

**From stagnation to revitalization: A study of select turnaround
churches in the urban context of Nairobi, Kenya**

by

PO ATOYEBI

**From stagnation to revitalization: A study of select turnaround churches in the
urban context of Nairobi, Kenya**

by

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**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D.) in Missiology at the
Faculty of Theology of the North-West University**

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Potchefstroom Campus

2010

DECLARATION

I declare that this PhD thesis:

From stagnation to revitalization: A study of select turnaround churches in the urban context of Nairobi, Kenya

is my own work and has not been submitted by me at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The city of Nairobi, Kenya, is plagued by the aching problem of multitudes of stagnant churches cramping the metropolis amidst a few mega churches. This research aims to identify the factors of revitalization in selected churches that have succeeded in bringing about a turnaround in this urban context and to propose a model feasible for revitalizing stagnant churches in the city. The researcher wants to go beyond acknowledging the urban church growth problem of stagnation by seeking to understand the perceptions of numerical growth amongst church leaders and the members of six selected churches that have undergone a turnaround in Nairobi. These churches are: African Inland Church; All Nations Gospel Church; Deliverance Church; Gospel Revival Centre Church; Pentecostal Assemblies of God; and Uthiru Pentecostal Church.

Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods, questionnaires were administered to 600 randomly selected church members from six selected churches, while face-to-face interviews were conducted with 100 pastors and church leaders. The analysis of both research instruments led to the discovery of perceptions of what constitutes the factors of stagnation and revitalization at the different stages of each congregation. In order to develop a proposed model of revitalization for the metropolis, eight critical elements of revitalization common to all the churches were identified and analysed as normative turnaround elements. Two groups of supplementary factors of revitalization were noted in addition: common factors that address converts' entry points and membership expectations, and non-common issues that may not be applicable universally, but nevertheless play significant roles in church growth, depending on the context and strategy that a local congregation opts for.

The research contributes to the understanding of urban mission work and church growth within the context of a growing African metropolis like Nairobi. A few urban mega churches colour the perception of missiologists and church historians on the plight of sprawling stagnant congregations on the African continent. The implication that this holds for urban *missio Dei* is the wholesale marketing and misapplication of the strategies used by big churches to small congregations, leading to an increased decline in membership and eventual retardation of the salvation of the city. Furthermore, the city church perceives spiritual growth to be subsumed in the pursuit of numerical growth, and that God is where

the 'church' is, leading to a gulf between growth and grace in the urban mission work of Nairobi.

Churches stagnate not because of a lack of external inducement to growth (the existence of which is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to church growth), but the absence of internal growth dynamics. This originates with a weak and non-credible pastor that has lost vision and passion for sacrificial ministry to a congregation that is adrift in the church boat of socio-political wrangling and misplaced kingdom priorities. The church begins to grow when it starts to act out its calling as salt and light in the world. Again, churches grow inside out and the turnaround experience is a product of strong pastoral leadership that is surrounded by a balanced mix of well mobilized and enabled members serving in all units of church ministries.

When set in motion, such a revitalization process will propel the urban church to both quantitative and qualitative growth that would prepare it in readiness for its place in the New Jerusalem where "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" will gather with the shout of the final hallelujah "to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" that "was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise" (Rev. 5:12, 13).

OPSOMMING

Die stad van Nairobi, Kenya, word belas met die brandende kwessie van hordes stagnante kerke wat die metropool vul tussen 'n paar megakerke. Hierdie navorsing poog om die faktore van herlewing te identifiseer by geselekteerde kerke wat daarin geslaag het om 'n verandering te ondergaan binne hierdie stadskonteks, en om 'n model daar te stel vir die herlewing van stagnante kerke in die stad. Die navorser gaan verder as 'n erkenning van hierdie problem deur te poog om die persepsies van getallegroei onder kerkleiers en die lede van ses geselekteerde kerke wat groei toon, te verstaan. Hierdie kerke sluit in: African Inland Church; All Nations Gospel Church; Deliverance Church; Gospel Revival Centre Church; Pentecostal Assemblies of God; en Uthiru Pentecostal Church.

