church growth is imminent (Cole, 2007:8). This follows that the eternal God who called the leadership to join Him in his mission, gives the leaders the direction that allows Him to work his purpose through the leadership. For the church, success is the leadership ability to influence members to spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:11–16), that transforms other people to Christianity.

The entire Bible reveals that the leadership of God's people are called to participate with Him in his mission (Prill *et al.*, 2011:67). They are called and tasked to reach out to the other nations, so that the other nations may also know Him (Genesis 12:2–3 & Matthew 28:19–20). These verses are indicating God's heart for the nations to come to the knowledge of Him, which is a blessing to them to give glory to God. The imperative to Abraham to leave his country and 'go', has the same implication with that of the Great Commission (Wright, 2006:212). In the call of Abraham, the redemptive plan is launched and is articulated in the Great Commission. Thus, "the people of Israel as a people involved in God's mission ... lead to the Messiah, and from him to mission of the new covenant children of Abraham, including both Jews and other peoples, in Christ" (Kreitzer, 2009:3). This makes the leadership of God's people virtually the same, even though the tasks, contexts, and dispensations appear differently. The reason is that the mission of the eternal God presents the same characteristics in different dispensations, and as such, his purpose remains the same. The following are the leadership principles necessary for all the leaders of God's people in all dispensations.

4.1. God calls and empowers leadership

Both the New and Old Testaments present the calling of God as foundational for biblical leadership (Berkley, 1992:147). God calls certain individuals from his covenant people to take up appropriate assignments that aligns with the gifts that He had invested in them. It stands to reason that the gifts God gave to these leaders, are the means through which they cooperate with Him in his mission (Ephesians 4:11). Examples of Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:4–7) and Moses (Exodus 3:10–14) show how God had called each leader to an assignment he is capacitated to fulfil. The prior life of an individual such as success records, knowledge, character, education, race and many more are not prerequisites to one's calling. God's gifts in a person are basic for the leadership success. Abraham was called from Ur of the Chaldeans where idol worshiping was prominent (Genesis 11:6–28) and he was called to lead God's covenant people. Moses, who once murdered an Egyptian (Exodus 2:12) and was unable to speak well (Exodus 3:10), was called to deliver Israel from Egypt. Saul who became Paul is also a good example, because his calling came as he was on his way to persecute the Damascus Christians (Acts 9:1–20). This shows that the calling of leadership depends on God alone – He knows the gifts He has given to each person that are necessary for the leadership

office and the task called for. Again, loopholes in the called leadership does not derail his purpose with the called leadership. Examples of shortfalls in all the called leaders, David's adultery and murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 11–12), Abraham and Hagar (Genesis 16:1–16), indicate that in spite of the shortfalls, Abraham and David are heroes among the leadership in the Bible. If God really calls the leadership, He leads them to succeed in their functions. This underscores the need for discerning the real people called to several leadership positions. In this regard, leadership identification and allocation require the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Word, in coming up with appropriate leadership in various offices. Thus, no other qualification supersedes the calling of God for identifying the leadership of God's people, – the church.

Only the persons called by God will be successful in their leadership tasks (De Moor, 2010:20; Smit, 2010:185), because they are endowed with the relevant gifts for the offices. Furthermore, after calling individuals, God empowers them for their tasks to enhance success. Although the empowered leaders are human beings who are prone to error, God who called them, will also sustain them. God intervenes where the called leaders are backing off, such as Elijah prayed that God end his life because of the circumstances surrounding him, God intervened and strengthened him to continue with his functions (1 Kings 19). This is how God works through his chosen leaders to achieve his will through them, despite their various weaknesses. This does not happen to uncalled leaders, who after transgressing, their leadership is terminated, as was seen with Saul (1 Samuel 15:14–28). God prepares those He calls to a permanent relationship with Him, which cannot be thwarted by their weaknesses.

Before God empowered individuals such as Moses, (Exodus 3:14; 4:10) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6), they felt unqualified to take up the leadership. It was after being equipped these with his Spirit for the assignments that they were zealous for them. Two related principles of leadership, namely calling and empowering of leaders, are indicated here. These two factors can be traced to all biblical leaders through the entire Bible. These align to Schwarz's (2006: 13 & 1996:12) NCD quality principle of "empowering leadership", so that they can accomplish their functions effectively. Empowering leadership includes giving them the appropriate training that aligns to the assignments one is called to do, up until the person can confidently perform them as expected. A conclusion can be drawn that for effective leadership to be realised, a called leader must undergo relevant training, to be able to successfully accomplish his functions.

4.2. Biblical leadership maintained a close relationship with God

God who chooses certain people from his children, remains with the authority of what the leaders are tasked to do (Cole, 2007:6–9; Sanders, 2007:27). This principle requires the leadership to be Christ-like in the executing of their functions, which Schwarz (2006 & 1996) agues, result from embracing the eight NDC quality principles. Being Christ-like flows from the leadership's total humility and daily dependence on the Holy Spirit, as they engage with the believers. This calls for the leaders' total surrendering to Christ (the supreme Leader) and his leadership.

In all this, prayer is an indispensable resource for leadership to connect with God (Drummond, 2001:153; Jenson & Steven, 1981:19–30; Sanders, 2007:85–92). The reason is that prayer is a powerful tool that energises the efforts of a leader and his followers, to actively work towards the envisaged missional goals together. Jesus taught and demonstrated the principle of prayer, which is core to all biblical leaders. Those who prioritised prayer, were successful. The fact that Jesus Christ emphasised the need to pray continuously and never to lose heart (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8; 1 Th 5:17), highlights the position of prayer for the leadership of God's people. In the same vein, Jesus affirms God's promise to answer prayers (Matthew 7:11).

A prayerful leadership is capable of overcoming temptations, which are obstacles to the purpose of God with his people. It is also important for the leadership to intercede for the whole congregation and encourage the congregants to do likewise for the leadership and for each other. The godly congregational leadership incorporate prayer, as one of the major aspects that they demonstrate and teach the members to embrace.

4.3. Obedience is prerequisite to biblical leadership success

Obedience to God who calls and empowers the leadership, is the next building block to leadership success after the calling and empowering of leaders (Grobler, 2007:70, Knight ,1985:1; Vorster, 1999:15). This is crucial for the leaders in their quest to achieving God's purpose with his people. God who called the leaders, also equips them by teaching them his will. He gives them the blueprint and emphasises that any side–tracking risks leadership failure. This calls for total humility and obedience, to avoid pride and arrogance, which are the sources of leadership failure in most cases (Grobler. 2007:61; Vorster, 1999:34). God's instruction acts as directional signs that takes the leadership to the success destination.

God blesses obedient leadership with success, and judges the disobedience of leaders by failure (Prill *et al.,* 2011:67). This is an indicator that leadership success is not centred in the leaders but is with God alone. All the obedient leaders from Abraham through to the apostles

were successful. The success secret that passes the test of time, is fully obeying and trusting God and his Word in all leadership endeavours (McNeal, 2009:24). Total faith in God enables the biblical leadership to blindly follow all that God instructs them, without questioning its credibility. Thus, a successful leader is a student of the Word, from where he gets everything necessary for leading the followers to where God wants (De Moor, 2010:135–136). The church leadership that is obedient to God, will also go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19–20), teaching them to also obey everything that God commands. This leads to healthy church growth (having quality Christians), while disobedience from leaders and their followers lead to decline. The following are the fruits of leadership obedience to the calling that enhances Schwarz's (2006 & 1996) NDC quality principles:

i. Effective evangelism to all nations

The spiritual mature church is an expression of God everywhere, and thus witnessing Christ to different peoples. Such Christians cannot stop testifying to others the good news of the grace of God in Christ.

ii. Teaching the converted in small groups to grow spiritually

The spiritual mature Christians are eager to make disciples of all converted people, using various platforms. Maximum teaching is possible in smaller groups, in which induvial needs are easily identified and are met.

iii. Transforming the church to be Christ-like

The life of quality Christians is instrumental in transforming believers to being Christ–like.

iv. Implement a gift-oriented ministry

The spiritual gifts for members (Ephesians 4:7) and that of leaders (Ephesians 4:11) are the reasons for establishing ministries that are relevant for various gifts. The effective serving of members and leadership leads to quality in ministry and subsequently, to the entire church. The quality members manifest into numerical growth in the church, as the Christ–like members attract people to share grace in Christ.

God ordained the church to grow (Cole, 2007:7–8) in quantity and quality (Genesis 12:2–3; 17:6–7; Matthew 28:18–20). Quantitative church growth is brought about by the inclusion of the believer's children in the church (Gen 17:6–7), and through evangelism (Gen 12:2–3; Matthew 28:19). Thus, numerical church growth is through both biological and conversional means, not only one of them. Qualitative church growth is encouraged in Matthew (28:20), where the people who are brought through conversion and biological means, are transformed into disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, leadership obedience includes leading the nations to

Christ, and convert them into disciples of Jesus Christ. It is not enough to only lead peoples to Christ (quantitative growth), but to also make them into disciples of Christ (qualitative growth), who live all their life to glorify his name.

4.4. Biblical leaders equip others to be their helpers[3]

Leadership helpers are men and women who can assist the leadership in their gifted areas, to positively influence others to pursue the will of God with them (Reeder, 2008:15 & 43). The Bible presented leadership helpers such as Joshua helping Moses (Gn – Dt), Joab to David (2 Sm), Timothy and Titus for Paul (1& 2 Timothy; Titus). Thus, organisational success is a teamwork in which empowered men and women work with the ordained leadership towards the desired goals. It is not a one-man show. Leaders should identify appropriate gifts of helpers, in leading specific tasks and then give them relevant training to enhance their gifts for effectiveness in their duties and tasks.

4.4.1. Preparing leaders and their helpers to enhance the full body functioning

Biblical leadership requires that God do something with them before He is doing something through them (Dodd, 2003:100). Thus, God equipped the called leaders to enable each one of them to reach his full leadership potential. Isaiah who felt inadequate for the calling, later had the passion and desire to take up the required leadership tasks after God equipped him (Isa 6:4-7). The same scenario is seen in Jeremiah (1:6), and in Moses (Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:10) that even though they were hesitant to accept the call, they later became zealous in their calling after God empowered them. The example of Saul who becomes Paul, is most stunning in explaining how God prepares his called ones for success (Galatians 1:15–17). God who called him from birth, adequately prepared him for his leadership tasks, and he was very successful as evidenced in his ministry, as shown in Acts and his epistles. This emphasises that a leader who does not receive proper training for his office, is not successful.

The failure to properly empower identified leaders, jeopardises their ability to lead the followers. Without proper training, the gifts are not cultivated to meet the required level that brings about success. Proper training given to the called leadership, must enable every helper to engage the whole church in the *missio Dei*.

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[3]   Helpers are the gifted members of the people of God who help the ordained leadership in their gifted areas.

The biblical leaders follow the model presented by Jesus, and they then strive to model the same character among all their followers (Reeder & Swavely, 2008:152-153; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:112; 126; Stenschke, 2007:95; Yount, 2008:23, 25). Jesus who is the fulfillment of the mission of God, set the precedence for Christian leadership. He demonstrated the unconditional love of the Father through his sacrificial death on the cross, which is the doorway to salvation through faith in Him. The principles of sacrificial character, unconditional love, obedience, servanthood, all flows from Christ. The people He saved and who are under his headship, should follow the example He presented as the Head (the Gospels). Again, the love of Jesus towards his follows that made Him to call them his friends (John 15:15), indicate the relationship that should prevail between the leadership and the other members. This is the leadership model that should be with the ordained leadership and the other multiples of leadership therein.

Thus, passing the Jesus-model of leadership from the ordained leaders to the others, result in the whole church becoming disciples of Christ, and thus forming a healthy church. This follows that the ordained leadership and the other leaders in the congregation can easily help the believers to move in the direction of God together. Paul puts it clearly that his followers should imitate him, because he imitates Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Biblical leadership produce followers like themselves, just as Jesus stated that "It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master." (Matthew 10:25a NIV). When the church has members, who are disciples of Christ (quality Christians), church growth is imminent. Endeavouring church growth with under-equipped or unequipped leadership and helpers to spearhead the process, does not lead to the desired results (Morrison, 2014:58). The result might be the realisation of numbers without quality, which defeats church health. This makes leadership empowerment (Schwarz, 2006:13; 1996:12) the core element in church growth. An effective leader leads the church towards real growth (quantity and quality of members), while that without capacity seemingly aid decline, because it is irrelevant to the needs of the members (Elliston, 1988:204; Fanning, 2009:2 & 10; Wagner, 1984:47; Wees, 2010:2). The reason is that the Christian leadership function is to transform the church to be what God wants with it. Thus, the church can only be an expression of God in the community when the members are spiritually mature to reflect Christ in all of life – family, work, neighbourhood, in the street and other areas Christians are a part of. Thus, do everything that is honouring God, even in very small things! Believers' Christ–like character is a product of the leaders that has been capacitated to be the real agents through whom God dispenses his will and purpose to the church (Niemandt, 2012:4). Without capacity, the leadership cannot transform the church, neither can it cooperate with God in his mission. This follows that leadership empowerment is centred on aligning the leadership to the mission of God, in that it (the leadership) cooperates

with God meaningfully. This argument encourages the churches to invest in relevant leadership training that capacitates them for their offices, before assuming them.

In this regard, the ordained biblical leadership would not teach, empower and leave ministry leaders on their own (Reeder & Swavely, 2008:153–154). They keep in touch with them, evaluate their progress and intervene where and when it is necessary. This is what Jesus was doing with his disciples (Matthew 10:1–15; Mark 6:7–15; Luke 9:2-6; 10:1–16). He was always with them, and when sending them for an assignment, He empowered them for what He wanted them to do. This is possible through the hands-on approach of training leadership, during which the identified helpers are nurtured and developed through partaking in real ministry work with the leadership (Jenson & Stevens, 1981:168–170).

The essence of the matter in training the leadership and their helpers, is to prepare them for their roles, so that their involvement with the members brings a healthy church growth (De Moor, 2010:113). Training is a key for shaping, empowering, and motivating the leadership and helpers in doing their functions with confidence and with accuracy, which will lead to success.

4.4.2.   The advantages of sharing leadership

Sharing leadership tasks between the leadership and helpers, relieves the leaders of certain tasks (Cole, 2007:98; Green, 2001:47), thus allowing them more time to focus on tasks of their gifts. It follows that both the helpers and leaders would be responsible for small and manageable groups that can easily be influenced towards the will of God. This will lead to the achievement of the desired results, because they each have ample time to transform the small groups they work with. Like the ordained leaders, God purposely identify helpers to assist in areas of their gifts, according to his design. The character of helpers is also described by Paul to Timothy: they should be above board (2 Timothy 2:2) in order to influence the others towards real church revitalisation (Knight, 1985:1; Paas, 2015:118). This criterion ensures that the leadership helpers must be grounded in the fear of the Lord, and they have the necessary capacity for the specific ministries where they can help. The identification of gifted members, and to place them to lead relevant groups, require expert leaders' skills in placing each member correctly. The gifted helpers can influence membership quality, through following Schwarz's (1996:19) NCD quality principles: "effective small groups, gift-oriented ministry, loving relations, and functional structures".

While the biblical leadership works as a team, the unbiblical leaders want to have all the authority to themselves. Jesus highlights that the worldly leaders seek to be highly honoured,

and they exercise authority over their followers (Mark 10:42). The problem with unbiblical leadership is that they are more concerned about their leadership title, rather than the success of the organisation (Morrison, 2014:61; Schindler, 2008:6). The unbiblical leadership does not want to serve, but wants to be served by all the followers, against the biblical principle of servant leadership. This is counterproductive, because failure to utilise identified talents among followers, paralyses the organisation.

Biblical leadership's success comes from both the leadership input and its ability to involve all potential members as helpers. in their varied areas of expertise (Reeder, 2008:103–104). Limiting all leadership tasks to the ordained leadership, handicaps the church, resulting in decline. The ordained leaders cannot successfully perform multiple leadership tasks in ways that induces quality in Christians. Limping ministries would disable growth efforts of the whole church, resulting in membership decline due to a lack of quality.

Church growth is not a product of only the input of ordained leadership, but of all members (Getz *et al.,* 2000:98). Input from all members is made possible through involving multiple leadership helpers, who motivate individual members to contribute towards church health. Congregational members should be made to participate in meeting the various needs of people they reach with the gospel, while the ordained leaders concentrate on the ministry of the Word.

4.5. Qualities presented by biblical leaders

Green (2001:75-76) and Yount (2008:51-58) identify the personalities of Jesus Christ and the other biblical leaders as central in their successful leading of the people of God. The personality of a leader is tied to both the intimacy with God and positive training that brings behavioural changes to the trainees (McIntosh, 2009:71). The result are leaders who attain the qualities that aligns to their calling.

These leadership qualities displayed by the apostles and other church leaders given in Acts, were able to influence the members towards church growth (Reeder, 2008:37). Such qualities flow from total dependency on God. Therefore, the secret to having these qualities, is to duplicate Christ as much as possible, in every aspect of leadership functioning. This urges the leadership to become sensitive to the statutes of God, and to the needs of followers which are necessary for a healthy church.

This model is based on leadership's personal commitment, to faithfully serve all the followers impartially (Reeder, 2008:30–31; Sanders, 2012:28). The leaders of God's people are servants who lovingly and willingly meet the needs of all followers equitably. Jesus

demonstrated servant leadership through serving peoples of different races, tribes, languages, religious background, and many other differences. Four important attributes of servant leadership that are shown in all the biblical leaders in both the New and Old Testaments, should be demonstrated by the church leadership today (Reeder, 2008:12–22; Wallace, 2007:127; Wong & Page, 2003:3 & 10). Inadequacy or missing of any one of the following four servant leadership attributes, result in leadership failure that comes with negative results.

i. *Servant leaders have their followers at heart*: This compels them to being committed, and caring, and to develop them fully to help them reach their full potential as members of the church. These leaders take pride in seeing their followers realising their full potential in all possible areas, leading to a healthy church where all members are active in serving in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–15).

ii. *The servant leaders align their activities to the will of God:* They are aware that God called them to such positions, and He works his purpose through them. They lead from the front and demonstrate to the followers what they should embrace for success.

iii. *Servant leaders are effective in building strong teams:* They build teams that are both united and diversified in nature. The unity and diversity bring the required blend for church growth. Leadership encourages followers to actively participate in the decision making of the church. This is important, in enabling the members to feel that they are recognised as being part of the organisation. It gives them the energy to participate in achieving everything set in the organisation, as a united team. The ordained servant leaders actively involve the whole congregation, in all issues of the church. They enable each member to play an active role, in building the church of Jesus Christ. Taking the leading role, is the motivation that urge followers to put maximum effort in imitating what the leadership is doing.

iv. *Servant leaders are committed to create a strong team of both the leadership and the followers:* Such a team brings desired results. The reason is that the followers and leaders work together, towards the same destination. The biblical leadership appraises that each member is called by God and has an active role to play in building the body of Christ.

These characteristics of a servant leader are powerful in empowering followers for service in their gifted areas, developing love among members, enhance Christ-like living, and cultivating inspiring worship among all members. These functions utilise the six NCD principles, which indicates the higher possibilities of church health.

4.6. Biblical leadership has a clear vision

The vision of the leadership is embedded in leading nations, peoples, and languages to Christ, and transforming them into his disciples (Genesis 12:2 –3; Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8b). The vision of biblical leaders is rooted in God's overall purpose with his people. This is the resource that empowers the leadership in their daily life, to fully engage in the mission of God through their lives and the proclamation of the Word. Their prime responsibility is grounding this vision in the people they lead (Weems, 2010:15), so that they also can become missional (living a life that reveals God). The missional leader adopts this vision of the *missio Dei* in accordance with his calling and adapt it to suit his own tasks. The leaders are careful that contextualisation does not alter God's purpose with his people (De Moor, 2010:53), but to present the purpose relevant to the people.