'n Mengsel van kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes is gebruik. Vraelyste is uitgegee aan 600 ewekansig geselekteerde kerklede van ses kerke, en onderhoude is gevoer met 100 woordbedienaars en kerkleiers. Die analise van beide navorsingsinstrumente het gelei tot 'n ontdekking van persepsies van die faktore van stagnasie en herlewing op verskillende stadiums van elke gemeente se groei. Om 'n voorgestelde model vir herlewing vir die metropool te ontwikkel, is agt kritiese elemente van herlewing geïdentifiseer wat algemeen tot al die kerke is en dit is geanaliseer as normatiewe herlewingselemente. Twee groepe bykomende faktore van herlewing is verder geïdentifiseer, naamlik algemene faktore wat persone se binnekoms en verwagting affekteer, en nie-algemene faktore wat nie universeel toepasbaar is nie, maar nogtans 'n groot rol speel in kerkgroei, afhangend van die konteks en strategie wat 'n plaaslike kerk volg.

Die navorsing dra by tot 'n begrip van stedelike sending en kerkgroei binne die konteks van 'n groeiende Afrika metropool soos Nairobi. 'n Paar stedelike megakerke kleur die persepsie van sendelinge en kerkhistorici oor die nood van stagnante gemeentes op die kontinent van Afrika. Die implikasie wat dit inhou vir stedelike *missio Dei* is die oorhoofse bemerking en wantoepassing van die strategieë wat groot kerke gebruik aan klein gemeentes, en dit lei tot verdere vermindering in lidmaattalle en uiteindelijke vertraging van die redding van die stad. Die stadskerke sien geestelike groei as vervat

binne die gejaag na getallegroei, en dat God is waar die ‘kerk’ is. Dit lei tot ‘n breuk tussen groei en genade in die sendingwerk in Nairobi.

Kerke stagneer nie vanweë ‘n gebrek aan eksterne stimulasie tot groei nie (wat in ieder geval nie ‘n noodsaak of ‘n voldoende voorwaarde vir kerkgroei is nie), maar vanweë die gebrek aan interne groeidinamika. Dit kom van ‘n swak en ongeloofwaardige kerkleier wat sy visie en passie vir opofferende bediening verloor het aan ‘n gemeente wat dryf in die kerkbootjie van sosio-politiese gestoei en misplaasde koninkryksprioriteite. Die kerk begin groei wanneer dit begin om die roeping as sout en lig van die wêreld uit te voer. Kerke groei van binne na buite en ‘n ommekeer is die gevolg van sterk pastorale leierskap omring deur ‘n gebalanseerde mengsel van goed gemobiliseerde lede wat in al die eenhede van die bediening meedoen.

Wanneer so ‘n herlewingsproses in beweging kom, stuur dit die stedelike kerk na beide kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe groei wat dit voorberei op ‘n plek binne die Nuwe Jerusalem waar “alle nasies, alle siele, alle mense en tonge” byeen sal kom in die uitroep van die finale halleluja “tot hom wat sit op die troon en tot die Lam” wat “geslag is om die mag en die rykdom en die krag en die glorie en die prys te ontvang” (Open 5:12, 13).

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This thesis is the product of an enduring and deep concern in my heart for the growth of the church in those cities of Africa where it experiences less than the phenomenal growth that I have witnessed elsewhere and have been involved with across the continent since the mid 1980s. While Nairobi city could boast of some urban-relevant congregations, they are too few to prevent an irregular heartbeat over the unchurched, strategic, continental hub. My faith and prayer is that God uses this work to advance the kingdom of Christ in Nairobi and in other cities of Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 INTRODUCTION, OUTLINE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section A gives the outline and introduction to the study. Section B discusses the research design used for the study and the methodology applied in obtaining the data that are analysed in chapters' four to six of the research.

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF STUDY

Key words: [Stagnant, Revitalize, Turnaround, Church, Nairobi, Growth, Urban]

Sleutelwoorde: [Stagneer, Hernuwe, Omkeer, Kerk, Nairobi, Groei, Stad]

1.1 BACKGROUND

Ever since the turn of the 21st century, church historians and missiologists are preoccupied with the recent phenomenon of Christianity having shifted to the southern hemisphere. Like in Asia and Latin America, there is great excitement that Christianity has suddenly become Africa's 'majority faith' (Bonk, 2009; Jenkins, 2002; 2006; Gifford, 2004; Aylward and Njiru, 2001). Showing an increase from a meagre 8 million Christians in 1990 to 351 million by 2000 (a spectacular rise from 10% to 48.4% of the population of the continent, and of 60% of sub-Saharan Africa), Africa is indeed in a revival (Johnstone and Mandryk, 2001:21).

Closely related to the above-mentioned phenomenon are issues of urbanization, urban missions, and urban ministry that have occupied the minds and discussions of church historians and missiologists in this era (Greenway and Mashau, 2007:1-10). Urban explosion is a worldwide phenomenon, but there is consensus among church historians and missiologists that countries in the southern hemisphere have the most rapid rate of

urbanization (Conn et al. 2002:43). This was confirmed by the United Nations¹. As for the African continent specifically, it is asserted that there is a clear urban explosion in Africa (Verster, 2000:16); hence Greenway and Mashau (2007:8) noted among others that urbanization has become a new frontier for the church to cross.

Whilst volumes of books and articles have been written on urbanization and the tremendous growth of Christianity in world cities, there is a major omission with regard to churches cramping in the same areas. Callahan-Howell et al (1998:111) rightly claim that the multiple books and seminars available mostly trumpet the case of the large churches. Only a few provide help for the small churches, though they seem to be getting smaller and pose a missiological threat to the accomplishment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

This research presupposes, in the first place, that the trend of seeing massive growth in some churches whilst others are cramped in the same locality is a worldwide phenomenon. The reality of this paradox cuts across nations and the cities of the world. In describing the Ghanaian context, Gifford (2004:38) alludes to the Pentecostal churches recording growth rates of 30-80%, while the mainline churches are plagued with stagnation in membership.

Gwag and Hendriks (2001:55-59) note the “decline crisis” in the Korean Protestant Church (KPC) as opposed to the “steady growth in membership” of the Catholic Church within the same national and cultural context. Even within the same “protestant denominational families”, the Pentecostals grew from 0.3% in 1960 to 9.0% in 1984, while in the same period, the Methodist church declined from 27.5% to 11.9%.

Churches in Europe and America do not present a different picture. The 2007 Outreach Magazine Report gave the statistics of the 101 Fastest Growing US churches.² While the Church at Brook Hills and Church of the Highlands recorded 61% and 52% growth

¹ UNFPA, “State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth, 2007,”

² Available at 2007 Outreach Magazine Report. Internet source assessed May 21, 2009.

respectively, the African Methodist Episcopal churches in the same city of Birmingham either declined or were stagnant³.

The second presupposition is that if the above-mentioned omission of cramping churches persists, it could retard the pace of salvation of the world cities, African cities included. It could equally compound the presently rising rate of nominalism among the 5 million inhabitants of Nairobi city. They are 80% Christian, but church attendance declined from an estimated 27% of the population in 1985 to a meagre 12% in 2001 (Niemeyer, 1990:48; Johnstone and Mandryk, 2001:381).

As part of a solution to these crises, this research focuses on six mainline and indigenous churches in Nairobi city that underwent a turnaround within the last two decades, i.e. revived from stagnation and was numerically “brought back to a glorious state of health” (Barna, 1993:14). These are in alphabetical order: African Inland Church (AIC); All Nations Gospel Church (ANGC); Deliverance Church (DC); Gospel Revival Centre Church (GRCC); Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG); and Uthiru Pentecostal Church (UPC). The research regards a church as having had a turnaround if it has surged from a period of stagnation to a 200% numerical church growth per decade, an “excellent” church growth as rated on the rating scale provided by Waymire and Wagner (1980:15) for measuring church growth.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Nairobi became the capital of Kenya in 1907 and was proclaimed a city in 1950 (K’Akumu and Olima, 2007:91). It is the nucleus of the nation’s socio-economic and political development. In terms of population, Nairobi was initially a railway depot designed for white settlers and a few native “bachelor” immigrants providing unskilled labour. However, by independence in 1963, the population of the city had risen to 300,000. It reached 400,000 by 1966, and crossed the one million mark to 1,162,189 by 1985 (Niemeyer, 1990: 47).

³ Internet source. The Birmingham News Living. Religion and Responsibility by Greg Garrison, Oct.4, 2008. Assessed 22 May 2009.

A year later, in 1986, Nairobi was growing at an annual rate of approximately 6% and contained 51% of the Kenyan urban population (Niemeyer, 1990:45). With a 1986 population of 1,886,164, the city became one of the 240 largest cities in the world and one of Africa's twenty-eight urban centres with over a million in population (Niemeyer, 1990:45). Presently, Nairobi is a metropolitan centre of about 5 million inhabitants, a world-class city by Bakke's definition (Bakke, 1984:30-34), with the distinctive features of African urbanization.