Though contextualisation is vital, the core of the gospel should be maintained (Morrison, 2014:60; Schindler, 2008:5). This requires the leadership to be conversant in the ministry of the Word, to strike a balance between the whole gospel truths and contextualisation, to avoid moralising the Good News, or enhancing syncretism. The biblical leader's vision embraces all the goals that the people of God need to accomplish. This is missional, in that the leadership influences the members to think beyond the boundaries of their congregation (Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:150). The leaders motivate the church to develop the love for reaching out to different peoples with the Good News. The missional vision is centred on the two aspects that are spelt out in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), namely:

i.   That the church grows quantitatively through effective evangelism.
ii. That the church nurtures all the converted members in the truths of the Word, until they mature spiritually.

The missional vision of the congregation is communicated to the multiple leaders and all members, to motivate each member to direct his or her efforts towards the shared vision (Blackaby *et al.,* 2011:85–109; Pue, 2005:89–100; Sanders, 2007:55;). The leadership communicates the vision, as part of the *missio Dei.*

Moses communicated the vision to all the Israelites, of what God expected of them and their children, after crossing over into Canaan (Dt 6). In the same vein, Joshua also told all the Israelites what God spells out to them, to conquer Jericho (Joshua 6). In each case, all the people were made aware of what was expected of them, to achieve God's purpose together. These examples point at the need to share the organisation's vision, so that each member is clear on what is expected (Reeder, 2008:99). It is unhealthy for the leadership to keep the vision to themselves, because the followers would not have the motivation to participate

towards its achievement. Knowing the congregation's missional goals, provide the focus for membership's diverse gifts in serving. The unity and diversity of the church membership is encouraged by Christ, when He prays that the unity in the church compares with that of the Trinity (John 17:21–22). All the talents, skills, and resources within different members of the church, are necessary for healthy church growth to occur.

4.7. Biblical leadership defies internal and external *missio Dei* challenges

Although biblical leaders face a variety of challenges, both from their followers and their enemies, they continue to persevere (Sanders, 2012:116–128). Coping with challenges is a skill that is embedded in leadership empowerment. The Bible reveals quite a few examples of these challenges: David faced challenges from Saul (1 Samuel 19, 21), Absalom (2 Samuel 15), and the Ammonites (2 Samuel 10). Moses faced challenges from the whole group of Israelites (Exodus 32; Nm 11), from Aaron and Miriam (Nm 12), and from the scouts (Nm 13). Jesus also faced challenges from his disciples (Matthew 18:1–6; 26:14-15; Mark 9:33; 14:10; Luke 9:46–48; John 13:27–38), and from the religious leaders (Matthew 9:1–13; 12:22–45; 19:1–12; Mark 2:1–17; 3:20–30; 10:1-12). Jesus highlights to the church that it will face persecution of all kinds, so that the biblical leadership are not derailed by the challenges. They are aware that multiple leadership challenges are the devil's instruments to side-track their calling. The energy to persevere, despite challenges, is the Holy Spirit who reminds the leadership of God's divine providence in all situations.

The book of Acts shows that the persecution of apostles and the early church paved the way for the growth of the church, instead of destroying it. The church leadership did not succumb to problems that they faced, but they kept working towards a healthy church growth. The realisation by the leadership that God who calls them, is always with them in all situations, helps them not to despair because of challenges. Leadership obstacles will always occur, but the biblical leadership keep focused on the *misso Dei*.

Although Jesus is God the Son, He always said that what He was doing or saying, was not His own, but the Father's (John 5:30; 6:38; 8:28; 12:49–50). Jesus demonstrated the importance of abiding by the will of God in all things. His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane shows that even when the fear of the cross gripped Him, He preferred the will of God to prevail (Matthew 26:42; Luke 22:42). The burning passion for doing the will of God, is the resource that passes the test of time for leaders of God's people. This is possible with leaders who are empowered to embrace the Word of God, from which all their decisions are flowing. Such leaders take the Bible to be the source of directions they need, in leading the people of God.

4.8. The biblical leadership sacrifice all for the *missio Dei*

The model of biblical leadership is Christ, whose missional commitment is displayed by the leadership in the entire Bible (Jenson & Stevens, 1981:169). To lead like Christ, the leadership ought to walk in his footsteps, being led by the Holy Spirit. Being grounded in one's missional calling, is all that is required for successful biblical leadership. Morrison (2014:277); Reeder (2008:19), and also Reeder and Swavely (2008:161-162) identify biblical leaders as those who sacrifice self interest in their pursuit, to lead their followers to the purpose of God. They aim to form quality followers through actively engaging them in the eight NCD quality principles (Schwarz, 1996). This is a pure act of service that calls the leadership to tirelessly serve individual members, in order to help each one of them to become a quality Christian.

Such leaders put organisational goals above personal interests and gains. Their servant leadership spirit compels them to invest in serving members, rather than in themselves. Sacrificing position, urges the biblical leadership to stoop down to the same level with their followers, making the two parties (leadership and followers) become a single unity, working towards the same destination.

Leadership sensitivity towards followers, and being determined for a strong relationship with all the followers, are the characteristics of biblical leadership (Green, 2001:72; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:116, 146). Thus, sensitivity to all members is the driving force in biblical leaders that leads to the fulfilment of their calling, by being available to various members. This includes going along with even those members whose behaviours oppose the leader's, in an endeavour to align them to the will of God. Jesus was attending to people of different sex, religious backgrounds, nationalities, languages, professions and He met their needs. Meeting the followers' needs in the mission of God, remains the priority for all biblical leaders.

Jesus' life was rooted in the accomplishment of his calling. He sacrificed his time, family, and status as God the Son, his resting time and ultimately his own life, to indwell a man (Green, 2001:73). This was done out of his love to bring back the fallen humanity to the Father. Reading through the book of Acts, one can also see that the apostles adopted the same sacrificial life, which they learnt from Jesus Christ. This commitment helped the apostles to be successful in establishing healthy churches of several nations. Even today, the church leaders need to demonstrate the sacrificial style of leadership, to accommodate all congregants and to show the love of God to them. Accommodating and loving all congregants, enables the leadership to influence them to grow spiritually.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study presents three common principles for the success of biblical leadership:

i. **The calling of God that is gift oriented, was foundational for the leaders in the Old Testament and the New Testament.** God called leaders and ordained them, to lead in tasks that align to their gifts. They were empowered for their tasks, before taking it up. Such empowering was necessary for a leader, to effectively deal with followers in ways that would transform them to be what they ought to be. Such transformation results from engaging the members as much as possible, in all aspects of the organisation, to actively participate. This process meets two of Schwartz's (2006 & 1996) NCD quality principles that are ideal for enhancing the people of God to achieve his purpose in the *missio Dei*. The empowering of leadership before engaged in their called assignments, is necessary as was shown by the seemingly hesitant leaders such as Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Gideon. They were later confident in their calling, after God empowered them. The key aspect of empowering the Christian leadership, is paramount for the successful implementation of their leadership functions. The other NCD quality principle is on the gift-oriented ministry, where different leaders were called for assignments that match their spiritual gifts. Each of the called leaders was not a master in all the assignments that were ongoing. David who was an exceedingly good fighter, was not sent with messages of God to warn or advise God's people. Instead David got a warning from God, through Nathan, who was called to deliver God's messages to his people.

ii. **These called biblical leaders were prepared for readiness, before they could assume the leadership.** Relevant preparation of the leaders enhanced leadership success. Even though the preparation was not the same, each was appropriate for the mission to be accomplished. The preparation of the leaders included giving them the qualities that enhanced the leadership success. Training equipped them for leading the members to the will and purpose of God. Leadership training allowed leaders to be experts in guiding the members towards achieving the desired results. In the case of church growth, the empowered leaders involved all members, so that they were equipped and motivated to participate in church growth activities of their congregations. This was effective when the minister was trained to be a trainer, who in turn trained the other congregational leaders for their offices. The trained congregational leaders (elders), trained the ministry leaders for effectiveness. This resulted in a congregation in which all congregants were actively involved in serving the congregation, in their gifted areas. Thus, the preparation of leaders and allocating

them in ministries of their gifts, which results in the participation of the whole church, indicate the NCD quality principles of gift-oriented ministries and holistic small groups. The allocation of leaders and membership into the ministries of their gifts, result in the effectiveness of each ministry which is church health. The functional structure is also indicated when success in various ministries, affect the entire church. This is a product of an organic leadership model, where various leaders are instrumental in their ministries, without negative interference from ordained leadership, or any other leadership and members. However, the ministries give each other advocacy that improves their functions, thereby coming up with effective ministries all round. This cooperation is ideal in cultivating the relationship among ministries and members, in line with the NCD loving relationships.

iii. **Obedience and commitment to the calling:** The called and prepared leaders showed obedience to God's instructions and were committed to their leadership tasks. Obedience and commitment to tasks lead the leaders and members to have a sound relationship with God, arouses passion to live a life that is devoted to give glory to God in everything the church does. Such a church take pride in embracing all that Jesus Christ taught, which made them reflect God in all of life, transforming their communities and beyond. God's instructions remain the packages of training that prepared leaders for their functions. Such instructions provided leadership directions that helped them to successfully achieve the goals of their tasks. This called for the relevant training of ministers of the Word, which enables them to be trainers in their congregations.

These common principles of biblical leadership appraise the implementation of Schwarz's (2006 &1996) eight quality principles. The implementation of these principles should result in quality members, capable of transforming their communities by the light of Christ in them. The success of the leadership in both the Old and New Testaments, substantiate Schwarz's (2006:13 & 1996:12) quality principles, which run throughout several leadership functions as indicated in the Bible. The argument is that when the eight NCD quality principles are implemented, success will be imminent. The present study established that the empowering of the leadership is the key NCD quality principles. This follows that the other seven quality principles can only be successfully implemented by a leader, with the necessary capacity. Without empowered leaders, the implementation of the other seven is almost impossible, or can be mediocrely done, and therefore cannot produce desired results.

The biblical principles identified by the present study, presents a leadership model that cuts across all dispensations inclusive of the present church leaders. As in the Old and New

Testaments, God today still calls the leadership of his church to spearhead growth, which is the agenda of the church. The church has the task to identify the real called leadership and appropriately empower them, before taking up the leadership tasks. These same principles that brought about leadership success in historical biblical leaders, are necessary for the church today.

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CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 4

BIBLICAL AND PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES FOR A REAL REVITALISATION AND HEALTHY CHURCH GROWTH WITHIN THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.   ABSTRACT

Multiple studies were done on church revitalisation and growth for several years, but none focused on giving a practical biblical guideline that enhances the leadership to spearhead revitalisation. The present study provides a biblical, practical, and leadership guideline and strategies for turn–around and healthy church growth (church revitalisation). To provide this practical strategy for the Christian church, and the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA), a concentric diagram is proposed. This strategy is showing three leadership aspects necessary for effectiveness, – viz. calling, empowering and multiplication, respectively. These are indicated by concentric lines and has nine leadership outcomes at the periphery of the concentric circles. It also has four spokes that are drawn from the centre to the end of the concentric circles, which are the pillars that strengthens the three leadership aspects. These pillars are identification, empowering, mentoring, and releasing leadership into service. It must be implemented for congregational leadership such as the ministers of the Word and other congregational leadership. The present study made use of the leadership principles indicated in the Bible, to determine how to act and what qualities the leaders ought to have, in order to successfully lead the church towards real revitalisation and healthy growth. The Bible presents the basis for all that the church leadership needs for a church to be healthy. Therefore, the Bible is the chief source of data, together with some relevant literature that shapes the present practical strategy for the Christian leadership. This strategy is necessary for both the leaders that are presently serving in congregations, and those yet to come from seminaries after graduating. A proposed curriculum to cultivate such leadership is provided at the end of the article.

Key words: biblical leadership, practical guidelines, strategy, real revitalisation, healthy church growth, Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA).

2.   INTRODUCTION

The leadership of the church is responsible for cooperating with God in his mission, by enhancing church health (Gets *et al.*, 2000:98; Wagner, 2012:7). This is because the leadership guides and leads members towards the destination of God. The leadership

influences the behaviour of followers and the way they act. When the church leadership is effectively performing its functions, church health is imminent. On the other hand, a lack of leadership capacity results in church decline. The church decline that continues in world Protestant churches (Krejcir, 2007:1; MacArthur, 2006:63; Stoll & Petersen, 2008:252; RCSA Deputies of turn–around and Church growth, 2015:492) and that of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) that dates to 1980 and 1994 respectively, is an indicator of leadership's lack of capacity to harness decline. Leadership failure to turn–around and to experience church growth for such a long-time. is devastating to the church of Jesus Christ. This is a clear sign of an unhealthy church that needs healing, because as the body of Christ, the church should grow (Costas, 1983:97; Jenson & Stevens, 1981:9; Sherman, 1997:21–22). Church growth is established in the Word of God (Genesis 12:1–3; Matthew 28:19–20). These Scriptures appraise both the quantitative and qualitative methods of church growth. Thus, the image of the church as a body, indicates an organism that has the potential to grow. Church growth is realised when all the congregants become disciples of Christ who can also make disciples for Christ. They can only do so after being well equipped by the congregational leadership to be missional members (Ephesians 4:12–13). The apostle Paul points out that the leadership is responsible for influencing the members, to actively serve in the church, in ways that leads to healthy growth.

In this regard, the present study is aiming at presenting a biblical and practical strategy for ministers of the Word and other church leadership. Central to the strategy is the equipping of the leadership to be effective in guiding the congregational membership towards church health (Startup & Harris, 1999:118). This strategy begins by empowering the ministers of the Word, who in turn are responsible for capacitating the elders, deacons, deaconesses and several ministry leaders. Note that the leadership of the Reformed Churches is not hierarchical, and the leaders are not subordinate to each other. Nevertheless, the teaching elder or minister of the Word, has a role to lead and guide the other leadership positions and the entire congregation, based on the Word (Grobler, 2007:61; Vorster, 1999:33). This is because, the minister undergoes theological training that is meant to equip him for leadership effectiveness in congregations.

The key aspect is that ministers are trained to be real trainers in their congregations, for both the congregational leadership and the members. The strategy utilises the biblical principles on how God identified, prepared, and assigned the leadership to different leadership tasks. By focusing on the biblical leadership principles, the present study was able to answer Osmer's (2008:140) pragmatic question number four: "How might we respond?" The study's response

is the provision of a clear practical leadership guideline that empowers the leadership to spearhead healthy church growth.

The call of God is central for the present study, as it forms the basis of leadership success. The reason is that God who ordains leaders before their conception, calls them to lead at his appointed time (Jer 1:5). Thereafter, the other building blocks that are necessary to augment the call of God, are discussed in detail to underscore how the called leadership could be effective. These principles are the same as those displayed by Jesus, and they are pivotal in the success of church leadership today. They are critical for transforming the leadership to become quality leaders who can influence the members to follow their example. They are presented as the pillars of the biblical practical leadership guideline strategy.

A curriculum that is necessary for successfully implementing the suggested practical strategies is given at the end of this article. This curriculum suits both the ordained leaders and lay leadership in congregation, though the approach should be tailor made, to suit each category. The proposed leadership curriculum can be used as a complete curriculum for the Theological School Potchefstroom. It follows that several courses taught therein are catered for in the proposed leadership curriculum. Further, the proposed curriculum highlights, theological education as a tool for effective participation in the mission of God. An example of a leadership training programme that was drawn from the present curriculum is in addendum.

3. THE PRACTICAL BIBLICAL STRATEGY FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The strategy proposes two parallel ways of leadership training that are meant to bring leadership effectiveness in the RCSA, and other denominations. On the one hand, it is a long term and ongoing training that is vital in preparing the leadership for readiness before assuming office. The training aims at equipping trainee ministers with the appropriate leadership skills that would enable them to guide their congregations to turn–around and to healthy church growth. The ministers of the Word use the same format in training the congregational leadership. This should continue to be used whenever it remains relevant. On the other hand, the strategy provides a temporary intervention that is aimed at making the present church leadership effective in their congregations. This intervention is meant to eliminate leadership problems that are affecting turn-around and church growth (RCSA, 2015:492). The thrust of the strategy is to equip these leaders to be what God wants them to be, in order to influence church growth. The proposed strategy is described below:

At the centre of the practical biblical leadership strategy is the call of God, who assigns certain individuals from his covenant people to leadership offices that are fitting to their gifts (De More,

2010:26). As such, the possible leaders should pass the calling test before they are engaged in training for various leadership offices. It is important to train the right candidates for each congregational ministry. The leadership that is already serving, had gone past the calling stage, and the present study has no control over that. The empowering stage is where the present strategy takes them on board to make them effective. However, if there is a leader in any leadership office without the call of God, the training process will not turn him into an effective leader. This emphasises that the call of God is core and indispensable for leadership success. Therefore, when the serving leadership has the appropriate gifts for their offices, they would benefit from the training programmes of this practical strategy. On the other hand, if the calling test was not properly done, it might have leaded certain individuals without the call of God into leadership positions. These individuals would remain stumbling blocks to church revitalisation. The practical strategy is given diagrammatically below in Figure 1. This diagram is a product of the present researcher and shows the whole strategy in a snapshot.
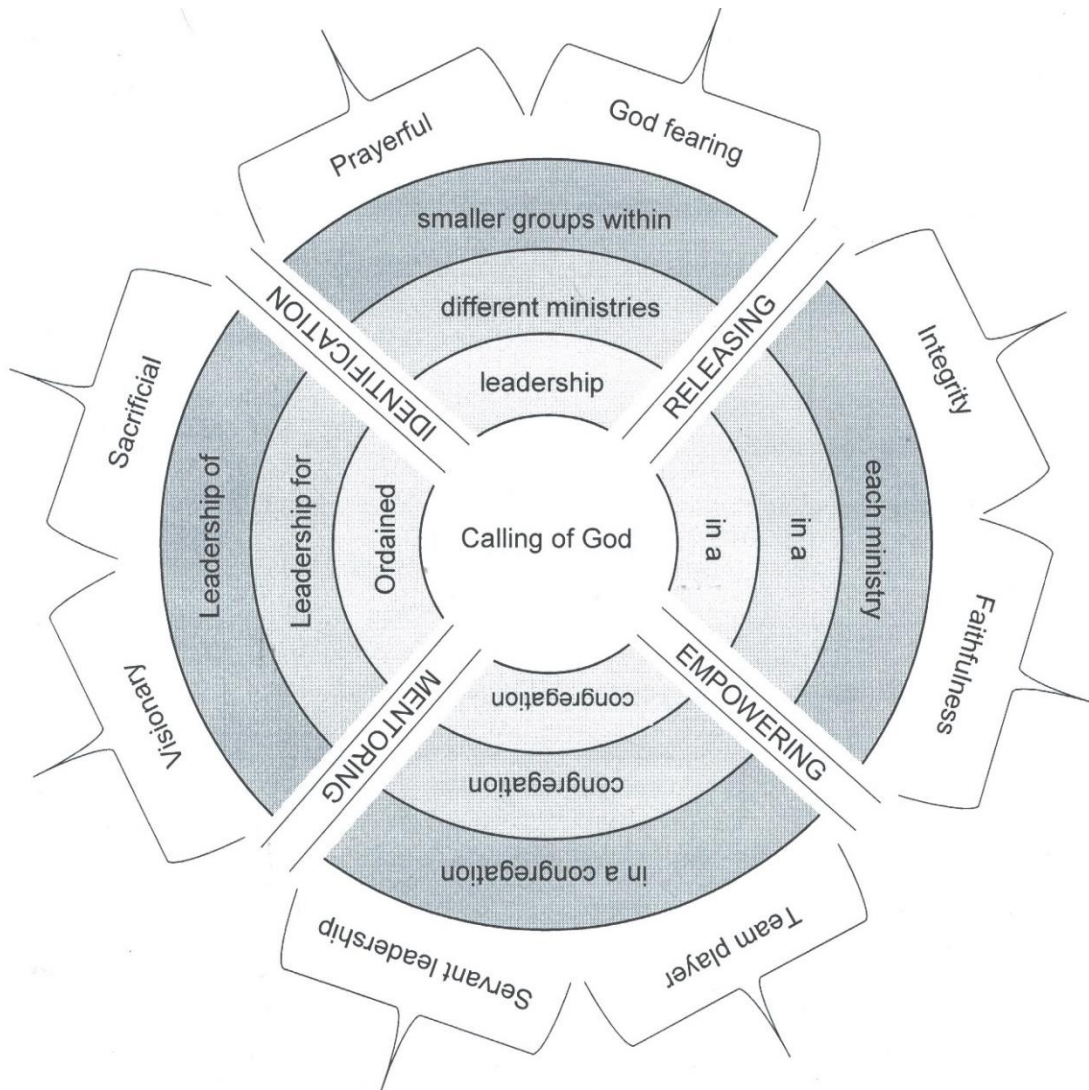
Figure 1: Practical biblical strategy for church leadership

Source: Researcher's own work

The diagram above shows that the call of God (internal calling or conviction) (1 Timothy 3:1; 2; Timothy 1:9) is at the centre of the strategy, and this must be confirmed by the church (1 Timothy 3:7). The call is at the centre for all the leaders, not only the ordained leadership. The concentric circles that are drawn away from the centre, are indicating the various congregational leadership roles. The first concentric circle is for ordained congregational leadership. The second one shows the ministry leadership, while the third is showing the leadership of sub-ministries within each ministry. The concentric circles can go beyond the three indicated above, if the congregation have further smaller ministries from the sub-ministries. At the end of the concentric circles are expected outcomes for the various leaderships: from the ministers of the Word to the lay leaders of sub-ministries. The four open

ended double lines that are drawn from the centre through to the outcomes, are the leadership anchors (pillars for leadership effectiveness), that are necessary for success. These are leadership identification, mentoring, empowering and releasing. They are drawn past the third concentric circle to outcomes, indicating that they are applicable to all leaders. even in congregations that have more than the three categories of leadership indicated in Figure 1. The implementation of the four leadership anchors or pillars, leads to the eight outcomes indicated on the diagram.