One distinctive feature of Nairobi's urbanization is the growth of slums or informal settlements. This is the outcome of the pre-independence colonial policy that restricted the native dwellers to a few poor immigrants from the hinterland. Many of these were forced by economic circumstance to live in the peripheral shanty towns. By 1998, WHO reported that the inhabitants of the slums constituted 60% of Nairobi's population, though these slums occupied only 5% residential land (Mugisha et al. 2003:232).

Today these slums are centres of worsening poverty, ethnic prejudice, violent crime and prostitution. This led to the city being depicted by the International Civil Service Commission as "one of the world's most crime-ridden capital cities" (Pokhariyal and Muthuri, 2003:57). The assessment posed a missiological challenge to the growth of Christianity in Nairobi and to the traditional Western ways of doing mission in African cities where the responsibilities of the Two-Third World churches are neglected (Bakke et al, 1987:182).

Christian missionary activities in Nairobi began with the arrival of the Gospel Missionary Society (1897), the Church of Scotland Mission (1898), the Holy Ghost Mission (1890), the Church Missionary Society and the Africa Inland Mission in 1901 (Niemeyer, 1990:46). In 1950, Nairobi, as the new capital city of Kenya, was home to the African organised East African Revival Convention with crowds as large as 15,000 (Niemeyer, 1990:47). The primary goal of the church then was to communicate the thoughts and values of the Gospel to non-Christians (cf. Jongeneel, 1995:41). The revival introduced the type of large church that has the uniqueness of being fitted for evangelistic outreaches in urban centres (cf. Wagner, 1989:132).

By 1963, church attendance on Sundays had grown to about 30% of the city inhabitants. This, however, declined to 9.5% by 1966 before surging again to 27% of the estimated population of the city in 1985. This represented an attendance of 310,400 in 784 churches (Niemeyer 1990:47, 48). This growth was widespread in all five traditions of the church in Nairobi: Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Indigenous, and Orthodox. The overall average annual church growth rate in the year was at an all-high 6.7% (Niemeyer, 1990:49).

This was when it seemed that the church in Nairobi was ready to fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) of going to the “panta ta ethne” (all nations) in the city to “make disciples”, “baptizing” and “teaching” “all of humankind” (cf. Bosch, 1992:64).

However, from this point onwards there has been a general decline in membership in all the church traditions. Worst hit were the Protestant churches. Some of them had less than fifty members in the city (Niemeyer, 1990:48). A few of these have surged of late, and this research consequently investigates the growth factors of six (6) such churches. However, despite the impact of those that had turned around, church attendance was a meagre 12% of the city’s 2.3 million inhabitants in 2000 (Johnstone and Mandryk, 2001:381). This is despite the claim of Nairobi being 80% Christian and the paradox of the co-existence of the phenomenally growing churches with the cramping congregations.

The reality of the paradox that exists between growing churches and stagnant ones as noted in the world cities of the nations of South Korea, the United Kingdom and United States of America also occur in African cities like Nairobi in Kenya. The All Nations Gospel Church (ANGC), according to the Senior Pastor, experienced a rapid expansion from its modest number of 80 congregants in 1994 to a membership of over 3000 by 2009. Similarly, the Senior Pastor of the Gospel Revival Centre Church (GRCC) reported the growth of his church from a cell membership of ten in 1992 to 3000 adult members by 2009, and it has continued growing since.

However, the same was not true for the Kenya Assembly of God, Karen branch, where the researcher was a worshipper in 2007. The congregation gradually declined until it went into extinction in 2008. The researcher equally observed, as a regular mission preacher in the 20-year old Calvary Worship Centre, the struggles of the church against its stagnation

at a total of 150 members, though existing in the vicinity of other phenomenally growing churches.

1.2.1 Main Research Question

This research seeks to go beyond just affirming the existence of the above-mentioned paradox by investigating the growth factors of six (6) stagnant churches that experienced a turnaround, i.e. African Inland Church (AIC); All Nations Gospel Church (ANGC); Deliverance Church (DC); Gospel Revival Centre Church (GRCC); Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG); and Uthiru Pentecostal Church (UPC). The main research question is therefore: What are the perceived growth factors in the turnaround churches in Nairobi, and what possible revitalization model is feasible to revitalize a stagnant church in the city?