The practical strategy is now explained in more detail for clarity, and direction for implementation.

3.1. Describing the four pillars of the strategy

3.1.1. Identifying the called leadership

The present strategy indicates that the call of God to leadership is essential for all leaders of the church (De Moor, 2010:26; Sanders, 2007:51). This call comes to different individuals at different times and for different leadership offices that are aligned to their gifts (1 Timothy 3:7). The congregational members are called at God's appointed time to lead in appropriate ministries. Thus, the church must be careful in appointing members to leadership positions and take caution not to assign leadership tasks inappropriately. This assigning of uncalled individuals happens when the congregation uses criteria such as profession, education, popularity, or any other factors to second or allocate members to leadership positions. These individuals become loopholes to the whole congregational leadership which affect church growth. Loopholes in one ministry affect the entire congregation, eventually leading to church decline. The reason is that like in the human body where weaknesses in one part affects the whole body, problems in one ministry handicaps the entire congregation.

In this regard, for any person who claims to have been called to the office of the minister of the Word, the church should seek through prayer for identifiable signs, that aligns with the proposed conviction of members. The argument is that the individual's conviction (1 Timothy 3:1; 2 Timothy 1:9) should be backed up by the observable signs in that individual (1 Timothy 3:7). In addition to the signs that aligns to the call, a member who claims to be called, or whom the church can identify for leadership offices, should be spiritually mature (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 3:8) and not a new believer who is yet to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. The whole process is very important and should be closely adhered to, in order to come up with appropriate and faithful leaders in the church of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul points out that spiritually immature Christians are not able to influence the church towards healthy growth (1 Corinthians 3:2–4), because they need guidance themselves. Having leaders who cannot

spearhead church growth, defeats the purpose of leadership. Church growth is their prime purpose.

Leaders without the call of God cannot guide the church towards healthy growth, because they are not men and women who are sought after God's own heart (Jeremiah 5:11), and they will not have the necessary skills to fulfil their offices. Therefore, care should be taken in the fear of God to establish that members who are seconded or appointed to congregation leadership, meet the criteria set in the Bible to establish the call of God. As a result, congregations should seek the lead and guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer before confirming the conviction of a prospective minister of the Word, or nominating possible candidates for eldership, deacons' offices and several ministry leaders. The importance of seeking God's guidance for leadership positions, is emphasised by Jesus Christ. Although Jesus Christ is God the Son, He had to seek the Father's guidance before choosing the Twelve (Mark 3:13–15; Luke 6:12–13). If the Lord Jesus sought the guidance of the Father, how much more should the church today pray for God's lead in identifying the called individuals among members. This calls for a prayer time to be set aside for the whole congregation, before the leaders are identified or confirmed.

In addition to the visible gifts of the spirit, the apostle Paul provides a general checklist for all possible leaders: to be of outstanding Christ-like character (1 Timothy 3; 1–13; Titus 1:5–9), to ensure leadership effectiveness. They should be spiritual mature members who can disciple others to being disciples of Christ. The church is compelled to recommend a member after a thorough scrutiny of his or her call, using every possible biblical principle and checklist to establish the call of God. The whole process is done through discerning God's will in each case. For the selection of elders, deacons and deaconesses, the whole congregation must also be involved in prayer, so that the Spirit of the Lord opens their eyes to see the called persons from the possible nominated candidates.

The present strategy encourages that the leadership works as a united team, during which each leader influences members accordingly. This unity and diversity of leadership results in healthy church growth (Ephesians 4:12), in which all members are equipped to use their gifts in serving their congregations. The blend of leadership gifts in several offices, is ideal for healthy church growth (Prill *et al.,* 2011). The image of a church as the body, highlights the need for different parts to cooperate in influencing the body to function properly, as directed by the head (Jesus Christ). Thus, the Lord who calls the leadership is the source of their success (Exodus 3:12a; Matthew 28:20b), because He is always with them and He is always inspiring their leadership functions. The result is church revitalisation and healthy church growth.

This is the reason Sanders (2007:18) argues, that the church grows in every way if, and only if, it is being led by strong leaders who remain faithful to God and their calling. God who ordains the church to grow, works through the leaders whom He calls as his instruments

3.2. Empowering the Leadership

Relevant training for all leadership offices is necessary for a turn-around and church growth to happen. Relevant training is the product of effective interaction and cooperation among the four leadership offices identified in the RCSA Church Order, Article 2 (minister of the Word, professors, elders, and deacons). Thus, the identification of the training needs of minsters, elders and deacons in congregations, allows the professors to craft the programmes to address them. In this regard, theological education that is designed without the input of the congregational ministers, elders and deacons, is insensitive to the needs of congregations, and thus irrelevant to them. The argument is that the membership decline in the RCSA is the same as what is ongoing in America and other Western countries (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021:2). These similarities indicate similitudes in the leadership, which is likely influenced by theological training. It follows that theological education is the tool that capacitate the leadership to effectiveness. The declining trends in the RCSA is pointing at the simililarities in the empowering of the leadership, which Werner (2011:3) laments that African theology has not been contextualised but reflects the Western theology. The fact that theological education does not empower the leadership for effectiveness in congregations, leaves a lot to be desired. It stands to reason that relevant theological education that benefits the congregation, utilises the trialogue of context, which include culture and language, biblical truth, and time or dispensation (Niemandt, 2012:10). Thus, proper consultation with the congregations, produces a theological curriculum that empowers the leadership to meet the congregational needs.

3.2.1. Relevant training for the called leadership

Effective training of the identified leadership is the second pillar that is prerequisite for leadership success. This begins with the ministers of the Word who are responsible for both the other congregational leadership and members. They are meant to transform the entire congregation to being disciples of Christ. However, the ability to transform the congregation require capacity, which is a product of effective training (Getz *et al.,* 2000:1–2). Thus, relevant training equips ministers for effectiveness, while inappropriate training negatively affects the entire congregation's church growth efforts.

While training is the second pillar for the new leadership, it is the first one for the leadership that is already serving in the congregations. The training that is offered to the leaders, enables

them to function in ways that profit the church. The training aligns ministers to the will and purpose of God, which keeps them on their toes to spearhead church growth in their congregations.

Both the present ministers in congregations and those undergoing seminary training, need to be empowered for their functions. The training programmes for the two sets of leadership are designed to meet their needs, hence are a bit different. On the one hand, the training programme for those presently serving in congregations, mainly entails equipping them to become effective trainers of their congregations. The process seeks to align the ministers and the other leadership to the will of God, which they should pass on to the members. This is done through involving them in the activities that build the eight biblical leadership outcomes, indicated on the periphery of Figure 1. Being aligned to the will and purpose of God, is the source for church health. This is achieved when the leadership guide congregations to lead peoples to Christ, and disciple them into his disciples. As a result, each training programme is aimed at enabling the leadership to guide congregations towards spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:12–13, 15), enabling them to become active members of the church (Du Plooy. 2003:59–63). The spiritually mature members are the light of the world. who can attract peoples to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This process results in both quantitative and qualitative growth of the church, advocated by the head of the church (Genesis 12:2–3; Matthew 28:18-20), which ensures church health.

The fact that the Reformed church polity appraises that Christ has all authority over the church, urges this study to emphasise that the leadership must perform their functions according to his directions (Grobler, 2007:61; Smit, 2010:185, Vorster, 1999:15). In this regard, the training focuses on influencing the leadership to totally surrender to Christ in humility and obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34–40). Loving God and others are the resources that motivates congregations to reach out to different peoples with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Obedience allows the Holy Spirit to work through the faithful leaders, directing them to God's purpose with the church "for the sake of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The curriculum is therefore developed in such a way that by the end of the training, all the leaders would be Christ–like in order to lead like Christ. The professors from seminaries are also the facilitators, who take the current congregational leadership through the models that the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul used in training their followers. They also practically demonstrate what they teach in the congregations' several ministries. For effectiveness, both the curriculum and trainers should be relevant to congregational needs, to build the capacity of the leaders.

3.2.2. The biblical leadership trainers and curriculum

The training and curriculum should be made relevant to trainees to equip them in various tasks (Morrison, 2014:60; Schindler, 2008:5). This training takes into consideration the strategies for perseverance in circumstances that might affect the church in different times. Such training prepares the ministers to deal with current issues, and with the ones that might affect the church in future years, e.g. COVID 19, Post Modernity, Post Christendom, to mention just a few. Theological education should equip ministers to handle such issues once confronted by them, to keep the church rooted in its calling rather than succumbing the different waves of events. This requires the Theological School (Seminary of the Reformed Churches in South Africa) to have an intervention programme that would equip the congregation leadership when faced with the identified challenges and more. Thus, the professors do not train the ministers and forget about them, but they keep connected by providing further training when and if it is required.

3.2.2.1. Leadership trainers at the Theological School

The training of the ministers of the Word is to make them expert trainers for the congregational leadership and all for the members (RCSA, 2018:970-971). Being expert trainers, enables the ministers to build capacity in congregational leadership, which enables them to guide members to be all what God wants them to be. Ministers of the Word who are transformed to be effective in the ministry of the Word, can come up with relevant training programmes for both the congregation leadership and all the congregants. Nevertheless, when the ministers of the Word are not equipped for training, there is no change that it can result in revitalisation and church growth in the congregations.

The present practical strategy provides directions for relevant theological education and training for ministers (Niemandt, 2019: 3; Startup & Harris, 1999:118), to make them effective in their congregations. The guideline appraises that the trained congregational leadership should in turn train the others, until the entire congregation is serving effectively in the body of Christ. In view of this, Reeder (2008:11) points out that once the leader is transformed, he produces more transformed leaders. The transformed leadership can easily influence their followers through engaging them with the relevant material for change accordingly.

The strategy emphasises relevant and appropriate education and a mode of delivery at the theological school as the heart to leadership transformation (Morrison, 2014:210). This follows that the minister of the Word has crucial tasks of aligning the whole congregation to the *missio Dei* of God. The relevant training is a product of a relevant curriculum by the professors. The present study appraises that the professors who are called to teach at seminaries, including

(the TSP), should be qualified ministers of the Word. These ministers should have served for at least more than five years in congregations, which makes them conversant with the congregational ministry. They are involved in both the designing of a relevant curriculum and training that equip the ministers of the Word with the necessary attributes of the ministry of the Word. The curriculum and mode of delivery that focus at addressing the congregational needs, can provide the answers to church health. The Seminary should therefore identify the needs of congregations that would lead to church revitalisation and translate them to learning objectives for the training of ministers. In other words, the curriculum focuses on addressing present anomalies in the fulfilment of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, that would promote a turn–around and church growth. The curriculum includes ways of training the congregation for growing in the church, through both biological and conversional means, as espoused in the Scriptures (Genesis 12:2–3; 17 & Matthew 28:18–20).

The curriculum is aimed at helping trainees embrace all that Christ Jesus commanded and demonstrated, and hand it over to the members. This is drawn from the Bible as the content of the training modules used during the process. The content and activities have the following two objectives:

    i.   to empower ministers to become effective trainers in their congregations
    ii.   to develop the eight leadership qualities explained in Figure 1

To successfully achieve these objectives, different congregations contextualise the training programme to suit their contexts and needs. The secret of leadership success is being all that Christ requires for church leadership. The professors, curators[4] and deputies for ministers training should work together to identify the church growth needs and establish how these could be addressed in the training of ministers of the Word. These are translated into learning activities that would meet the identified needs. In the same vein, the observable and measurable learning outcomes that aligns to the identified congregational needs, are developed (Elliston, 1988:204–210; Morrison, 2014:60). The leadership qualities in Figure 1 should be used as a checklist of what the leaders should be. If it is necessary, the responsible deputies, curators and professors should engage curriculum specialists, to help them in translating the leadership principles and needs into measurable learning objectives and activities that culminate to the desired behaviour.

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[4]   Curators are ministers of the Word who are responsible for the training of ministers at the TSP. This task corresponds with professors and Deputies responsible for the training of ministers.

Measurable outcomes make both the assessment of the effectiveness of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the training mode easier. This is helpful, because any deficit in the programme, training, or the implementation processes is easily identified and addressed in time, rather than continuing with a curriculum and strategies that are not effective (Elliston, 1988:210). Therefore, continuous evaluation should be done using expected outcomes and short comings addressed forthwith.

3.2.2.2. Trainers and curriculum of current congregational leadership

The training for the current congregational leadership should be aimed at transforming them for competences in their functions (RCSA, 2015:496–499) to being effective in their functions. This training is aimed at transforming the leadership to be experts in church revitalisation and heathy growth. Thus, the curriculum for the training of present congregational leadership, is the same as that used in seminaries that was described above. The professors from TSP, in collaboration with some qualified ministers of the Word who have the required capacity, should be involved in the training process.

On the one hand, the professors are facilitators of the training that takes places at both classes and congregational levels. On the other hand, the identified capable ministers should be mentors[5] to the trainees in their respective congregations. They provide mentorship until the trainee leaders are capable of their functions. In each case, both the facilitators and the mentors are involved with the leadership on a day to day basis. The professors teach them ways to enhance the quality of members and demonstrate it in several congregational ministries. Thereafter, ample time is given to the congregational leaders to practice what the facilitators taught and demonstrated with the aid of mentors.

Although the entire congregational leadership is involved during this training, ministers of the Word are involved with more and intense activities. The reason is that they should be empowered for capacity, to train and guide leaders of numerous congregational ministries and all the members. Their effectiveness affects all the ministries in the congregation and vice versa. The professors engage with ministers in different functions of the ministry of the Word, to ensure that the ministers become conversant in all of them. The process utilises on what the apostle Paul appraised (1 Corinthians 11:1), namely that the facilitators and mentors

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[5]   Mentors are ordained ministers with the capacity of training trainee ministers, who cooperate with professors during the training process of ministers. They are responsible of guiding trainee ministers in the ministry of the Word in congregations.

should be Christ-like in everything they do, to enable the trainees to follow a good example. The emphasis is for trainers and mentors to replicate their Christ-like personality to the trainees (Reeder & Swavely, 2008:152-153; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:112; 126, Stenschke, 2007:95; Yount, 2008:23; 25).

In the same vein, Jesus taught that a leader could make his followers to be like him, when He says, "It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master" (Matthew 10:25 NIV). Everything that facilitators and mentors do and say, is a school and lesson for trainees to imitate. Effective training is evidenced by the reproduction of the trainees who mirror their trainers (Reeder & Swavely, 2008:152–153; Roxburgh & Romanuk, 2011:112, 126; Stenschke, 2007:95; Yount, 2008:23; 25).

Research on teaching and training confirms that learning through imitation contributes up to 80% of the total learning process (Reeder, 2008:44). It is therefore crucial for the professors and mentors to exhibit the desired character all the time, to enable the congregational leadership to grow in the same character, which they can in turn, pass on to their followers in the congregations.

3.2.3.   Suggested training process of the leadership

The strategy proposes that the leadership training must only be given to the appropriate candidates, lest it might not yield the intended purpose. This is because training that is given to individuals without the necessary gifts, is abortive. Thus, the church should be convinced beyond any shadow of doubt, that it has the leadership candidates that are really called by God to lead his church. They must be equipped for effective congregational ministry (Startup & Harris, 1999:118). This training appraises equipping leadership for specific leadership needs, and on how congregation ministries can collaborate with one another in working towards the *missio Dei* goals. God gave the leadership varied gifts that are necessary to profit all the congregational members (Ephesians 4:11–13), hence intra and inter ministry cooperation is prerequisite.

This means that each ministry leader needs the input of the others to function well, and they must also impact the others for effectiveness. This is a true reflection of the body of Christ, in which different members cooperate towards the common goal of glorifying God. The process satisfies the body analogy, where good health in various body parts results in a healthy body, while a defect in one, disables the whole body. This requires relevant education, which Elliston (1988:203), Jenson and Stevens (1981:168-170) and Reeder (2008:44) argue, is an important component for different church leadership. They point out that even the Head of the church,

Jesus Christ. equipped his disciples for their functions, as shown in the Gospels. Such education is instrumental in leadership capacity building.

The training proposed, uses a hands-on strategy. This training appraises that the learning process is done through real life experience in relevant congregational ministries, in which the leadership would lead (Breed, 2013:1; Yount, 2008:50). The emphasis is that the training process exposes the trainees to the actual ministry during the training process. This is because the ministry of the Word is a practical domain, and the training should be as practical as possible. The hands-on strategy calls for an immediate marrying of theory and practice. The practice time should be extended for a long period, to cover all the ministry dynamics in congregations, rather than only on weekends as was earlier proposed by the Curators (2018:430). The hands-on strategy encourages that trainees spend more time practicing the different aspect of the ministry in congregations, rather than in seminaries. This helps them to grasp, embrace, and apply various approaches to guide and lead the congregations to church growth. Furthermore, the strategy equips the leadership with approaches of dealing with challenges, that might arise as church growth obstacles. The practical strategy satisfies the Confucius quote that underscores the importance of practicing: "I hear, and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." (https://www.mrgreatmotivation.com/2018/04/). Such training is recommended to all the leaders, not only the minister of the Word. Thus, the training strategy addresses Fanning's (2009:5) argument that training that is divorced from congregations, produces ministers full of theory, but lack the practical component of the ministry.

Although formal training might not be possible for the elders and deacons and deaconesses, because they have a limited term of office, they nevertheless need training at congregational level that equips them for their tasks, before they assume office. The congregational leaders are key in enhancing the believers' office for effectiveness (Ephesians 12–13). In this case, the training of elders, deacons, and deaconesses becomes profitable to the whole church. Thus, the proposed eight outcomes in Figure 1 are the benchmarks that apply to all congregational leaderships as well. The whole training process indicate a fine line from the Theological School, through to congregations. Thus, the effects of the effective training of the minister's flow to the believers' office, influencing them to be all what God wants them to be.

This stands to reason that equipped ministers of the Word can equip the other leadership and the congregation at large. in all ministries that each congregation is involved with. The minister uses his capacity to coordinate all the congregational ministries, to work as a team towards a common goal. Such a congregation ends up having the ordained and grassroots leaders, who are effective in influencing the church to a turn–around and healthy growth. The empowered

church leadership strives to produce members that are disciples of Christ, who influence church health.

The present strategy appraises a twofold congregational training method to ensure that the congregational leadership have been capacitated adequately, to spearhead church revitalisation and healthy growth. That is, in addition to the minister's training programmes for the congregational leadership and all the other members, the theological school, classis and synod should design a curriculum that can be contextualised for Theological Education by Extension (TEE) in various congregations. The TEE consolidates the leadership training in all congregations, through effective professors and identified ministers of the Word, with the required capacity to be facilitating for the mentoring of trainees and new ministers.

3.3. Mentoring of trainees and new ministers

The training strategy appraises the trainee ministers in seminaries to get mentoring from healthy congregations, from the first year of enrolling in the seminary. In the same vein, graduating ministers should be attached to healthy congregations, to become acquainted in the ministry of the Word. This process enhances the trainee and the graduating ministers to grasp the dynamics involved in the ministry of the Word and help to equip them for effectiveness in the congregations they would serve (Folkenberg, 2001:211). On the one hand, the trainee ministers should be attached to different healthy congregations in every year of training. The practice period should be increased for every year of training. This allows the trainee ministers to practice various aspects in ministry of the Word during the training period. The practical and theoretical aspects of the training of ministers, should be balanced in such a way, that the mentee is involved in several aspects of the ministry in congregations under the mentor. This involvement equips them with the necessary requirements for effective functioning in congregations.

For effectiveness, the TSP professors should cooperate with the ministers who would mentor the trainee and the graduating ministers. They should identify the areas the trainee, and the graduating ministers require more assistance that enhances effectiveness in the ministry of the Word. The mentors should be above board in the leadership aspects, in order to give the mentees a perfect model. The apostle Paul affirms that the biblical leadership mirrors Chris, and He models the others to duplicate Christ in all the dimensions of leadership (1 Corinthians,11:1). Having an effective minister of the Word, is the source of effective congregational leadership. as mentioned above. The argument is that the greater part of learning is through imitation, rather than instruction. If the mentees imitate conversant ministers in congregations, they become effective (Reeder, 2008:44), and their leadership

becomes successful. This compels the mentors to reflect on Christ as much as possible in everything they are, do and say. This builds the desire and passion in the mentee, to embrace all that the mentor models.

The following are the proposed areas the mentor should emphasise to the mentee, and evaluate the extend the mentee would have embraced them:

i.   Teach the mentee to embrace the truth that his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 16:19), which should also be presented as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). This encourages the mentee to grow in self-denial and in trusting God in all ministry endeavours. Growing in Christlikeness. enables the mentee to discipline his flesh in faithful obedience to God who called him. He should be trained to live a sacrificial life that always glorifies God. This urges him to sacrifice personal gains and benefits, in pursuit of the will of God. He should be trained to live near God through prayer and studying the Word. The mentor and the mentee should study the Bible and pray together all the time, as a way of encouraging the mentee to fully engage in both the Word and prayer. The following checklist for the mentee is a daily, self-evaluation tool for himself. This should be filled in faithfully and the mentor should have a routine check of the checklist. More aspects could be added to the checklist.

Table 1:   Daily devotional diary of the mentee

Date	Morning Devotion	Afternoon devotion	Evening devotion	Prayer sessions	Other piety activities throughout the day
	Scripture	Scripture	Scripture		
	Summary message	Summary message	Summary message		

Source: researcher's own work

ii.   The mentee is taught to derive his priorities from the Word of God and to seek, firstly the kingdom of God above all other things (Matthew 6:33). The mentor encourages the mentee to desist from all types of sin, in the quest for the truth of the gospel. Any obstruction to the ministry goal should be discussed with the mentors as early as possible. The mentee should be taught and encouraged to totally trust God in all things.

iii.   The mentee is trained to embrace love, humility, obedience, faithfulness, and all other attributes of a biblical leader. This leads the mentee to totally surrender every aspect of his life to Christ (Galatians 2:20), thereby seeking to follow everything that Christ

commanded to the church. Thus, being Christ-like is a resource to leadership success and church health. A checklist to identify how the mentee embraces the biblical leadership qualities, could be drawn as well.

The use of this hands-on model of training is excellent in the production of effective church leadership. It requires the biblically oriented curriculum that is taught by effective professors, who are conversant with congregational ministry. The curriculum should be presented in ways that arouse the interest of trainees. Interest in learning material results in the maximum embracing of the matter by participants. The result is the production of a leadership with capacity to lead the church towards turn–around and healthy church growth. Through implementing this means of training and mentoring, the RCSA will enhance the leadership that meets Christ's standard of leadership, and that will cause their congregations to be on fire for the Kingdom, where each one actively ministers in the body of Christ, resulting in healthy church growth. This is the process that Paul spells out to the Ephesians (4:12–14) that a healthy church will realise, when all members are actively serving in the congregation

3.4. Releasing the leadership

The practical strategy proposes cooperation among professors, TSP curators, relevant deputies, and mentoring ministers, in establishing that the ministers of the Word can go and effectively serve in congregations. This is done by proving that the trainee ministers met the eight measurable outcomes in Figure 1. The minister of the Word who demonstrated effectiveness in the ministry of the Word, can lead the entire congregation successfully (Reeder & Swavely, 2008:152). They can empower the other congregational leadership to guide all the ministries to participate in church growth. The following are some, but not exhaustive, ministries each congregation can have:

i. cell groups
ii. structured and unstructured Bible studies
iii. active youth ministry
iv. couples' ministry
v. women and men ministries
vi. single parents

These ministries are necessary for qualitative and quantitative growth of the church. The umbrella quality is that the released minister has become a true servant leader, who is ready to serve all the congregants equitably. This strategy enhances each member to reach his full potential of being missional. The leaders are encouraged to stoop down when serving the

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members, to avoid lording over the membership. Therefore, the released ministers should demonstrate the attributes of a servant leader as benchmarks for success in congregations.

The ministers who are prepared for congregational ministry, are effective in the training for elders, deacons and several ministry leaders. The same hands-on training strategy for ministers applies to congregational training. This training allows them to participate in their leadership positions during the training process, which the minister blueprints in each ministry (Paas, 2015:121). This training enables all the participants to be well equipped for their offices, and thus being able to influence the growth of the church of Christ. Nevertheless, the minister remains as coordinator of the congregational leadership. He is in forefront in the transformation of the other congregational leadership and the members to be Christ-like. In turn, the whole congregation influence other people towards the way of the Cross, through word and deed.

4.   LEADERSHIP OF VARIOUS MINISTRIES

Even if congregational ministries vary, Paas (2015:120) identifies the following that seemingly cut across several reformed denominations and congregations. These ministries are children, Bible studies, cell groups, children and youth, men, women, couples, and evangelism. The present study describes the children and youth, as well as evangelism ministries, but the same process can be applied to all the ministries the various congregations have. The reason for choosing the two ministries (evangelism & youth ministries), is that church growth occurs through biological and conversional means (Genesis 12:2–3; 17:1–9; Matthew 28:18–20), with the other ministries augmenting them.

i.   **The Sunday school and other youth ministries:** The leaders for these ministries should be trained and mentored in such a way that they willingly stoop down to the various age levels of their members, as models to all members. This age group is perfect in duplicating what they see others do, because they learn better by imitation (Stevens-Fulbrook, 2019:n.p). The leaders in these ministries should serve the members in ways that are profitable to their varied age groups. For this to happen, ministers of the Word and the other congregational leadership, should ensure that the youth leaders receive relevant training, following the model suggested in Figure 1 for all the leadership.

In addition to well-prepared leadership, the curriculum including the catechism, should be made relevant and appropriate for several age groups of youths in congregations. These programmes should be contextualised and made relevant, to meet the needs of different levels of members, in different times. For instance. the

needs of a ten-year-old in 1980, differ from the same age group in 2020. This points that effective congregational leadership, can lead and guide the production of the appropriate curriculum for youths and children ministries. An effective curriculum meets the needs of those involved with it, thereby transforming them to the desired outcomes.

In addition to the church programmes for youths and children, the ministry for couples should also equip the parents on effective ways of inculcating the Christian faith in their children. This responsibility for parents was ordained by God (Dt 6:2 & 6–7) and is the source of biological church growth. Thus, parents should be trained and encouraged to always teach their children the Word of God, so that they will not depart from it, even if they are grownups (Proverbs,22:6). Research carried out by Bruce and Glendinning (2010:108), confirms that parents are most effective in transmitting their faith to their children, rather than any other means. Therefore, equipping parents with the necessary skills to teach the reformed theology to their children, strengthens the faith of the Christian youths. Raising covenant children in the fear of the Lord, is imperative for Christians to enhance healthy church growth through biological means. The congregational leadership should empower parents in various ministries, for effective ways of imparting Christian values to their children.

The teaching process for youths and children should employ the methods that are most appealing to them, at church and at home (Elliston, 1988:210). They learn best through games, stories and through using the technology of the day, rather than dwelling on the traditional ways, which might be irrelevant. The methods should extensively involve children to develop a deep love for Christ and the biblical doctrines. Developing the youth to spiritual maturity, is fundamental for healthy church growth of any church. The reason is that the quality youths bring double benefits for church health. On the one hand, they would stay in the church for the rest of their life, keeping the membership growing and stable. On the other hand, they influence their peers and other people to Christianity, through the proclamation of the Word. In other words, they become active in evangelism that brings people from other nations.

ii. **Evangelism ministry:** Evangelism is an important activity (mission) that is aimed at leading peoples to Christ, through witnessing to them (Wright jr, 2010:179). The word, witnessing, refers to the fact that the Church lives as an expression of God in the world, and they also proclaim the good news therein. In other words, evangelism is communicating the good news of Christ, through both the message and the messenger (Stackchouse, 2003:141). Since real evaluation involves message and messenger, it emphasises the need to 'go' and being present with the target

population (Matthew 28–18–20). This argument discerns some forms of spreading the Word, where the messenger is not present with the people. Furthermore, by being present with the target group allows the contextualisation of the message and messenger to the best of the target population. Thus, evangelism is a priority for every Christian, hence several ministries of the congregation should participate in it, in one way or another. This involvement fulfils the imperative of Christ in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20), that the church must reach out to the nations with the gospel (Exman, 1987:43; Stott, 2007:20; White & Ford, 2003:39). This is a marching order for the members and the leadership. The well-equipped congregations aim at reaching far and wide with the gospel – the gospel that is powerful in leading people to Christ. In the same vein, the leadership should have a programme to disciple converts to become quality Christians. These two aspects meet the demands of the Great Commission, that the converts are transformed to in becoming Christ-like. Effective discipleship requires the cooperation of a united congregational team of leaders and members.

The minister of the Word should work closely with several ministry leaders, to ensure that the entire congregation is moving towards the same goal. The goal is reaching out to peoples, locally and beyond. When a leader or member is misrepresenting the truth, appropriate discipline should be administered to bring the member to conformity with the Word., This gives good reputation for the church of Christ. Church discipline is important when it is correctly administered, as a means of helping the members to grow in faith, and not as punishment to inflict pain on the offender. A well-disciplined church can influence its community to Christianity, through its several ministries that share congregational tasks.

5.   SHARING LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS

This fourth pillar appraises that the ordained leadership share functions with other gifted members of the congregation. The sharing of leadership functions with gifted followers, comes with vast advantages to the church, and is necessary for healthy church growth (Wagner, 2012:7). The fact that Jesus Christ, who is God the Son, had to engage disciples in his ministry, highlights the fact that sharing of leadership responsibilities is indispensable, if the church leadership is to be successful in spearheading turn-around and healthy church growth. Sharing of responsibilities comes with two important benefits to the congregation:

i. Enabling the leadership and the gifted members to be involved in fewer responsibilities, that they can effectively implement.

ii.   The involved members become conversant in their gifted areas, and could influence the others, just as the leadership does.

This sharing process begins with an empowered minister of the Word, who prepares the congregational leadership in their gifted areas. As the congregational leadership becomes more involved, the minister's role changes to one of coordinator of ministries, who guides others to reach their full potential for active service in the congregation. They motivate members to actively work towards church growth.

Figure 2 below, was adopted from Peters (1972:18) to indicate how effective empowering of the whole congregation comes with church growth.

Minister of the Word = Leader + Equipper
Minister of the Word's LEADERSHIP ROLES

Church Growth Potential

Pastor as Leader

Congregation as Leader

Leader
Visionary
Goal Setter
Chairperson of Board

Administrator
Implementer
Enabler
Member of Board
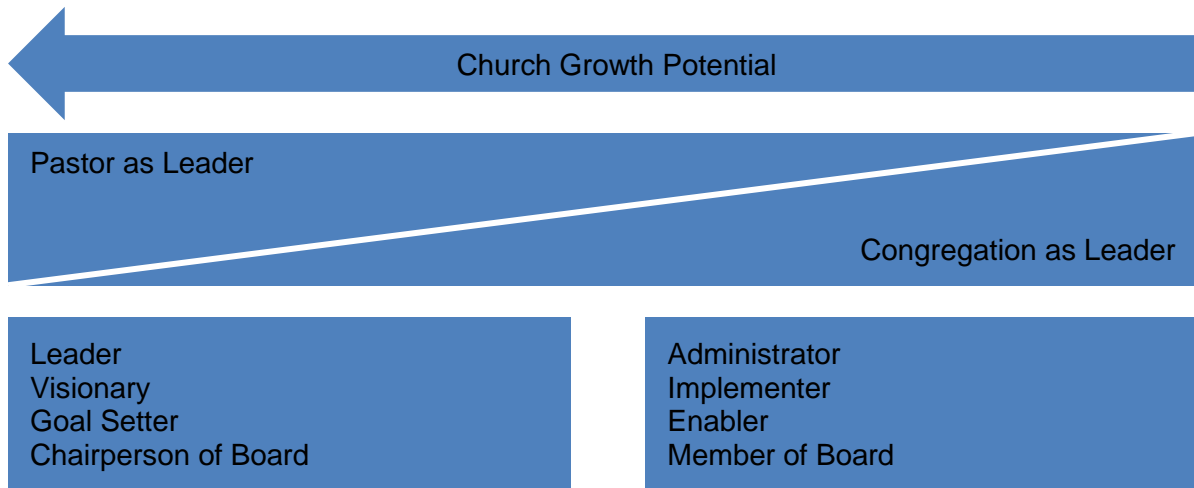
Figure 2:   Empowering the congregational leadership and members to church health
Source: Peters (1972:18)

Figure 2 shows the growth process in a congregation. The process begins with the minister of the Word being both the leader and equipper of his congregation. He is involved in several leadership tasks. At this stage, he is giving the congregation all that is necessary to equip the congregational leadership and members for active service. The diagonal line shows that during the empowering of the congregation, the minister does several tasks, during which little growth occurs. The minister is seemingly determining and controlling all the activities that are happening in the congregation, up until the multiple congregational leaders and the members are capacitated to actively participate. During this stage he is a visionary and goal setter who oversees and controls all the congregational activities. As the congregation is equipped for service, the minister's roles changes to that of ministries coordinator. However, he is involved

with the other leadership and members at this stage. This is the stage shown by the growth arrow, which occurs when the entire congregation is actively involved. The diagonal line widens to the lower right side showing that participation of leadership and members leads to church growth. Church growth is realised when the minister of the Word prepares and encourages the entire congregation to participate, and he remains with a few tasks. Sharing congregational leadership tasks comes with the following advantages to church growth.

i.   It reduces the workload of the ordained office bearers who are presently doing most of the leadership tasks in the RCSA congregations (RCSA, 2015:505–515). Expecting the ordained leadership to lead, in most ministries leads to poor results. This is because the ordained leadership thinly spreads their efforts in many tasks, and as such, they yield very little success in them all.

ii. Having multiple leaders in various ministries, ensures that the ordained leadership is left with the functions that align to their gifts, which makes them more effective in executing them. God gave each member specific gifts that are relevant to the calling He has for him or her in the congregation (Wagner, 2012:7). Doing any function out of God's gifts, is 'playing god' and does not lead to the desired results. The entire leadership should be rooted in the spirit of servant leadership, where the goal is to effectively serve followers by meeting both their individual and corporate needs.

Their core leadership function is to identify and develop members' gifts, in ways that are beneficial to the entire congregation (Ephesians 4:12a). This happens when each member becomes active in the body of Christ, who participates in all aspects of the congregation.

6.   CONCLUSION

The present biblical practical leadership strategy proposes the outline of how the church leadership comes into being, and how they are prepared for effectiveness. This strategy is applicable to several congregational leaderships, from the minister of the Word to lay leaders of small ministries. The aim of the strategy is to make sure that each leadership office is led by a person with the necessary gifts. This holds the call of God central for all church leaderships. The called leadership should be empowered in their specific leadership offices, to spearhead church growth in the congregation. The minister with the necessary capacity, should transform both the congregational leadership and members to being Christ-like.

The strategy also recommends training workshops for the leadership that is currently serving in congregations. The seminary professors facilitate the workshops in classes and congregations. In each case, they contextualise and implement the curriculum to meet the

needs of various congregations. In the same vein, the mentors spend adequate time with congregational leadership in an endeavour to guide them towards attaining set course outcomes. The length of time one takes in the training, is determined by the rate at which he or she achieves the desired learning outcomes. The training is designed in a way that the leaders, who achieve the learning outcomes, becomes effective in their congregations. Therefore, the measurable outcomes are the benchmarks for determining whether they have reached the level that is conducive for leading to church growth.

6.1. A summary of the NCD quality principles, that are indicated in the practical leadership model

Empowering leadership: The practical strategy elevated the training of the church leadership, as the most important component, before the leaders could be engaged in their functions. The proposed training is geared towards several leaders that the congregation is having. It should not be meant for the ordained leadership alone. The empowering of the leadership takes into cognisance the relevance of curriculum and training methods, that are beneficial to each leadership office. This principle as the foundational one, has to be exceptionally good to prepare the leadership for effectiveness. Once the leadership has capacity to move the congregation towards the direction of God (Weems, 2010:2), the quality of members is guaranteed. It follows that the leadership task is to transform the believers to being Christ–like, and once the leadership has such capacity, church growth is imminent. Along the same issue of empowering leadership, comes the need for multiple gifted members to twork along with other ordained leadership in the areas of their giftedness. This aspect meets Schwartz's NCD quality principles of gifted oriented ministries holistic small groups, and functional structures. The reason is that the gifted multiple leaders are responsible for smaller groups, which they can move to the purpose of God easily, rather than the entire group which is difficult to manage. These structures are conducive to make the whole congregation be an expression of God in their communities and beyond (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88). The believers who are transformed, are new creatures who lives to glorify God wherever they might be. This is a true reflection of the NCD principle of passionate spirituality, which cannot be separated from an inspiring worship service. It stands to reason that a church that develops a deep passion for God, expresses it in all the areas they serve, and it inspires the church and their communities. The other NCD principles, such as need oriented evangelism and loving relations, flows from the Christ–like character of the church. Their Christ–like character is centred of the love of Christ, that cannot exclude proclamation of the good news, both in word and in deed. This follows that, wherever the church expresses itself, Christ is being communicated both with the message and the messenger (Cole, 2007:9; Stackhouse, 2003:141).

Therefore, Schwartz's eight NCD quality principles are catered for herein. In can be emphasised that the empowerment of the church leadership is the source of success in the other seven principles. The empowered leaders have the capacity to fulfill the calling of God, during which the other seven NCD quality principles are dealt with. Leadership empowerment flows from relevant and effective theological education, which is a product of a practical and contextually relevant curriculum.