Individual problems that inevitably emanate from the main research question are:

1. What light does the Scripture shed concerning the phenomenon of urbanization, urban church planting, church growth and revitalization?
2. What is the origin of the select six (6) churches and their relationship to the urban mission work in Nairobi city?
3. What are the perceptions of the church leadership and members of the six (6) churches on church stagnation in Nairobi city?
4. What are the perceptions of the church leadership and members of the six (6) churches on church revitalization in Nairobi city?
5. What are the growth factors that can revitalize a stagnant church in Nairobi city, and what would a possible model look like?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to uncover the perceived growth factors in the six select turnaround churches and to propose a feasible model to revitalize a stagnant church in Nairobi city.

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- Establish the evidence of Scripture on urbanization, urban church planting, church growth and revitalization.
- Study and outline the origins of the select churches and their relationship to urban mission work in the context of Nairobi, Kenya.
- Study and evaluate members' and church leaders' opinion of the factors of church stagnation in Nairobi city.
- Study and evaluate members' and church leaders' opinion of the factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city.
- Identify common critical growth factors in the turnaround churches and propose a feasible growth model to revitalize a stagnant church in Nairobi city.

1.4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of the research is that a feasible revitalization model that can ensure a turnaround in the stagnant churches in the Nairobi urban setting is possible.

1.5 METHODS USED IN THIS RESEARCH

As outlined in Section B below under Research Design, Methods and Procedure, this study makes use of the qualitative case study research method of investigation. The study is conducted within the Evangelical Tradition (Couch, Mal., 2003). The following methods were used to arrive at the specific objectives of the research listed above:

- An exegesis of relevant Bible passages was done according to the grammatical-historical method (De Klerk & Van Rensburg, 2005) in order to establish the evidence of Scripture on urbanization, urban church planting, church growth and revitalization, together with an analysis and synthesis of relevant literature study.

- Available literature was analysed and synthesized in order to study and outline the origins of the select churches and their relationship to urban mission work in the context of Nairobi, Kenya. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with church leaders, and the available documentation in the archives of the six churches was reviewed.
- Semi-structured interviews (face-to-face) were conducted and self-administered questionnaires distributed regarding the views of the leadership and followers of each church on factors of stagnation in order to study and evaluate opinions of the factors of church stagnation in Nairobi city (Gillham, 2000:11).
- To identify common critical growth factors in the turnaround churches and to propose a possible growth model that is feasible to revitalize a stagnant church in Nairobi city, empirical findings from interviews conducted and questionnaires served were evaluated and conclusions drawn from them.

Two main factors account for the selection of the six churches under study. One is for the purpose of sampling. Two, the researcher considered them to be truly representative of the evangelical Christian traditions within the church in Nairobi (Johnstone and Mandryk, 2001:2, 3, 380-381).

The research method was essentially qualitative, though quantitative data was gathered from respondents. The research covered an approximate twenty-two-year period, 1988-2009. This is the period when the stagnation and revitalization of the selected churches manifested clearly. It also coincided with the period when the foundation for study of the growth variables and patterns of Christianity in Nairobi city had just been laid (Niemeyer, 1990:54). The researcher was personally involved in the mission work of some of the churches in Nairobi during this time.

Since the story of the turnaround churches will become the revitalization model to bring new life to the stagnant churches, the researcher ensured that findings from the interviews and questionnaires were the perceptions of the selected churches, not what he wished or thought. In order to avoid the researcher's biases, the interviewees were required to comment on the researcher's findings and his evaluation and interpretation of the findings.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this research, the following terms are used as defined below:

1. **Urban Church.** This refers to a group of believers in Christ who regularly worship together in a city.
2. **Regular Members.** These are church members who worship almost every Sunday in a specific congregation and whose allegiance to the church is recognized by the Pastor.
3. **Numerical Growth.** This defines the increase of membership of a local church in terms of numbers.
4. **African Initiated Churches or African Indigenous Churches (AICs).** These are churches started by Africans themselves as opposed to those that split off from Western-oriented churches.
5. **Mission Churches.** These are congregations whose origins had close ties with Western mission.
6. **Cell Groups/House Fellowships/House Churches/Home Caring Fellowships.** These are synonymous names that refer to local church members meeting weekly at homes in order to promote evangelism, fellowship and care of one another within the same neighbourhood. They are often led and supervised by under-shepherds.
7. **Decadal Growth.** This refers to church growth per decade, measured from 25% (marginal growth) to 500% (incredible growth) on the rating scale of “graphs of growth” provided per Waymire and Wagner (1980:15).

1.7 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

1. Introduction, outline of study and research methodology

2. Biblical perspective on urbanization and urban mission, church planting, church growth, and revitalization
3. Urban missions context in Nairobi, Kenya
4. Factors of church stagnation in Nairobi city: Case findings, analysis and interpretation
5. Factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city: Case findings, analysis and interpretation
6. Proposed model and conclusions: From stagnation to revitalization

1.8 CORRELATION TABLE

PROBLEM STATEMENT	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	METHODOLOGY
What light does the Scripture shed on the phenomenon of urbanization, urban church planting, church growth and revitalization?	Establish the evidence of Scripture on urbanization, urban church planting, church growth and revitalization.	A review of applicable parts of Scripture within the Evangelical tradition and literature study.
What is the origin of the selected six (6) churches and their relationship to urban mission work in Nairobi city?	Study and outline the origins of the select churches and their relationship to urban mission work in Nairobi city.	An analysis and synthesis of literature study, interview and review of available documentation on areas of interest.
What are the perceptions of the church leadership and members of the six (6) churches on church stagnation in Nairobi city?	Study and evaluate members and church leaders' opinions on the factors of church stagnation in Nairobi city.	Use of interview & questionnaires on church leaders, workers & members on factors of stagnation.
What are the perceptions of the church leadership and members of the six (6) churches regarding	Study and evaluate members and church leaders' opinions on the factors of church revitalization in	Use of interviews & questionnaires on church leaders, workers

church revitalization in Nairobi city?	Nairobi city.	and members on factors of revitalization.
What are the growth factors that can revitalize a stagnant church in Nairobi city, and how does this translate into a model?	Identify common critical growth factors in the turnaround churches and propose a possible growth model, feasible to revitalize a stagnant church in Nairobi city.	Evaluation & conclusions from empirical findings from interviews conducted & questionnaires administered.

SECTION B: RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS AND PROCEDURE

1.9 Introduction

When conducting research, it is vital to keep in mind the purpose of the research (Patton 2002:214). Once this is settled, it becomes mandatory for the researcher to decide on the most appropriate design to connect the research questions to the data from the field. This is the essence of a research design. Its main components include strategy, conceptual framework, who or what will be studied, the tools and the procedures both for collecting and analyzing the empirical materials (Punch 2006:48).

1.9.1 Methodology

The study is a qualitative research study that used the case studies approach as the mode of inquiry. However, the quantitative data analysis of church growth per decade, using the periods of 1988 to 1999, and 2000-2009, necessitated the use of structured interviews for the collection of data. This enabled the researcher to generalize “from a sample to a population” (Creswell, 2003, 14). The researcher thus used the “*concurrent* procedures” strategy of the mixed method approach by collecting and converging both quantitative and qualitative “forms of data at the same time” and then integrating the information to analyse the data, interpret the overall results and report the findings (Creswell. 2003, 16).

According to Creswell, data from this kind of approach gives the “best” understanding of a research problem that investigates a phenomenon like church revitalization using quantifiable variables like numerical church growth (Creswell. 2003, 21).

1.9.2 Theoretical Framework for qualitative research

Qualitative research embodies different research strategies, depending on the modes of data collection employed. Field research, in-depth interviews, ethnographic research, participant observation, and ethno-methodology are some of the qualitative designs where closeness to data and field experience are emphasised as means of better understanding and insight into social behaviour (Chadwick, et al 1984:206). The interaction of the researcher with the social world of the researched helped him to understand the emic perspectives or “native’s point of view” on the object of study, and assisted in the collection of firsthand data rather than constructing rigid structures that put the empirical social world in an artificial box of “highly quantified techniques” (Chadwick, et al 1984:206). By dealing with observable behaviour in a natural setting, depth of understanding is not only enhanced, but flexibility of plans becomes possible as the researcher is confronted by variables not planned for before field work. Such an approach helps to define social realities away from the experience of the researcher by focusing intimately and entirely on the researched (Chadwick, et al 1984:211-212). It equally helps to capture emotional feelings, inward unobservable experiences, and subjective motives for actions or projects undertaken, especially in an institution like a church where pastors often attribute their actions to subjective constructs of ‘divine leading’ rather than objectively lived realities.