The following leadership curriculum is aimed at developing the Christian leadership that can fulfil its calling, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The curriculum is designed in a way that the leadership is made to be trainers of their congregations. However, the first aspect in the curriculum is to make the leadership be all what God wants them to be, through engaging them with the biblical principles that are drawn from Scriptures. The principles are engrained in the leadership for personal formation, that produces a leader whose character is transformed to lead the believers. A syllabus drawn from the curriculum on enhancing leadership effectiveness, is in the addendum. The syllabus is highly practical, in which more of the training time is spent in congregations than in lecture halls. The practice in the congregations exposes the leadership with the real ministry issues, in which they should use their gifts to influence the believers as the Lord expects.
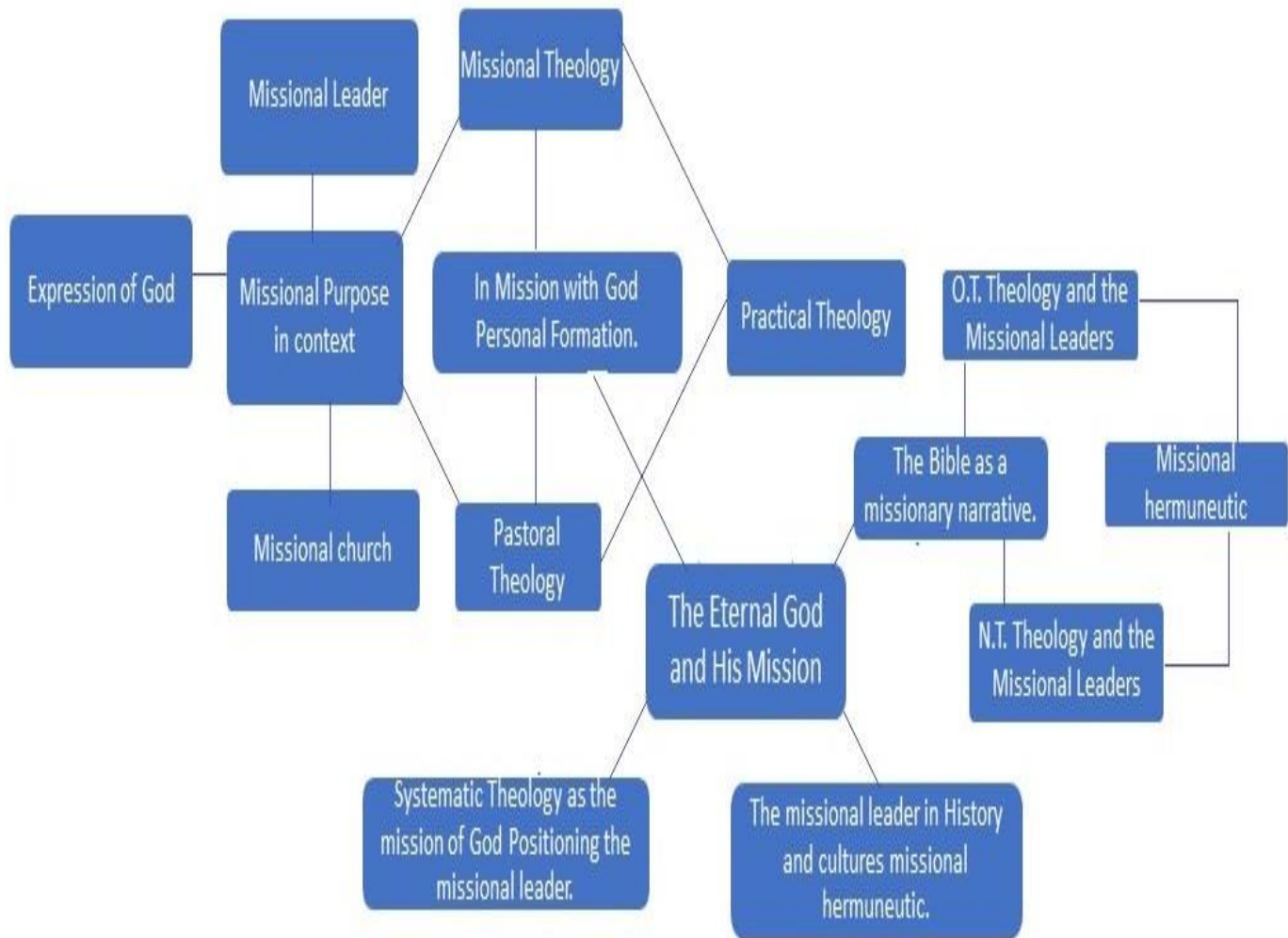
Figure 3:   Curriculum for missional leadership

Source: Researcher's own work

6.2.   Leadership Curriculum for Christian leaders

The proposed leadership curriculum for Christian leaders is in two sections, and the third part is a product of the second section. This part gives the goals of the curriculum, as they flow from the people who are in the mission with God:

- Section one has the courses that indicate the source of biblical leadership principles that derive from God and his mission. The principles are drawn from the way God revealed Himself in Scriptures, and how peoples throughout church history were engaged with these principles in different historical cultures and leadership. The missional hermeneutic rightly places the present church in the mission of God.

- The second section is aimed at developing a missional leader who can participate with God in his mission. The process builds on the correct missional hermeneutic of missional leadership principles of the Old and New Testaments through to church history. Thus, the study in section 2 of the curriculum, enables the leadership development of the qualities necessary for a missional leader. This process is congregationally based. The necessary theological courses that are found in this section, are meant to build the leadership capacity, to help congregations move towards the will and purpose of God.

- The third and last section, is the result of sections I and 2 which is also the missional goal for the church. This section indicates how the equipped leadership should subsequently achieve in the mission of God. It spells out the missional goal of the missional church, that flows from God. through the missional leadership.

6.3. The leadership curriculum diagram

The leadership curriculum diagram places the eternal God at the centre of theological education for missional leaders, an indication that mission is from Him, through Him and for Him. This makes Him the centre of church activities (missions), to articulate his purpose which He does, through involving selected people. Therefore, the selected individuals should align with the purpose of God in his mission. The mission of God is eternal, traced from the creation narrative in the Old Testament, through the New Testament where it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Wright, 2006 & 2010), and it will be consummated at the second coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This makes the whole Bible missiological, as it is about God's redemptive plan through Jesus Christ, which He stated in Luke (24:25–27 & 44–48), that the entire Old Testament testified about Him, as does the New Testament. It also means that the church is a missional church that should be led by missional leaders. Missional leaders understand the mission of God (*missio Dei*) from the historical narrative which shapes how the church today participate in the same mission of God. The proposed missional leadership curriculum embraces several theological courses, as they refer to the mission of God. In this respect, all the Christians are a product of the mission of God, and they are agents of God in the *missio Dei*. This is the starting point of the curriculum, where the leadership is acquainted with the mission of God, and that their life as Christians is missional, as it flows from the missional God through Christ. Moving from the centre, the next aspect is to explore the mission of God through biblical studies and the other theological courses.

6.4. Description of the Curriculum diagram figure 3

6.4.1. Section 1

This section sets the foundation and focus of a missional leader and missional church as defined in the way God revealed his missional purpose and the need to engage human beings therein.

6.4.1.1. The Bible as the missional narrative

The mission of God is revealed in the Bible and how He purposely selected individuals to participate with Him under various leaders. The Biblical studies highlight to the leadership the principles, presented by the leaders, who were called to guide God's people as a means of participating with Him through their functions. It shows how God could intervene where need be. The way God brought people to Himself, as described in the Bible, enhances the leadership to read the Bible as part of God's mission (Flemming, 2015:188–189), taking every word and letter as relating to the original peoples. The deep understanding of God's mission to a specific group and setting, as revealed in the gospel, is the ultimate idea of this activity. This emphasis shifts the attention of the students from concentrating on academic aspects of the periscope, that might make the reader lose the focus of the witnessing aspect, that is being portrayed. On this aspect, Mashau (2012:5) highlights that "The reading of both the Old and New Testament should serve the gospel to the fullest, lest it becomes a void academic exercise that only enhances human, knowledge." In this regard, the biblical studies should equip the leadership with the missional focus of God, that enables the leaders to fit in well in today's mission. The hermeneutic interpretation serves as a ladder or bridge, to the application of the identified principles to the leadership contexts today. Thus, biblical studies set the stage for God's involvement with his people and their leadership in history. These studies equip the leadership with the necessary insight, to engage with the church in a missional way. Through the application of the principles derived from the biblical narrative, the present leadership can cooperate with God in his mission in a better way.

6.4.1.2. The mission of God in the early church through cultures

From the apostolic church in the first century, through the various historical reflection of the church, the purpose of God in various cultures and peoples is traced. The focus is not just on historical events and how they unfolded, but the ways the gospel affected different cultures in different dispensations. The way the leadership of different cultures and times cooperated with God in their leadership in pursuing the gospel story, is explored. Thus, Church history is treated as mission in historical cultures. It indicates how the various cultures encountered the message of the cross, and it becomes thus not just historical events by several institutional

churches (Goheen, 2016:322). Studying Church History as missions in historical cultures, enables the leadership to draw a fine line of the mission of God, that runs from the Old Testament through the present dispensation. In each case, the model of leadership and the strategies used to bring the gospel to the various people groups, and how their reactions was, paints different missional pictures to the students, and that shapes their missional approaches. The emphasis is to enhance leadership to identify how the same gospel can be effectively presented in different cultures and times, to meet the needs of each.

6.4.1.3. Systematic Theology and the missional leader

Systematic Theology for the missional leader derives the important doctrines from the biblical studies and missional hermeneutic. These doctrines form a missional worldview in the leadership and believers, that fight against cultural idolatry, which might plague the message of the gospel and fails to achieve its intended meaning. The Christian worldview provides the lenses for the missional leadership that enhances it to influence the church, to proclaim the gospel to different contexts in the most relevant ways (Goheen, 2016:320). Systematic Theology for missional leadership, is aimed at empowering the leadership to influence the congregation to have the necessary lenses to witness to various people, in the most faithful way for each group of people. Such witnessing of the good news speaks to the hearts of listeners.

6.4.2. Section 2

This section is based on the missional principles drawn from section 1, which are put into practice. Thus, this section is depended on section 1, hence can be effectively taught in the order of these sections, beginning with the section before 2. The identified principles are made relevant to various settings, using the proper missional hermeneutic.

6.4.2.1. In the mission with God

This section has a central focus at human beings, as in mission with God. It emphasises that the mission is God's, and He chose to call some people to participate with Him (Wright, 2006:191–259 & 2010:63–95). The courses involved in this section, enhance the leadership to position themselves well in the purpose of God. This also derives from sections 1 & 2, where the missional principles derived and contextualised, are now applied in the congregation, with the aim of achieving the missional goal of the church. This is achieved when believers use their gifts to serve in the church, expressing God in such services (Nel, 2018:7).

6.4.2.2. Missional theology

Reflecting on section 1, an indication of the entire church as the mission of God is identified. This means that the life of the church is an expression of God and his love for nations through Christ (Niemandt, 2012:4–5; Nel & Schoeman, 2015:22). Missional theology enhances the total development of students, viz. their head, heart, hands, and emotions (Mashau, 2012:8), to function properly in helping believers to move them to God's purpose. The basis of the missional engagement in the congregations are the "missional spirituality and formation" (Niemandt, 2019:9). The leadership is empowered to train believers in the effective use of their gifts every day. Such continuous practices shape the life of human beings (Roxburgh, 2015:49). Such life becomes the believers' way of living. and thus an organic congregation, where all of life is a product of a new creature in Christ. Such a missional church under the missional leadership, is not individualistic or institutional. Ephesians (4:15–16) instruct the people to be an expression of God in the World, and indicates the goal of the missional church:

> Speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

6.4.2.3. Practical Theology or Pastoral Theology

Although pastoral theology is a subset of practical theology, it has been given at par with practical theology, to emphasise that the gifted leadership's pastoral functions cuts through the other disciplines that make up practical theology. The leadership that is gifted (Ephesians 4:11) has the capacity to practically help believers to move to where they should go in the mission of God. The pastor uses his gifts to help individual believers to reach their full potential of service in the body of Christ. Thus, the pastor is practically implementing all that is at his disposal in the congregation, hence Osmer (2008:4) names the two disciplines, *congregational theology*. The daily task of the church is to give an expression of God's unconditional love to the world. This witnessing is done in ways that enable the various contexts, to clearly view the love of God from their own standpoint. As a result, the practical aspect of the congregational theology is centred on how the truth, of what has been learnt, is applied, to influence the church's daily task, and this can be communicated meaningfully to different cultures.

6.5. Conclusion

The leadership curriculum draws a fine line from the creation narrative to the present day, as all is constituting the mission of God. It is from this mission of God that God calls and the

people can position themselves well to participate with Him. The theological education curriculum for the leadership should survey the mission of God through the Bible and church history, to have a better insight on how the church must participate.

An example of a leadership programme, drawn from this curriculum, is give in an addendum, to illustrate how the leadership can be empowered for effectiveness in congregations.

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CHAPTER 6: ARTICLE 5

LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS AND CHURCH DECLINE IN THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA, CONSIDERING EPHESIANS 4:11–16

1.   ABSTRACT

Multiple studies have been carried out from Ephesians 4:11–16, mostly on aspects of the believers' priesthood. The present article highlights the significance of adhering to the instructions of God, to attain church growth. This follows that the church was created by God, and as such He directs the process of church growth. Nevertheless, the ongoing membership decline in the World Protestant Churches globally and the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) locally, is an indicator that the church is failing to meet the will and purpose of God with the church. In the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA, the decline trends are basically the same (Bendavid, 2015:3; RCSA Deputies of turn-around and church growth, 2015:492–496), and the loopholes are pointing at the leadership. This article seeks to describe the leadership failure to uphold the blueprint of church health according to Ephesians 4:11–16, as the source of membership decline. Central to the present study is the investigation of the extent to which the leadership functions are influenced by spiritual gifts, that are emphasised in Ephesians 4:11. These are the keys to real church revitalisation and growth. The exegesis of the problem verse (Ephesians 4:11) was done to indicate the various leadership gifts that are necessary for church growth to occur. The Bible and related literature are the sources of data. This article identifies how an omission of the gift-oriented tasks in a congregation, leads to church decline.

Key words: leadership functions, church decline, Reformed Churches in South Africa

2.   INTRODUCTION

The Lord commissioned the church to grow, as indicated in Genesis 12:2–3 and Matthew 28:19–20. These verses identify the two aspects of church growth that are necessary, namely numerical and spiritual. These are attained when the church reaches out to the peoples with the gospel of Jesus Christ, enfolding them in the church, and to successfully disciple them (Van Aarde, 2015:6). This process of church growth enables church growth missiological – the believers are urged to participate with the Lord in what He is already doing in the world. The participation processes suffice under the effective leadership, and spearhead church growth in their congregations. This happens because the leaders are the instruments through

whom God works to achieve his purpose with the church through them. Thus, church growth or decline is closely tied to the leadership functions. In any case, church decline is not in the will and purpose of God, as is indicated in Genesis and Matthew above.

Regrettably, the Protestant Churches globally and the RCSA have been in decline for several years. Decline in the RCSA was identified since 1994 (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:492). This continuous decline is now more than two decades to date, pointing at leadership failure to execute its functions that should enhance church growth. The lengthy period of church decline indicates leadership flaws in revitalising the RCSA. The decline trends in the RCSA are also realised in the World Protestant churches in the same way. In both cases, some congregations were closed because the membership could not make it to become an independent congregation (Elphick & Davenport, 1997:397; RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:492). The apostle Paul highlights that the leadership gifts were given as the means to church growth, making the leadership the chief player in church growth. Therefore, the ongoing church decline in the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA, is directly attributed to the leadership failure in their calling to spearhead church growth.

It stands to reason that the leadership might not have capacity, or is under-passing, or omitting the core functions of their calling that are spelt out in Ephesians 4:11–16. These functions are foundational for real revitalisation and church growth. Central to the present study is the description of Christian leadership gifts that are necessary for enhancing a missional church, that is mature and an expression of Christ in the world, as highlighted in Ephesians 4:11–16. These leaders are called by God and are gifted to help the church "to move from where they have been into a new place to which they are being called" (Weems, 2010:2). This makes the present pericope missiological, as its primary focus is with the nations to which the missional church transforms, as they reflect the light of Christ that dislodges the darkness. In an endeavour to accomplish this purpose, the main responsibilities of the ordained leadership are the identification of members' spiritual gifts, and to cultivate them for effectiveness before allocating them to appropriate ministries (Gelder, 2007:6). The precise description of such Christian leadership principles enables the present study to investigate how the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA leadership are engaged with the members, and to urge them to reach their full potential of service in their congregations. The investigation establishes the leadership loopholes in the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA leadership that are barriers to church growth, resulting in the ongoing church decline (Morrison, 2014:62; Reeder, 2008:141-145; RCSA, 2015:492–496; RCSA, 2018:971–972).

This study exegetes the mentioned text to highlight the growth process which the church leadership should be engaged with daily. The exegesis unveils the following aspects that are dependent on the leadership, and are vital and crucial for church growth to occur:

i.   Leadership and gifts – verse 11;
ii. Leadership purpose – verse 12;
iii. The goals of leadership functions – verse 13; and
iv. The results of leadership functions – verses 14–16.

These are the pillars for church growth that are established by Jesus Christ for his church. All four pillars are necessary and are accomplished in the order provided above. These are the means for church growth, the method to achieve church growth, the goal of church growth, and the result of church growth. Adhering to the above church growth guideline, is the only solution to turn-around from church decline to church growth.

These aspects are discussed in the present article, to establish the extent to which the RCSA leadership has drifted away from the guidelines provided by Christ.

2.1. An overview of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians

The epistle to the Ephesians followed the Pauline approach of commencing with doctrinal issues, chapters 1–3 and the chapters 4–6 is focusing on applying the taught doctrines (Jones, 1980:5). Although the scholars differ greatly on the purpose of the epistle to the Ephesians, they concur that the issue of unity of believers as the body of Christ through the Holy Spirit, is key (Ferguson, 2011:30; Hoehner, 2002:501; Kam, 2006:57; Wright, 2020:2). However, scholars (Kam, 2005:25; Hoehner, 2002:501) suggest that the apostle Paul was encouraging the unity of Jews and Gentiles as one body in Christ. Whichever is the case, Chapter four marks the introduction of the application of the doctrines in chapters 1–3. The means, purpose and outcome of the unity of believers is dealt with in Ephesians (4:11–16). However, to better understand what the apostle Paul is appraising, there is a need to look back to verse 7, where the issue of gifts was first highlighted and is continued from verse 11. This part of the epistles (Eph 4:11-16) highlights the distribution of gifts to the church as means to unify the church as central. In verse 7, the apostles Paul indicates that the Lord has "appointed people with different gifts to the church", which are activated by the gifted leadership and that they are used to benefit the whole church. The pericope identifies the five gits given to the church through Jesus Christ. This part of Ephesians reveals the heart of God with his church, hence the unity called for to the Ephesian church is the same unity called for in today's church.

3.   EXEGESIS OF EPHESIANS 4:11–16

11   καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας   τοὺς   δὲ

  And He gave some indeed (to be) apostles, some prophets, some now.

εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς   δὲ ποιμένας   καὶ   διδασκάλους,

evangelists, some now shepherds, and teachers.

12   πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς   ἔργον   διακονίας,   εἰς οἰκοδομὴν

Towards the perfection of the saints for (the) work of ministry for the building

τοῦσώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ,

of the body – of Christ

13   μέχρι καταντήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἑνότητα τῆς πίστεως   καὶ τῆς   ἐπιγνώσεως

Until we may attain   –   all   to   the unity   of the faith and of the knowledge

τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον   ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ

of the son of God, unto a man, complete to the measure of the stature of the fullness

χριστοῦ,

of Christ

14   ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι,   κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς

So that no longer we might be infants being tossed and being carried out by the

διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν

of teaching in the cunning of   men   in craftiness with a view to the scheming

τῆς πλάνης,

of deceit

15 ἀληθεύοντες   δὲ   ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὐξήσωμεν   εἰς αὐτὸν

Speaking the truth, however in love we should grow up into Him

τὰ πάντα,, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλή   χριστός,

in all   things who is the head Christ

16 ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα   συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον   διὰ πάσης

From Him all the body being joined together and being held together by every

ἀφῆς   τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ᾽   ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ   ἑνὸς

ligament of (its) supply according to the working in (the) measure individual

ἑκάστου μέρους τὴν αὔξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται   εἰς οἰκοδομὴν

of each part   the   increase of the body makes for itself to the building up

ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

Of itself in love

3.1. Discussion of Ephesians 4:11–16

4:11 The periscope, Ephesians 4:11 begins with a conjunction 'And' (καὶ) as a connecting word with what the apostle Paul said in verses 8–10, that God, through Christ, has given all the believers gifts appropriate for their service in the church. Verse 11 goes further and indicates that the same Christ also gave appropriate gifts to the leadership of the church.

καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν (And He **gave**) – gave is a verb, *aorist, indicative*, third person, singular. Thus, Jesus Christ is the source of the gifts that are given to the church leadership to be used for his purpose with the church. The *aorist* verb of 'ἔδωκεν' (*gave*) points at the onetime event in the past. This *aorist, indicative* verb in the verse, helps to shed light in identifying whether the list of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers are all continuing, or were discontinued. It is therefore clear that if the listed were one-time offices, then most of them ceased with those to whom the offices were conferred (Calvin, 1976376–377) Thus, in the present church, these gifts are necessary for the church leadership to accomplish the purpose of the church. The apostle Paul further highlights the same list of Ephesians 4:11 as the gifts

of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:28; 12:8–11; Romans 12:6–8). These gifts of the Holy Spirit are the basis for church growth hence the church leadership is equipped with them as God's agents for church growth. In other way, Lord Jesus has already put in place the vehicles to church growth which the leadership need to ride on, in order to enhance church health.