The subjective elements of qualitative research sometimes cause the risk of generalizing the research data of emic perspectives that are borne out of etic views or interpretations. Some other likely problems that have been raised in literature includes but are not limited to issues of violation of human and institutional rights, confusing a part of the social reality for the whole and over-reliance on a single observer, which tends to compromise reliability (Chadwick, et al 1984:212-215).

Qualitative researchers find a way out of this limitation with the use of structured interviews and questionnaires that capture the perceptions of the researched. They supplement their sense of observation with such mechanical devices as audio tape recorders, video tape recorders or movie cameras (Chadwick, et al 1984:206). They also pay great attention to the sequence of conducting authentic qualitative research.

According to Kirk and Miller (1986:59), research activities using the qualitative research approach is performed in a four-way sequence that are always present and completed in sequential order with each phase depending on the other in only one sequence or way. The four phases are Invention (research design), Discovery (data collection), Interpretation (analysis), and Explanation (documentation). The phases are undergirded by the all-important duty of field work where the designed research data has to be collected before it is analysed and documented.

On the premise of this theoretical framework, the researcher designed both closed-ended quantitative data collection tools and open-ended qualitative data collection tools before entering the field. Questionnaires were developed for church members (Appendix 1). There were interview guides for pastors and church elders (Appendix 2). The questionnaires were administered to 600 church members randomly selected to cover both sexes and varied age groups.

Using the interview guides, the researcher interviewed the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor, the Eldership Board members, a selected group and departmental leaders in each of the six churches in the courtyard of each church. In addition, to further verify the findings from the members and the leaders, the researcher preached two Sunday worship services in each of four of the churches in order to observe the congregation. He addressed the congregation in a fifth and met for roundtable talks with the associate pastors and a few elders of the sixth congregation. Furthermore, the researcher inspected some church projects and growth plans of some of the churches that participated in the research.

It was the data gathered from all the above-mentioned steps that the researcher analysed under Case Findings, Analysis and Interpretations in chapters four and five. This formed the foundation for the reported research conclusions in chapter six.. This approach agrees with the view expressed by Leedy (1989, 90) that the data for a case study qualitative

research must be gathered directly from the target group in their “natural environment”. It also concurs with the view of Gall, et al (1996, 551-556) on the need for a researcher to decide his chosen role in the research once he decides on the research problem and has selected the case on which his research will be based. The researcher paid keen attention to all of these groundwork procedures relevant for collecting data in a mixed-method case study research.

The researcher holds the view that the use of openly administered questionnaires for church members in the church services, as well as semi-structured questionnaires and a voice recorder in the interviews with pastors and members of the elders’ board of the six churches researched, sufficiently guaranteed the reliability of the data collected for the research within the framework of qualitative research described in this chapter.

1.9.3 Role of the researcher and gaining entry to the setting

Unlike the natural scientist that is detached from his/her objects of research, the behavioural scientist is part and parcel of what he/she studies. This helps in understanding the research circumstances as the researcher sees himself in the situation of the researched and becomes absorbed in it (Huysamen 1994:166, 167). On accessing entry into a research setting, Jorgensen (1989:45-47) advises that it is a phenomenon that is as human as the problem being studied. Some settings are visible and open with the information available in the market place and negotiations of access being very minimal. Others are invisible to outsiders and research undertakings require gaining the confidence of insiders. Some settings are closed and research demands a covert approach. Each of the churches in this research has a relatively overt access, though permission from Senior Pastors in authority was a *sine qua non* for conducting the research.

In this research the researcher identified from the very beginning with the African cultural value of respect to ‘entry’ into another person’s sphere of authority, the role of the ‘ancestors’ (elders) in obtaining favour, and the encroaching influence of technology on an effective research project. All these account for the steps taken, which are recorded below.