It is in the interest of the present study to briefly define each of these offices, described in the mentioned periscope, and to describe how the RCSA leadership has the responsibilities that were attached to each office.

i   Apostle: The Greek word, ἀποστέλλω' (*apostolos*) means a messenger, or one who is sent. Hoehner (2002:541) identifies three different groups of people to which the word *apostle* refers to. These are:

- Those who were with Jesus in ministry and witnessed his resurrection (Acts 1:21–22).
- Paul who was born out of season (he met the resurrected Christ as he was going to Damascus and was commissioned as well) (1 Corinthians 15:8–9).
- Those who received the gift of apostleship such as Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Corinthians 9:5–7), James the Lord's brother (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; Uprichard, 2004:19).

This analysis points at the first two as offices that do not apply in the present church. However, the third one which refers to the gifts of the Spirit, is applicable to the church today. The third meaning is consistent with the Reformed Churches' doctrine including the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA). Thus, the church through its leaders is sent into the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, to transform their communities. God's sending of people are obliged, to fulfil the purpose for which they are sent. This is possible because Jesus Christ, who sent and who gave them the gifts through the Spirit, is with them in their assignments with the peoples (Matthew 28:20).

ii.   Prophets: A prophet is one who is called to communicate God's message to his people. The prophets and apostles have overlapping ministries, of communicating the divine revelation to the people of God (Hoehner, 2002:542). The Old Testament canon has a section of prophets, ranging from Isaiah through to Malachi, in addition to many others, who spoke for God, and would foretell the future in some cases (Moberly, 2006:4). These were sent to deliver God's message to his people from time to time. Though the office of prophets ceased with the completion of the canon (Yew, 2011:7), its function is basically that of the RCSA ministers of the Word. The ministers of the Word are endowed with the Word and should be faithful in teaching and preaching it to accomplish God's purpose

with the church. Failure to effectively communicate God's divine Word makes them false prophets, who speaks not from the Lord as those indicated in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 23 and 29). Such preaching and teaching cannot transform the believers, nor the church communities.

iii. **Evangelist:** An evangelist is responsible with the proclamation of the good news that brings salvation to the world. Some scholars distinguish between the evangelists, apostles and prophets in that the evangelists and apostles take the good news to unreached people, while the prophets are responsible for the existing church (Hoehner, 2002:542; O'brien, 1999:300). Looking through the book of Acts, one can identify that the apostles and evangelists were responsible for feeding the flock of God as well. The apostles Paul would visit the churches he planted in various parts, to strengthen them in the Word of truth, or could do that through letters. The New Testament uses the *noun* (evangelist) in only two places other than Ephesians 4:11. These are in reference to Philip (Acts 21:8) and Timothy who had to do the work of the evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). Timothy was doing the work of an evangelist in the church that was already established; hence discipleship is part of the evangelist. The verbal form, 'to evangelise', occurs frequently, which literally means to proclaim the good news. The evangelists should be students of the Word who are able to speak the whole truth that convicts sinners, and rightly teach the converts till they become spiritually mature.

iv. **Pastors and teachers:** Pastors and teachers have one definite article, unlike the other offices, that are preceded with a definite article in the Greek text "ἔδωκεν **τοὺς μὲ** ἀποστόλους, **τοὺς δὲ** προφήτας, **τοὺς δὲ** εὐαγγελιστάς, **τοὺς δὲ** ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους". This might mean that a pastor has multiple functions, including teaching, or what Hoehner (2002:544) argues that when one article is used in two plurals in Greek, the first noun is a subset of the second, hence all pastors are teachers. This, however, does not means that all teachers are pastors (Uprichard, 2004:224). The New Testament describes the same office with *nous*, such as elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:12, 19; 1 Peter 5:1–4), *overseer* (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Philippians 1:1). In 1 Timothy 3:2 the apostle Paul writes of the overseer as the bishop also. This whole range of *nouns* indicates that the offices that are appraised for the church to date, presents the multiple responsibilities that pastors have as suggested by Hoehner above.

Discussion: Therefore, leadership offices of the Protestant churches globally and the RCSA locally, are the following: minsters of the Word, elders, Professors, deacons and deaconesses (Vorster, 1999:17). The gifts that the apostle Paul highlighted in Ephesians (4:11), are relevantly applicable in today's church to enable them to give the expression of God in the

world (Ferguson, 2011:110; Kam, 2006:81; Weems:2010:2). The Holy Spirit equips the leaders to activate the believers' gifts for active service (v. 7), and thus accomplish their leadership tasks with the church. Thus, these spiritual gifts are not meant for personal benefit, but to benefit the entire body of Christ. In case of the RCSA, the teaching elders, ruling elders, and missionaries are the agents armed with the spiritual gifts necessary for accomplishing their calling as church leaders. The leadership gifts are meant to enhance the unity of the body of Christ, that the apostle Paul is focusing at in the epistle to the Ephesians. In any case, the gifted leadership needs to be empowered in their gifted areas, to enhance effectiveness, just as Jesus did with the called twelve apostles, who He trained for about three years (the Gospels), enhancing their gifts. The called apostles had the requested gifts of the Spirit, but had to undergo training for perfecting the gifts for their tasks (De Moor, 2010:20; Smit, 2010:185). The guarantee of the spiritual gifts for the called church leadership and the necessary empowerment of the leadership through training, brings the desired unity of the church which the apostles Paul is emphasising to the church. In this regard, the present study encourages that the RCSA congregations seconds the leadership into the various offices, through establishing the conviction of those claiming God's call (1 Timothy 3:1; 2 Timothy 1:9), which should be confirmed by the observable signs of the call before they engaged the leadership (1 Timothy 3:7). This action ensures that the church has identified the called leadership who has the gifts of the spirit, suitable for a specific office. When this is done well and all other variables are in place, there is no reason why the RCSA churches would continue in decline for such a prolonged period – from 1994 up to date.

The apostle Paul's description of spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:11), is indicating that God purposely gives the gifts to all those, with the mandate to fulfil the missional purpose of the church (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88; Niemandt, 2012:5). Thus, the leadership who has a true calling of God, is endowed with these gifts. Reading through the entire Bible, one can identify that the leadership called by God, had the gifts that were necessary to achieve the purpose of the calling. Leaders like Moses, Abraham, David, Nehemiah, Peter, and Paul to mention a few examples, were all having gifts relevant for a specific calling to which God called each one of them. As a result, they were successful in the execution of their various tasks. It stands to reason that their success was vested in the gifts that God had given to them. In the same way, the church leadership is called according to the spiritual gifts for the purpose of articulating church growth. The purpose for the leadership's spiritual gifts is discussed next.

Leadership offices of the RCSA, minsters of the Word, elders, and Professors (Vorster, 1999:17) has functions that require the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit equips them to accomplish their leadership tasks. The RCSA's teaching and ruling elders are the called

instruments through whom God builds his church. They are responsible for spearheading church revitalisation and church growth. However, the ruling elders' effectiveness is a result of the teaching elders, who is expected to empower him for effectiveness. The study assumes that the RCSA congregations seconds the leadership into their offices, through establishing the conviction of those claiming God's call (1 Timothy 3:1; 2; Timothy 1:9), which should be confirmed by the observable signs of the call before they engage the leadership (1 Timothy 3:7).

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3.2. The purpose of the leadership gifts for the church

Verse 12. This is a continuation of what the apostles Paul said on the spiritual gifts in verse 11, identifying what the gifted people will do and the subsequent result to the church of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the gifts is "for the preparation of the saints" (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων,). This can be understood to mean that the identified gifts in verse 11 are meant to prepare every believer for effective service in the body of Christ. This leads to the important goal of edification of the Church. The other purpose is: "for the work of ministry" (εἰς ἔργον διακονίας). The goal of the gifts is introduced by the prepositions *to* (εἰς), indicating the gaol as to prepare the believers for the work of ministry. In the third purpose, namely "for the building of the body of Christ" (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ) ,again *to* (εἰς) is used to indicate the other goal of the gifts, namely to build up the body of Christ–the church. In summary, Hoehner (2002:551) describes the purpose thus: "Christ gave the gifts to the church for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints for the goal of service and in turn this service is for the final goal of building up the entire body of Christ".

3.2.1. The purpose of the various gifts

The various categories of spiritual gifts which Christ gave to the church as the means to facilitate church growth, are meant for the benefit of the entire church and not for individuals. This emphasises the need for unity and diversity in the church of Jesus Christ, in which different leadership inputs in a congregation, produce members that are fully developed for service in the congregation (DeVries, 2016:1). The garden metaphor in which one plants and the other one waters (1 Corinthians 3:6), indicates the cooperation of leadership towards developing members who are effective in their congregations. Thus, each gift Christ gave to the leadership, contributes to the growth of individual believers. This process is effective when the leaders are effective in displaying the unity among the leadership in their diverse gifts – all meant to produce a believer who can actively participate in the church. Thus, the skill of cooperation among the leadership is necessary in transforming the membership, because the maturity in believers is the aggregate of various leadership gifts. A deficiency in either leadership capacity or cooperation, comes with negative results for the individual believers and the entire church.

3.2.2. God's purpose in giving gifts

The gifts are given as the driving force that leads to church growth. This makes church growth almost obvious, because God provided the means to accomplish church growth, which is attained when all the saints are actively serving in the body of Christ. Thus, failure to appropriately engage the whole body of Christ in active service, defeats the purpose to which

the gifts were given, and subsequently affect the ultimately goal of enhancing unity in the entire body of Christ. Church decline is therefore a result of the leadership failure to embrace and implement the goal of the gifts, given to the church leadership by Christ. The apostle Paul is very clear that having been given the gifts as the means for building the entire body of Christ, these (gifts) must be used to engage the whole congregation into active serve, which will result in the unity of the body.—.church growth.

God gave the leadership various gifts:

i.   To equip the saints (12a)
ii. for the work of the ministry (12a),
iii. to build up the body of Christ (12b).

The leadership gifts are necessary for effectively helping the believers to become actively involved in the church as an act of service therein (Getz *et al.*, 200:1–2). The believers' active involvement lead to desired unity of the body of Christ. The process of equipping the believers includes the identification of the gifts of various believers, which they also get from Jesus Christ (verse 7) and nurture them for effectiveness. These gifts should be developed through training (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν) to enhance the membership's full potential of service in the body of Christ. Nevertheless, the equipping leaders should also be equipped through relevant training, to correctly identify members' gifts, and then nurture them accordingly. Without the capacity to identify the members' gifts, the training would not produce the desired results. This follows that the leadership might attempt to develop members on ministries, that do not align to their gifts. Training does not impart the gifts, but a means of developing them for effectiveness. Thus, leadership capacity to identify gifts of members is necessary.

Jesus Christ, the Head and model of church leadership, identified the Twelve and spent about three years equipping them for effectiveness in the ministry (see the four Gospels). Jesus commissioned them for service, when they were ready to use their gifts in achieving the ministry's purpose (Matthew 28:19–20). It stands to reason that the empowering of leadership precedes the sending (Ikechukwu, 2019:26). The effectiveness of the apostles' ministry is indicated in the book of Acts. The apostles were effective in turning the world upside down with the gospel of Christ (Acts 17:6), resulting in church growth among different peoples. This is a testimony that transforming the people does not require a multitude of people, but the well-developed gifts of the Spirit. The indication is that the equipped saints can serve effectively, thereby giving a true expression of the unity necessary in the body of Christ. Unfortunately, the findings of the RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth indicate that the RCSA leadership is not able to impact members for service (RCSA, 2015:492). As

such the RCSA membership is not equipped to actively serve in the body, that is espoused in verse 12 as the key responsibilities of the leadership of the church (Ferguson, 2011:110; Kam, 2006:61; Uprichard, 2004:227). The RCSA leadership as God's agents for growth, has failed to equip the members so that they can effectively use their gifts for both personal growth and for influencing the growth of others.

In this regard, turn-around and church growth cannot be realised in the RCSA before all the members are equipped to fulfil their calling in the various RCSA congregations. This situation points at the leadership, that is not utilising the given spiritual gifts in ways that are beneficial to the church. Thus, the RCSA should seriously consider empowering the leadership through effective training, that will boost their spiritual gifts for effectiveness. The apostle Paul underscores that the leadership gifts are the means to accomplish church growth. The leadership can only transform the members if they have the necessary training in the use of their gifts (Startup & Harris; 1999:118). If the RCSA leadership are the ones God called to leadership, they have the necessary gifts for their offices. It follows what the apostle Paul highlights in Ephesians 4:11, that Christ gave the gifts to the leadership for enhancing church growth. Thus, for the RCSA to realise the most anticipated turn–around and church growth, equipping of all the saints should be their priority. The researches and strategies for tun–around and church growth that are identified (RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:492–495), will not come up with the desired results if all the saints are not equipped for active service in the body of Christ. The goals of the gifts are discussed next.

3.3. Goal to be attained by the church

Verse 13 draws a line from verse 11 on the gifts given by Christ to the leadership, that are necessary to enable all saint to serve in the building of the body of Christ, to verse 13 that underscores the continuation of the process until all believers are spiritually mature in Christ. Paul emphasises the spiritual maturity of all beliers as the final goal, by saying "until we all attain" (μέχρι καταντήσωμεν οἱ πάντες). The word *all* (πάντες), indicates that the equipping of gifted elders should focus not on a part, but on the total picture, and the process should continue to the point when the total body of Christ attains the desired maturity. However, *all* (πάντες) here, is not referring to the total world population, but only the body of Christ, that should be helped to move "to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God" (εἰς τὴν ἑνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ). The preposition *to* (εἰς) indicates the direction of the goal, that is, the unity of faith in the body of Christ. The final aspect of maturity is "to a mature person" (εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον). *To* (εἰς) is used for the second time, pointing at a mature person as the other aspect to be aimed at. This maturity is "to the

measure of Christ's full stature" (εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ,). This is the third time that *to* (εἰς) is used to show that the direction of equipping is also to attaining maturity.

The following aspects that can add up to the maturity of the body of Christ, are the following:

   i.   All members should attain the unity of the faith in Jesus Christ (13a – paraphrased).
   ii. Members should have effective knowledge of the Son of God (13b – paraphrased).
   iii. Members should become mature Christians (13c – paraphrased).
   iv. The church should attain to the measure of Christ's full stature (13d).

These are the four aspects that result in having mature saints in the body of Christ. Note that this is not just for the leadership or a specific group, but for all the saints. Thus, the leadership of the RCSA should aim to help the members to reach the desired maturity of faith in Christ. Thus, the gifts God gives to the leadership, aim at developing a missional church that can be an expression of God in the church and beyond (Nel &Schoeman, 2015:88). This should be the aim of each leadership office, that is to work towards equipping the saints so that they mature in the faith in Christ as a united body. One can draw a flow diagram showing that the Christ-given gifts for the leadership (v. 11), and the purpose of these gifts are to equip the entire body of Christ (v. 12), with the aim of helping believers to accomplish the goal of being mature in faith (v. 13). A consistent chain of activities that flows from the leadership gifts, are the keys in enhancing the purpose and goal for all the saints. The whole process rests with Christ, through the gifted leadership that must influence the saints to serve in the body, until the Christ–like character will be exhibited in all believers.

The RCSA loophole to attain this maturity of the saints, is caused by leadership (RCSA Deputies for ministers' training, 2018:970–972; RCSA, 2015:1056–1084). It boils mainly to one thing, namely that the ministers are not trained to be trainers in their congregations. This inadequacy in the training, is a barrier to enhance the RCSA leadership in equipping the congregational members for service in the body of Christ. Equipping the believers for ministering in the church, is the reason for the gifts that are given to the leadership (Ephesians 4:11). If this is not done properly, the church does not achieve its ordained purpose. As a result, the RCSA cannot achieve a turn-around and church growth despite of various efforts made since 1994 to turn–around the declining church (RCSA Deputies for ministers training, 2018:971-972; RCSA Deputies for turn–around and church growth, 2015:492–495). Up until the leadership has capacity to equip the entire membership, all the other turn–around and growth efforts are futile. Along the same lines, Werner (2010:7–8) highlights that if the leadership is not trained, their efforts yield no positive results in the organisation. These leaders could become barriers to church growth, rather than facilitating it.

The spiritual gifts that are vested in the leadership (v. 11) have the purpose of equipping the church for active participation in the body of Christ (v. 12). This process leads to the spiritual maturity of the entire church (v. 13). Thus, the church becomes salt and light that can live to glorify God in the church and in the community. This is qualitative growth of the entire membership, and it enhances quantitative growth. This follows that mature members remain in the church for their entire life, during which period they will transform other peoples to become disciples of Jesus Christ. The membership quality identified by the RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth (2015:494), indicates spiritual immaturity, a pointer that they are not equipped for service in the body. Without being equipped for active service in the body of Christ, the maturity described in verse 13 is never attained. This is true for a church that has ineffective leadership to reequip all the membership. The results indicated in verses 14–16 cannot be realised in the RCSA – not until the leadership is capacitated to effectively use their gifts to transform the members to become all what God wants them to be.

4.   ULTIMATE RESULT FOR THE CHURCH

The ultimate result of the church growth process in Ephesians 4:11–16, is that the entire body of Christ will grow in unity. This is the theme that runs through the epistle to the Ephesians.

Verse 14: The purpose for the mature body of Christ is stated in the negative.

i.   "In order that we might no longer be children" (ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι). The mature body of Christ cannot be deceived by any false doctrine of any kind. This behaviour contrasts that of children (spiritual immature) who are not stable in their faith in Christ. The spiritual immature believers, are exposed to:

a.   "being tossed back and forth by every wind of doctrine" (κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας). This part continues to explain the behaviour of one who has not attained the maturity in Christ. These can follow any teaching they are exposed to, because they lack the ability to differentiate between the truth and the error. They are prone to the force outside of the church to influence them negatively. These are deceived:

b.   "by the trickery of men" (ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων). The device used by false teachers cannot be discerned by the believers who have not matured in the Lord. The preposition "by deceitfulness" (ἐν πανουργίᾳ), is showing trickery method used towards immature believers, in a deceitful manner that make these believers to be caught unaware. The result is that the immature believers are driven "towards the scheme of error" (πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν τῆς πλάνης). Thus, the

immature Christians are in the danger of being taken for a ride and led away from the truth. Their being led away from the church, counts for membership decline in the affected churches.

Verse 15: Paul discusses the purpose of maturity positively. While lack of maturity in Christ leads to instability in the body of Christ, those who grow in the measure of Christ (v. 13) are not saved by error:

c. "but rather being truthful with love" (ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ). This is showing a complete opposite in behaviour between a mature and immature Christian. Maturity in Christ, who is the truth (John, 14:6), leads to believers who live the truth, speak the truth, and as such cannot be tricked to accept the lie of false teachers. Everything in the life of mature Christians is aimed that "we might grow up to Him with references to all things" (αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα). The foundation to this purpose are the gifts given to believers, which are instrumental for growing a united body of Christ to maturity in all (πάντα) things, not just some. Thus, the *all* (πάντα) points at the fact that Christians are meant to grow in all aspect of life so that, **all** their life is subjected to Christ. Such is quality Christians, who can express God everywhere they are (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88), because they have grown in Christ in all those areas of life. Mature Christians are depended on Lord Jesus who is "the head, the Christ", (ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλή χριστός). The believer has to strive to follow the model of Christ, who is the head of the church and has put in place all the necessary instruments for Christian maturity as was seen in Ephesians (4:11) through the gifts, that have the purpose of enhancing participation of all believers, (4:12), with the goal of attaining maturity in Christ (v. 12). This maturity gives the believers an identity different to the immature Christians (children). Mature Christians have grown on Christ, who is the truth, and their life is anchored on that truth, after the head of the church (Christ), who is their absolute example.

Having discussed both the negative and positive purposes of individual growth of Christians, the apostle Paul goes on to discuss growth of the whole body of Christ, that

i. "from Him the whole body [church] grows, fits and keeps together" (ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον). The preposition *out of* (ἐξ οὗ) points at the previous verse, where Jesus is identified as the head, herein, is given as the source of growth to the church. It stands to reason that Jesus as the head of the church, is the source of the church, and the goal for the growth of the body (Ferguson, 2011:112–113; Hoehner, 2002:569; Jones, 1980:254). Christ is the

power that makes different members fit well in one united body after going through the process (Ephesians 4:11–15). Each of those aspects from gifts, flows out of Him, with the goal and purpose to enhance each Christian to serve in ways that lead to a united matured body. These gifts for the leadership and believers, and how each believer participates, build the unity of the body thus "through every supporting connection" (διὰ πάσης ἁφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας). The participation of believers and leaders through their gifts are the connections that brought the whole body to unity, through Christ.

ii. "according to the working in measure from each individual part" (κατ᾽ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μέρους): The two prepositions show the means and manner respectively, of the fitting of various parts into one united body. Thus, the working everyone contributed towards the growing of a united body. Thus, each believer "causes the growing of the body" (τὴν αὔξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται). This is basically pointing back to Ephesians 7 and11, where Christ gave the believers gifts, that must be put into use for serving in the church, through the guidance of the gifted leadership. The result will be mature Christians who together build a mature body of Christ, under the headship of Jesus Christ. Looking at the thread of the whole process, the church is aimed "to build itself in love" (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ). The last preposition in this pericope *to* (εἰς), highlights the binding factor in the process of building believers to maturity, and how believers are joined with each other and together in Christ, and all is done in love. Ephesians 4:11–16, indicates that the apostle Paul highlights Christ as the ultimate source of everything the churches aim, do and become.

4.1. Application

The goal of being a mature Christian, is given in both the negative and the positive: so that the believers become mature Christians, who can resist false doctrines, while they are growing in truthfunessl and love at the same time. Such Christians can live the life of truth in Christ, even in the postmodernism where falsehood is plaguing the world. The mature Christians are truthful, hence they can detect error from truth, as well as various forms of tricks that might be used by enemies of the cross to deceive the church. Only the spiritual immature falls pray to such deceit and trickery.

The key to protect the believers from falling pray to false teaching and exit the church, is to help individual believers to be all that God wants them to be. This is the instrument to grow in truth and a shield against false doctrines. Members who are immature, could hardly distinguish

truth from error and they are deceived through cunning tricks of the evil one, to derail them from the ways of truth (De Moor, 2010:135–136; Vorster, 1999:44). In other words, building the body of Christ, begins by building individual members to maturity in Christ. These mature, individual believers can come together in love and join in Christ to be one mature body, that is a real expression of God in the world (Nel & Schoeman, 2015:88; Niemandt, 2012:9). Thus, church growth is possible, only with mature members who live for truth in Christ and can team up to articulate the mission of God in the world. It stands to reason that all this begins with Christ who gave gifts to individual believers and leaders, that should be used to build the church on Him and through Him (Weems, 2010:2).

Nonetheless, the continuous membership decline in the RCSA is testimonial that the individual believers are not equipped for growth; hence are 'children' who cannot resist error and cannot embrace the truth (Hoehner, 2002:544–565). Using the figure of speech by the apostle Paul, 'children', qualifies for the members of the RCSA, as was identified by the mentioned Deputies, and the immaturity identified in them, cannot cause the church to turn–around and grow (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:428–492). Looking through the pericope under study (Ephesians 4:11–16), we can identify that the problem is with the leadership that could not equip the believers to be all that God wants them to be. Equipping the believers, is the starting point for church growth.

A lack of effective training of the church, results in immature members who are deceived and tricked to follow false teaching such as the so-called prosperity gospel. This gospel has flooded the whole world (Maura *et al.*, 20151–15). A lack of maturity brings the negative that the apostle Paul warns against in Ephesians (4:14), and to which the concerned believers are subjected to: "by the wind of a doctrine through the trickery of men" (v. 14); leading the membership to be influenced to exit their churches by the false teaching, which they cannot determine. Immature membership affects the individual members, the congregations, denominations and the whole body of Christ. The reason is that all the believers are important parts of the body, and the removal of one member creates a loophole that affect the other believers and the whole church. Like in the human body, amputation of one body part has a direct effect to the whole body. Regrettably, the churches with sound biblical doctrines are losing the membership to the false doctrine from men who manipulate the church, because the members could not discern the false doctrine from the true one. This happens because they are still "children" in their faith (Pfau, 2002:1). The church of Jesus Christ should stand up firmly, and put up a hedge of the whole truth, that will save the church.

The present study cannot establish whether some members from the RCSA were deceived by the false teaching, to be part of the charismatic preachers who misrepresent the truth.

Nevertheless, the members who lack the deep understanding of the true doctrine, cannot reach maturity, which is the shield against false teaching, and on the other hand, the foundation for the truth in Christ. These members neither have the whole truth, nor they can practice it. Such a church ceases to exist as the light and salt to the world, and it rather conforms to the standards of the world (Romans 12:2), because members are not able to discern the whole truth of God from the partial truth that is preached mostly in African founded churches.

A church that achieves the goals mentioned in verse 13, can reflect the outcomes of verses 14–16. The RCSA leadership is seemingly failing to articulate the purpose of their spiritual gifts, which in turn leads to their failure to achieve the goals set for the church by its Head. The result is that the church fails to be what God wants it to be (Van Aarde, 2017:9). Nevertheless, a church's failure to reach God's purpose with it, will be in qualitative decline, which manifests in quantitative decline. When the church members are prayerless, lack genuine love, under-pass evangelism, and many other goals, the church is already in decline (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:494–495). All those aspects are manifestations of believers who have not been equipped for service in the body of Christ. The point continues to revolve on (Ephesians 4:11), that the leadership did not utilise the gifts given to them to build the individual members to maturity, and as such, nothing than qualitative decline occurs. Qualitative decline is the state of believers that does not reflect the qualities of Jesus Christ as the Head of the church. From the pericope in this study, failure to train all the believers (v. 11), disrupts and derail God's purpose with his church. This follows that the purpose of the church is only realised when all the believers are empowered and motivated to actively participate in the church – the body of Christ.

5. THE WAY FORWARD FOR A TURN-AROUND AND CHURCH GROWTH IN THE RCSA

5.1. RCSA efforts for revitalisation and growth

Since the identification of membership decline during the 1994 synod, the RCSA has put several interventions in place (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:492). These interventions were meant to enhance church revitalisation and growth. The interventions were under the leadership of the deputies for church growth. The deputies for turn-around and church growth done several researches in South Africa and abroad, that were geared towards church revitalisation. They provided findings which proved to be effective in certain denominations, but they did not work for the RCSA, since membership decline continues (RCSA Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:503–505). The reason is

that the mentioned deputies' efforts focused on addressing the result, namely membership decline, and not the root aspect that should lead to church growth (Ephesians 4:11). The deputies under-passed the church growth strategy that is highlighted by the apostle Paul, namely the utilisation of the spiritual gifts. The whole process is rooted in Jesus Christ who gives all believers gifts (v. 7), which must be enhanced by the gifts He gave to the leadership (v. 11) to equip the saints for the work of ministry. The bottom line is equipping all the believers to mature and be able to be actively safe. Active service of individual members builds up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). Its like each members' active service is a building block for the body of Christ, that positively affects each individual and subsequently the entire body of Christ. The starting point is the utilisation of the leadership's spiritual gifts, in helping the believers to use their own gifts positively in the church. Thus, the growth means leadership gifts should be the focal point of the deputies' research, to identify whether the leadership has the capacity to effectively use their gifts. Effectiveness of the gifts is enhanced through the training that the leadership receive, to enable them to influence the believers' gifts positively. The effectiveness of the leadership efforts in using their God-given growth gifts, is realised in the quality of believers. On the one hand, a congregation with quality (Christ–like) members, indicate leadership ability to equip the believers appropriately. On the other hand, compromised membership quality points at the leadership failure to transform them to being what they are meant to be, viz. as members of the body of Christ. The serious gap is seemingly the leadership failure to help the members to move towards the direction of God (Weems, 2010:1; Wright, jr, 2000:2). The next step would be for the mentioned deputies to identify whether the goals (membership's active participation) are met, and that all the members attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to become "a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature" (Ephesians 4:13). It is the spiritual mature members who meet Christ's goal with his church. These can team up with the other mature members, to build a united mature church with Christ as the head. The church growth process begins with individual believers, who should be transformed for Christ, not the other way around (Hoehner, 2004:501–560: Jone, 1980: 203–254). The church desiring of turn–around and church growth should be concerned about the growth efforts of its individual members, that will manifest healthy congregations, that are an expression of God. In other words, the state of the congregation reflects the individual members of it. Spiritual mature believers constitute a spiritual mature church, and vice versa.

In any case, the attainment of spiritual mature members in the church is the reason Christ gave the gifts to the church leadership, namely as a means for church growth. Thus, the RCSA deputies for turn-around and church growth and any other person concerned with turn–around and church growth, should identified means to enhance leadership effectiveness. All the

resources, efforts, and researches should be focused on producing the leadership that is capable to train individual believers for their various ministries of their gifts. Focusing at any other aspect, might be a waste of resource, without positive results being realised.

The starting point in endeavouring church revitalisation and growth, is thus to assess the leadership needs, so that it can be addressed to ensure that the leadership is ready to equip the saints. Thus, the proposed leadership curriculum could be a gateway to meeting this goal.

5.2. Establishing the purpose of the spiritual gifts

The purpose of the gifts is to enable the leadership to achieve the following:

i. Identifying membership gifts and nurture them for effective service in the church (Ogden, 1991:20).

ii. Empower the members to serve in areas of their gifts in the church – thus contributing towards the growth of the body of Christ (Weems, 2010:15).

The description of gifts in Ephesians 4:11 and the exegesis done on the same verse, indicate that the RCSA ministers of the Word are responsible for articulating the purpose of God with the church. They are solely responsible for enhancing the quality of membership, that could fulfil the purpose of Jesus Christ with his church. For a turn-around and church growth to happen in the RCSA and the other Protestant Churches, the ministers should be the focus of all growth efforts. This follows that they are the called leaders through whom God works his purpose among his people (Getz *et al*., 2000:1-2). In the Old as well as the New Testament it is indicated that God calls the people to leadership according to the gifts that they were given. The eternal God places a leader in a leadership position that suits his gifts. Reflecting on the leaders like Moses, Abraham, Noah, David, Nehemiah, the prophets, and apostles to mention just a few, one can conclude that each one was assigned to a leadership task that suits him. Furthermore, for all the leadership positions of God's people in the Bible, God empowered them in one way or the other before they commenced their leadership tasks. This is the reason why even those who were hesitant to take up the leadership tasks, felt confident and courageous after God prepared them for their tasks. Moses (Exodus 3:14; 4:10), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:4-7), and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6) felt that they were not qualified to take up the leadership to which God had assigned them, but after He prepared them, they acted zealously in their leadership tasks. There is also the example of Peter who once denied Jesus because of fear (Luke 22:59–61), but later became the fearless leader of the apostles as indicated in Acts. These examples highlight that the called leaders of the church need appropriate preparation, before they could be deployed in their various leadership positions. Jesus Christ had to

prepare the apostles for their leadership tasks for about three years before they were deployed. Their success in the book of Acts, undoubtedly indicates the effectiveness of their preparation for their leadership tasks. The calling of God was followed by the empowerment of the leader before he could commence the leadership of God's people. The calling and equipping of the called persons to leadership should always be effective, so that the church leadership become outstanding in executing their assigned leadership tasks.

Thus, the deputies for church growth and other related deputies and committees should identify the needs of ministers of the Word that are necessary for the fulfilment of the purpose of God for his church, through them. The ministers should be empowered through relevant means. This is foundational for the church to successfully present a turn-around and church growth. The church growth efforts, including the financial, human, and time resources, should be channelled towards meeting the needs of the ministers of the Word, until they become conversant in using their spiritual gifts. When this is accomplished, the goals and results will obviously realise as products of the purpose. It stands to reason that achieving the goals and desired results is depended on the effective use of the spiritual gifts.

Through the entire Bible there are examples of persons who came into leadership positions with neither the call, nor being empowered by God, and they were not successful in their leadership positions. These include the sons of Eli, whom their father had put in leadership of God's people (1 Samuel 8:1–3), Saul the first king of Israel, who came to the leadership position as a request of the people and who was not God's choice (1 Samuel 8:4–22). Because they were neither called, nor equipped for the leadership of Israel, they were unsuccessful. The Old Testament has many other examples of leadership of both Israel and Judah who were unsuccessful, and the results were failure of their leadership efforts, which finally led to the exiling of both Israel and Judah, as God's punishment.

This is an eye opener for the Protestant Churches and the RCSA, that they should endeavour to identify the real called persons to lead God's church, before engaging them. Engaging someone who is not called by God, is a barrier to church growth, because leadership success comes from God to those whom He calls. This same principle is emphasised by the apostle Paul, namely that the church leadership are called and given the gifts necessary to enhance church growth (Ephesians 4:11). This is a wake-up call for the Protestant Churches and the RCSA, to affirm the calling of the ministers and to appropriately empower them to articulate the will of God with his church.

5.3. Working towards real church revitalisation and church growth

The church is meant to grow as ordained by God (Cole, 2007:7–8; Genesis 12:2–3; Matthew 28:19–20). The emphasis in these verses is that people are led to Christ by God's elected people – the church. The chosen people are meant to be his instruments, through whom He works his purpose in the world. The apostle Paul highlights that Christ gave the leadership gifts that are the means to achieve church growth (Ephesians 4:11). Putting these verses together and keeping Cole's explanation in mind, one clearly sees that church growth is the will of God, because He provided everything necessary for a healthy church to develop. In the whole process of church growth, the leadership is central in enhancing membership participation for church growth to be realised. Nonetheless, church decline points at the leadership that is failing to uphold its calling to establish effective church growth. The World Protestant Churches and the RCSA should focus their efforts in empowering the leadership, to enable the effective use of their spiritual gifts. If the leadership are not able to effectively use their gifts, they cannot transform the members for service in the body of Christ.

5.3.1. *Enhancing leadership effectiveness*

For a turn-around and church growth to occur, the RCSA and the Protestant Churches globally should focus on enhancing the ministers' spiritual gifts, so that they are effectively used. God has invested the church growth potential in the ministers in the form of the five different gifts (Ephesians 4:11). In this regard, the Theological School Potchefstroom (TSP), deputies for church growth, deputies for ministers' training, and TSP curators should come up with a theological training that boosts these gifts of the ministers.

5.3.1.1. *Proposed Theological training for ministers*

Such theological education should have a curriculum that prepares the ministers to use their spiritual gifts effectively. Thus, the curriculum, mode of teaching and lecturers should all be relevant in achieving the desired outcomes (Elliston, 1988:204; Fanning, 2009:2, 210; Krejcir, 2008:1, Werner, 2011:3 & 8). In this regard, the TSP should engage lecturers who had previously served as ministers in congregations. Such lecturers have the necessary practical experience on how the spiritual gifts could be effectively developed and used. Nevertheless, appointing lecturers with the relevant academic degree, but lacking practical experience in congregations, is abortive in successfully equipping ministers for congregational functions (Elliston, 1988:210; Wourms, 2007:3). Wourms (2007:3) also argues that such lecturers lack a clear focus on transforming the ministers in such a way that they in turn can transform their congregations.

Furthermore, the identified team responsible for theological training, should engage the curriculum specialists, those who should work with them in translating the spiritual gifts into clear and measurable objectives. The measurable objectives allow the TSP lecturers to measure the extent to which the graduating ministers of the Word achieved them. This might shift the assessment from basically only an academic means, to include a practical part. The practical aspect asses the ministers' use of the spiritual gifts, which is their principal function in the congregations.

Thus, the ministers' training calls for more practical involvement of student ministers during their period of study, than what it is at present (TSP Curators, 2018:935). This allows students to get assistance and guidance in congregations, on how they could effectively use their gifts to build the church of Christ. It is important for trainee ministers to have adequate exposure of ministering in congregations, where they can learn how to do it, with the help of the experienced ministers (Mwangi & De Klerk, 2011:1). The practical part of training is important for enabling the marrying of theory and practice, making it a cohered whole. Also, students learn better through practice, as solely by theory. Research on learning established that about 80% of learning comes through practice (Reeder, 2008:44). Thus, the current limited practice in ministers' training is seemingly affecting their functioning in congregations. This leads to what Ames (2014:19) argues, namely that training divorced from the context, does not lead to desired results.

5.3.1.2. The coaching strategy for leadership effectiveness

To recap, the spiritual gifts are the means to achieve the purpose of the church. These gifts lead to the accomplishment of the goals of the church, resulting in real church growth – in quantity and quality of membership. The key importance in the entire process, is to enhance the effective use of leadership's spiritual gifts. Thus, the leadership training should instil the necessary character and skills that urge them to influence change in the membership of congregations (Wourms, 2007:7). Along the same lines, Ogne and Roehl (2008:14) argue that the training for leadership should empower them to equip the postmodern members to use their gifts in building the church. Thus, the training strategies that were effective in the 20th century, might not be effective in the present dispensation. The RCSA and the World Protestant Churches should revisit the programmes for the training of ministers, as the main congregational leaders.

The fact that all ministers from the mentioned churches are trained, but a turn-around and church growth are not happening, is an indication of loopholes in the training process. In view of this, Ogne and Roehl (2008:19) propose a personal transformational way of 'coaching that

will pull together training and experience with context and reality'. Their emphasis is on boosting the leadership gifts for effectiveness. The coaching should be done with contexts in mind. This follows that church growth is also influenced by the contexts of members, such as political, cultural, social and economic contexts (Nel & Schoeman, 2005:95). The coaching process is aimed at enabling the leadership to effectively use what they learned, and in turn, they become effective in equipping the congregational members (Ephesians 4:12). Effective use of the spiritual gifts enhances the leadership to adapt to various contexts, by providing the conditions that are conducive for influencing membership transformation (DeVries, 2016:5). If the appropriate church growth conditions are made available in each context, growth is imminent. Therefore, the Protestant Churches globally and the RCSA locally, should exert their efforts in coaching the ministers to become the real means for church growth (Ephesians 4:11).

The leadership coaching technique was effective for Moses with Joshua, David with Joab, Christ with the apostles, and Paul with Timothy and Titus (Reeder, 2008:37). Each of these coached leaders were effective in their functions. The emphasis is to coach a leader until he becomes ready to equip members of the church (Wourms, 2007:7). This is a call for the Protestant Churches and the RCSA to refrain from dwelling in the lecture hall as the chief means of equipping trainee ministers. The current training mode in seminaries has been blamed for producing ministers who are well educated, but who cannot translate their theoretical knowledge into practice (Mwangi & De Klerk, 2011:1). The problem is that the education and training do not lead to personal transformation of the leadership, to become the means through whom God wants the church to grow. The present article encourages the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA to realign the training for ministers, to give more emphasis in coaching them to be effective in the congregations, than dwelling much in the lecture halls at the seminary.

Coaching is appraised as an appropriate approach in empowering leadership for the following reasons, as given by Ogne and Roehl (2008:26–28):

i. **Coaching is relational:** It is consistent with the postmodern value for relationship and community. This relationship provides safety and trust in emerging leaders, who are seeking to relate to modern church denominations.

ii. **Coaching is incarnation:** This is a hands-on, person-to-person, face-to-face process, and it functions in the realm of shared experience beyond knowledge.

iii. **Coaching is practical:** It deals with the reality with actual and immediate issues in the life and ministry of the leader.

iv. **Coaching is holistic:** It touches on the calling, gifts, and character of a leader as well as the life of the faith community and its place in the culture.

v. **Coaching is contextual:** Every coaching conversation starts and ends in the life and ministerial context of the leader, rather than starting from a specific model, or even the coach's external point of reference.

vi. **Coaching is missional:** It enhances the coach to help the leader to understand and engage the culture through relevant activity that allows a leader to effectively use the gifts of the spirit, to benefit the church and the community.

vii. **Coaching is flexible:** It is an especially useful approach to ministry during this time of changing paradigms. It enables one to keep pace with rapid changes.

viii. **Coaching is cross-cultural:** It is centred in the context of the leader and not the coach. Thus, it empowers the leader to contextualise ministry principles to his or her own culture.

The coaching approach enables the leaders to perfectly develop and use their gifts in effective ways that benefit the local congregations. It allows the coach to identify the needs of various leaders and to provide possible means to meet them. Effective coaching requires an effective coach, thus professors in seminaries and whoever are involved in the coaching of the leaders, should be relevant to this approach. The present study appraises the channelling of resources towards leadership coaching, to enable real transformation in the leadership. The necessary transformation positions the leadership as the real means for church growth (Ephesians 4:11). When leadership can effectively use their spiritual gifts, the purpose (v. 12), goal (v. 13), and results (v. 14–16) are seemingly obvious. This is because the purpose, the goals and the desired results are depended on the means.

6. CONCLUSION

Turn-around and church growth have not been realised in the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA for a period exceeding two decades. This is despite the efforts of the RCSA to implement possible means in an endeavour to enhance church growth. This article establishes that the RCSA failed to identify the root of the problem that leads to church decline, instead deputies exerted their efforts on what could not bring the desired results. The church growth process provided by the apostle Paul, is the answer to the ongoing membership decline in the RCSA and the World Protestant Churches. The process provides everything that the mentioned churches need for a real turn-around and church growth to take place. In Ephesians 4:11–16, the apostle Paul indicates that God purposely gives the gifts to the leadership, for the purpose of spearheading church growth. However, the membership decline is pointing at leadership failure to uphold God's purpose with them. Thus, the present article identifies

relevant leadership training as the basic need in the RCSA. This follows that the leadership training enhances the effectiveness of the spiritual gifts, which are the means to church growth. Thus, the article recommends that the TSP redesigns the curriculum in a way that enables ministers to be effective in the use of the spiritual gifts. In this study, it is recommended rather to coach the leadership than to lecture them. Also, the policies of appointing lecturers should also be revisited. Only candidates with congregational experience should be considered to take up lecturing posts at the TSP. Only these can be effective coaches, because they are conversant with the congregational ministry.

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CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   INTRODUCTION

This study was aimed at investigating the decline that is ongoing in the RCSA nearly three decades now. The membership decline has been significant for such a long period of time. This might have been curtailed, if the leadership was conversant with the turn-around and church growth biblical principles. This is because the leadership is responsible for the tone and texture of any organisation, hence continuous decline is pointing at deficiencies within RCSA leadership. However, the situation in the RCSA is also reflected in other Protestant churches in the world and in South African denominations. Protestant churches in both the West and in South Africa indicate the same pattern of membership decline as shown in Table 2.1. The higher decline in membership has led to the closure of congregations that have been hard hit by membership decline (Mabry-Nauta, 2015:22; Deputies for turn-around and church growth, 2015:428). Although it is abnormal for the church to continuously lose members, they had to investigate the quality of members in the church to establish the state of the church. This follows that actual church decline cannot be conclusively established by mere numbers, without establishing their quality. Different articles of this study focused on specific aspects related to growth and decline; each article focused on answering one of Osmer's four research questions (Osmer, 2008:4).

1.1.   Chapter 2 – Article 1 answers the question: "What is going on?"

Statics drawn from Protestant churches globally, and RCSA churches locally, indicated a progression in membership decline. The present study did not rely on statistical trends to conclude whether the reduction in membership numbers was decline per se. The present study had to consider the biblical description of the church growth that utilises both numerical and spiritual growth. Nevertheless, spiritual growth is supreme for the church (Matthew 28:19-20). Members who are spiritually mature are retained in the church as the light of Christ in the community, and no doubt leading some people to Christ through their light. The continuous decline of Protestant church membership is a manifestation of the spiritual decline. Thus, the two aspects of growth and decline (quality and quantity), are inseparable, though quality determines the other. This follows that the disciples of Jesus (quality Christians) are able to influence numerical growth (Chaney & Lewis, 1977:13), while counterfeit growth can not.

1.2. Chapter 3 – Article 2 answers the question: "Why is it (Church decline) happening?"

This article attempts to give reasons for the scenario of membership decline that is affecting the Protestant churches and the RCSA. Article one identified a lack of membership quality as influencing quantity too. Developing membership quantity is the responsibilities of the congregation leadership (Ephesians 4:11-13). Nonetheless, the membership decline that has been going on in the RCSA for nearly three decades, points at leadership that fails its prime responsibilities (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 28:19-20). The study established that the leadership had no capacity to spearhead and influence membership quality. Theological training for ministers is not preparing the ministers for effectiveness in congregations. This is affecting how the minsters of the Word guide and influence elders, deacons, and the entire congregation. Thus, the way they serve in congregation is not conducive for developing Schwarz's (1996) NCD quality principles, that lead to spiritual maturing in members. Thus, the spiritually weak members cannot remain in the church, nor can they influence others to Christianity. A result is a continuing membership decline in the church that will continue until the leadership is empowered for effectiveness.

1.3. Chapter 4 – Article 3 answers the question: "What ought to be done (in the RCSA)?"

This chapter attempts to provide the model of leadership that is exhibited by the successful leadership in the Bible. These were investigated to establish the common aspects that brough about success. These were put together as principles that guide the biblical leadership, that are also relevant to church leaders today. The following are the leadership principles that runs through the Bible:

i. **Leadership comes from God and is dependent on Him.** God called and prepared the leaders for the assignment He called them for. Thus, the call of God and training for specific offices is ideal for church growth and should be appraised in all congregational leadership.

ii. **Leadership obedience to God.** The leaders that obeyed God in all things were successful. The church leadership should closely follow God's Word regarding the nature of the church. This requires leaders who spend time in prayer, praying for guidance, and for the members.

iii. **Servant leadership.** The leader must be conscious that he is called to serve God and the followers. Thus, he should meet the needs of all members timely and

adequately. This requires a good relationship between the leadership and members. The servant leader leads for the members to imitate.

iv. **Identifying membership gifts and equipping them for service in the congregation.** The leadership appraises the use of all membership gifts in the body and not to have the whole congregation loaded on their shoulders. The active service of all members brings the desired results – church health.

1.4. Chapter 5 – Article 4 answers the question: "How might we respond (to the current situation in the RCSA)?"

Article 4 drew a practical leadership strategy by utilising the biblical principles identified in article 3. This strategy provides a guideline for the RCSA leadership that enhances turn-around and church growth. The practical strategy is given diagrammatically, which is further explained to provide a clear insight of how it could be implemented. The strategy is meant to be used by the upcoming RCSA leadership and those who are in service. This two-way strategy is aimed at both preparing the leadership before they are engaged, and also rejuvenating the leaders who are presently in the congregation. Thus, the entire leadership would have the capacity to influence members towards growth.

The following are the strategic summary proposal:

i. Using the Bible and other relevant instruments to identify the called leadership for various offices.
ii. Train the identified persons for the relevant office. Thus, no leader assumes office before adequate training.
iii. Cooperation between the TSP and congregations is encouraged during the training of ministers at both the TSP and in congregations and classis. This call for the TSP to engage ministers in providing the congregational needs which the TSP meet in their training, and in mentoring the trainee ministers.
iv. Encourage congregations to be missional.

1.5. Chapter 6 – Article5 focuses on Ephesians 4:11–16

This article summarises Osmer's (2008) research questions, that were answered in articles one to four. The article interprets this passage and concluded that the passage in Ephesians 4:11–16 begins by affirming Christ's gifts to the church leadership, which are the basis for church growth. Church growth or decline is a result of the leadership function, in which the effective use of gifts leads to growth, and vice versa. Thus, for the RCSA and other Protestant Churches to realise church revitalisation and growth, the ministers of the Word should be

empowered through relevant training, to be competent in the use of the spiritual gifts. Once the ministers are effective in using their gifts as the basis for church growth, growth is imminent.

2.   CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the RSCA, like many other protestant churches in the world and South Africa, is in a state of decline. The significant length of time is a testimony that the church is failing to properly address decline and to turn around from decline to growth. It is also true that the leadership of the RCSA is having problems, because after noticing the church decline in 1994 (Deputies of turn–around and church growth, 2015:428), it has failed to effectively turn–around. If the problems were somewhere else other than the leadership, something positive might have been done by now, because the leadership can influence the direction the organisation should take. If the problem is with the leadership, all other efforts are doomed to failure.

The study therefore established, that for this trend of decline to be stopped and for church growth to realise, the leadership should firstly become what God wants the leadership of his people to be and to do. If they are what God wants them to be and do what He wants them to do, the leadership will be able to stimulate growth in the church without any shadow of a doubt. God, who is the same from eternity to eternity, called the leaders of his people before, and used them mightily if they remained obedient to Him, and were able to act faithfully to their calling. God still does the same with the called leaders today, the ones whom He calls and assigns to different leadership positions – if they only remain in his purpose.

The present situation might be pointing at the fact that one or both aspects that enhance leadership success, might be missing in the RCSA leadership. The only route to turning around and to church growth, is to go back to the biblical basics of leadership, and to embrace them as much as possible. Leadership must accept that the church belongs to God and the leadership therein are the agents whom He uses to articulate his purpose with his church. The leadership should be reminded that only the Owner of the church can lead it to growth, and hence they should depend on God in every leadership function, if real turn-around and church growth are to be realised in the RCSA.

3.   RECOMMENDATIONS

This study identified that the RCSA and other Protestant churches have experienced church decline for a prolonged period. Such decline has led to the closure of certain denominations, which were unable to constitute an independent congregation. Continuous decline for more

than twenty years points that few or no new members were converted over the years. Looking in the book of Acts, we can identify two methods of church numeral growth that occurs, namely conversion (Acts 2:14; 10:44-48) and biological growth (Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8). Failure to grow, suggests that both biological growth and conversion are not effective in the RCSA.

This study proposes that the following studies should be done:

i. Identify how the RCSA can increase the youth population and how to retain them in the church.

ii. Establish ways to reach out with the Gospel to the various nationalities in South Africa. This follows that South Africa is a fertile ground for evangelism to many immigrants from far and wide, including Muslims who are not easy to reach out in their own countries.

The study strongly recommends the implementation of the leadership curriculum, that would awaken the leadership to be effective in equipping the members for active service in the body of Christ.

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Missional leadership curriculum for the Reformed Churches in South Africa

Note to the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA).

This leadership curriculum is designed to be taught to leaders in their own languages and in their own contexts, thus professional translators should be engaged to translate this document in all the languages of the RCSA membership.

Note to the lecturers/facilitators.

This course is aimed at instilling in students the knowledge and understanding of the leadership that God expects for the leaders of the church. Spend time and walk the students through various sections of the Bible and allow students to identify the principles for the Christian leadership. Please adhere closely to ratio 1:2 between theory and practice. Lead the students to identify and embrace that:

- *They we called by God for His purpose and they can only achieve the purpose by obediently follow His directions.*
- *Successful leadership depends on God not who they are and what they can or not do hence the need to closely align with His directions.*

Rationale

Upon the completion of this leadership curriculum, students will be equipped with knowledge and meaning of being a missional leader, as agents through whom God dispenses His love His love in Christ to the church and the world. The knowledge enables students to embrace that they are called to obediently help the church to move from where it had been to what God wants it to be. The students are made to acknowledge that they can only fulfill this by being obedient to the leading of God. This knowledge compels the students to discern through the Holy Spirit and studying the Word what and how God wants them to serve in the church. This knowledge provides the lenses through which students process the material they engage with during and in their leadership functions.

Course outcomes

Having completed the leadership course, the church leaders should:

- Be able to demonstrate an understanding of church leadership that aligns to God to the fulfillment of the purpose of God with the church.
- Be able to justify that leadership is from God by God and leaders are responsible to God in their functions.
- Be able to analyse the different ecclesiological models and identify one that is consistent with God who called the leadership.
- Be able to demonstrate the contextualisation of organic leadership model in different cultures, languages, and times.
- Be able to identify and demonstrate how the entire body of Christ is involved daily.
- Draw and justify a training program for the congregation leadership.

Methods for teaching and learning.

One contact class (2 hours) and the rest of time students interact with the material taught**.**

The course is taught through the following means:

i. Lectures
ii. Role plays depicting different leadership aspects and how they affect the church.
iii. Presentations on topics given.
iv. Debates on leadership related topics
v. Group projects on several aspects of leadership that lead to church health.
vi. Practice in congregations under gifted mentors and lecturers.
vii. Assessment of students on practice by lecturers
viii. Observe the leadership in selected congregations and comment.
ix. Lead several ministries during the time of practicing, to implement what was learnt.
   a. Evaluate how they help ministries to move from where they have been to where they envisaged.

Duration of the course: Minimum of one and half years.

The minimum duration is for those who demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of the Christian leadership principles. Those who take longer time graduate only after demonstrating the knowledge and understanding of the Christian leadership principles.

Teaching programme per year.

Semester 1	Length	Semester 2	length
Theory at college or any training venue	three Months	Theory at college or any training venue	Three Months
Practice in Congregations	Six months	Practice in Congregations	Six months

Semester 3	Length
Theory at college or any training venue	three Months
Practice in Congregations	Six months

Evaluation of students

    i.   Continuous assessment–written, oral and practical assignments.
    ii.   Summative assessment–written, oral and practical examinations.
    iii.   NB Two year follow evaluation of graduates to establish whether the program is producing desired fruits or not.

Material to be covered.

NB The idea is deal with the material extensively that each student demonstrates understand of the material. If need be repeat problem topics

***Make the lectures to be as interactive as possible lecture, thus the classes must be small that each student has maximum participation.

Leadership

1. Objectives

<u>At the end of the section students will be able to:</u>

1. Students should be able to analyse the different definitions of leadership to come up with the one that stood out for the Christian leadership.

2. Demonstrate how the church fits in the mission of God.

3. Justify that the church leadership is part of God's plan with the church.

Content

A. Definitions

- Leadership in general
- Christian/church leadership
- Missional leadership

***Compare and contrast the three definitions.

B. The mission of God and the calling of the church.

- Leadership responsibilities in the calling of the church in the mission of God.
- Foundation/source of leadership as a resource for leadership efforts.
- The purpose of Christian leaders

Assessment

These are suggestions; hence lecturers can use some or all of these activities and can add their own as they see it fit.

- Students use a flow chart to explain to explain the mission of God and how the leadership and the church are involved.

- Explain how Christian leaders of the church come into being and state their functions towards God and the people. Give possible causes of leadership failure in today's church and suggest possible solutions.

2. leadership in the Bible

Objectives

At the end of the section students will be able to:

1. Outline the leadership in Old and New Testaments–comparing them.

2. Analyse the successful and unsuccessful leaders in the Bible.

3. Draw the qualities of a Christian leader that are drawn from Jesus.

4. Describe the focus and functions of a missional leadership

Content

- The imaging of Christian leadership.
- Essential qualities of a Christian leader.
    - Prayerful life
    - Willing to learn
    - Prioritising calling
    - Being sacrificial
    - Be exemplary to the church and community
- Different leadership models: classical, Transitional, visionary and organic.
- Successful ad unsuccessful leadership

Assessment

- Students draw Christians leadership principles from the Bible.
- Give advantages and disadvantages of various leadership models.
- Define reasons for leadership failure in the Bible, giving Scripture references.
- Draw lessons from both successful and unsuccessful leaders from the Bible.

3. The church

Objectives

At the end of the section students will be able to:

1. Identify the most appealing definition of church and justify it.

2. Draw a line among connecting the church, leadership and community.

3. Distinguish between institutional and organic church.

Content

- Definition of Church
- The place of the church in the purpose of God
- Place of church in the community.
- Models of ecclesiology
  - Advantages and disadvantages of each in the *misso Dei*
- Origin and function of the organic church.
- The leadership functions to enhance priesthood of believers.

Assessment

i. With reference to Acts and other Scripture outline the purpose of the church.
ii. Distinguish between apostolic and present church leadership and churches.
iii. Describe the models that are used in their congregation and suggest ways to improve if it is not missional leadership.

4. Moving the people of God to His direction.

Objectives

At the end of the section students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate how the leadership can move the people in the direction of God.
2. Distinguish distinctive roles of the persons of the Godhead in the mission Dei.
3. Describe the utilization of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in enhancing church growth.

Content

- The Triune God and the mission Dei
  a. Various functions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- Lessons drawn from the Triune God about the Christian leadership and the church.
  b. Unity and diversity in the church according to gifts
  c. Cooperation in everything the church does
  d. Giving each other advocacy in their functions

- Cultivating missional leadership for a missional church
- Spiritual gifts and participation of the church

Assessment

i. Students demonstrate various ways that can be implemented to transform the church to be all that God wants.

ii. Describe the functions of the Godhead in the mission Dei and suggest lessons for the church.

iii. Illustrate the cooperation ideal for church health.

iv. Demonstrate how the church support each other in a health way, both the leadership and the other believers.

v. Explain various ways that ideal for enhancing missional leadership for the missional church.

vi. Describe the identification of spiritual gifts from members and how they can be effective in church health.

5. Stablishing and keeping a missional church.

Objectives

At the end of the section students will be able to:

1. Identify characteristics of a missional church and how to cultivate them.
2. Establishing the direction, the congregation goes from where it has been to where it should be.
3. Drawing a plan for keeping a missional church.
4. Be an expression of God in the communities.

Content

- Characteristics of a missional church.
  - Components
  - Focus
- Map how any church can be missional.
- Similarities between messenger and message.
  - Word and deeds to mirror each other.
    - Witnessing with own life more

Assessment

    i.   Distinguishing a missional church

    ii.   Outline how missional a church is established and maintained.

    iii.   Establishing the importance of on living the Word

    iv.   Carry a project on sustaining a missional church.

6. Equipped to equip

Objectives

<u>At the end of the section students will be able to:</u>

1. Demonstrate the knowledge to empower other leaders.
2. Contextualise the training programmes to contexts and times.
3. Describe how to draw a training programme for various leadership.
4. Train congregation leadership during practice.

Content

- Empowering leadership to empower others.
- Variables to consider for training leaders.
  - Context–culture, language, level of education etc
  - Times/dispensations
- Outlining training programs.
- Practicing training of leadership

Assessment:

    i.   Give clear description of effective training leadership.

    ii.   Motivate the importance of context and time in training the leadership.

    iii.   Draw a training program for different congregation leadership.

    iv.   Choose a training programme and implement it in congregation.

Follow up evaluation for the leadership in their congregations or ministries.

The lecturers and facilitators should carry out a two-year evaluation on the leadership to identify how they are influencing the church to move towards God's direction. A report should be compiled, and an intervention done if need be.

DECLARATIONS OF LANGUAGE EDITING

WELLINGTON
7655
02 October 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I hereby confirm that the research article *A comparative investigation of church decline in the West and in the Reformed Churches in South Africa: Measuring more than numbers* by W Chipenyu was edited and groomed to the best of my ability. The processing included recommendations to improve the language and logical structure, guide the line of argument as well as to enhance the presentation. I am satisfied that, provided my changes to the text and my recommendations are implemented, the language would be of a standard fit for publication.

Rev Claude Vosloo
Language and knowledge practitioner and consultant

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Don't think outside the box, reinvent the box

Posbus 20217
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25 November 2020

Aan wie dit mag gaan

Hiermee bevestig ek dat ek die volgende artikels deur Wilbert Chipenyu taalversorg het:

1. Hoofstuk 2*:* **Leadership problems in the World Protestant Churches and the Reformed Churches in South Africa are contributing to church decline**
2. Hoofstuk 3*:* **Biblical teaching on leadership and church growth**
3. Hoofstuk 4*:* **Biblical and practical guidelines and strategies for a real revitalisation and healthy church growth within the Reformed Churches in South Africa**
4. Hoofstuk 5: **Leadership functions and church decline in the Reformed Churches in South Africa, considering Ephesians 4:11–16**
5. **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Ek het dit gedoen in ooreenstemming met die stylvereistes wat AOSIS aan die outeurs stel. Die outeur is vriendelik versoek om veranderings wat ek aan sy artikels gemaak het, te oorweeg en om aan die vrae en versoeke wat ek aan hom gerig het, aandag te gee waarna hy die taalversorgde artikels sou kon inhandig.

Vriendelike groete

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