The promoter of the researcher wrote an introductory letter to all the pastors of the six select churches on behalf of the North West University, stating the aim of the research and asking for permission for the researcher to conduct the research in their churches (Appendix 4). The Head of the Department of Mission of NEGST/AIU, Nairobi, where the researcher did his Master's degree in Mission and serves as Teaching Assistant, was contacted, and he wrote another letter appealing for the cooperation of the churches concerned in order to appeal to context. Armed with the two letters and the research proposal, the researcher made contact with the pastors officially to gain entry into the research setting (he has been in contact with some of them over the years as a fellow minister in Nairobi, where he has been a minister and Mission Director since 2006).

Each pastor was personally informed by the researcher of the general purpose of the research, the main elements of the design and possible benefits as well as disadvantages that the project could bring (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:70). This is more so because a phenomenal-theological research of this nature could lead to what one of the pastors called 'turning the carpet upside down'.

As cautioned by Leedy and Ormrod (2003:139), the researcher suspended all preconceived notions or personal experiences that could bare undue influence on him during the collection and analysis of the data. He made sure that the data collected accurately reflect the perspectives, opinions and thoughts of the participants as much as possible. He did this by adopting the role of interviewer, listening very closely to minute details from interviewees and taking notes throughout or tape recording where applicable. It is this data that the researcher transcribed, analysed and interpreted in chapters four, five and six of the research.

1.9.4 Case study: the qualitative dimension

1.9.4.1 Definition of case study

A case study is a research design that attempts to describe the totality of a unit within its context (Kombo and Tromp 2006:72). Unlike hypothesis-testing, which constitutes a type of research that concentrates on "the general and the regular", case studies aim at a

particular case and seek to understand its uniqueness and idiosyncrasies (Huysamen 1994:168). In pastoral research, it is “the process of pastoral-theological reflection about a given case” that involves analyzing, reflecting, theologizing, and prescribing needed action based on the overarching problem or original case under study (Vyhmeister 2001:144).

The design approach permits the learning of much of the phenomenon under study by examining a few examples that are highly representative of the particular population under study. The in-depth micro analysis leads to a deeper and better understanding as well as clearer insight regarding the problem under research. In the social or behavioural sciences, case study research entails exhaustive study of a social unit’s background, environmental influence and contemporary status. Such social units could be individuals, communities, groups or church institution as in the present research (Vyhmeister 2001:143). Case studies may be preoccupied with the investigation of specific factors or may embrace all events or variables in an individual or a small group.

Though case studies help to generalize research findings and lead to further research via generated hypotheses, it is vulnerable to subjectivity. It is limited by its occupation with small numbers, which may lend credence to complete generalization. It could also be subjective to an emotionally dramatic event or the personal involvement of the researcher (Vyhmeister 2001:143).

Nonetheless, the case study design was selected for this research for many reasons. One major reason is the nature of case study itself. Huysamen (1994:169) identifies three aspects of case studies that are all relevant to this research. The first is the possibility of determining or demarcating the boundaries of case studies, boundaries that can be adjusted in the course of the research from the initially arbitrarily determined ones. In this research, that boundary was eventually set at six churches that have experienced a turnaround in Nairobi city.

The second relevant aspect of case study is the fact that data collection is not limited to a description of what was observed, but is also an inductive search “for recurring patterns and consistent regularities” (Huysamen 1994:169). This is noted in chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this research. Thirdly, case studies permit different construct validities in measuring

variables, especially in this research where systematic sources of variation showed variables that are constant for any given church (see Chapter 6) and unsystematic sources of variation showed “accidental factors which may vary from one measuring occasion to the next and from one (church) to the next in a completely haphazard fashion” (Huysamen 1994:112, 113). In addition, the findings of case studies can always be substantiated away from the personal bias of the researcher through the use of voice-recorded conversations, semi-structured interviews and other publications.

Case study has also been chosen for this research because of its strategic place in pastoral education, enabling capacity building in pastors by improving their innovative and decisive ability for doing theology in ministry. When pastors are equipped to do theology in ministry, it becomes easier for them to respond to what has been called the reporter’s questions: Why? What? Where? How? and When? on preaching manner, leadership style, and counselling skill. Conducting a case study means applying the word of God to the daily life of man and church, which is what Theology is all about. Case study design helps pastors to “learn from a situation, either their own or someone else’s” (Vyhmeister 2001:143). The goal of this research is for pastors of stagnant churches to learn how to bring about revitalization in their congregations through a growth model developed from the six churches that had experienced a turnaround in Nairobi City.

1.9.4.2 The case study approach

According to Vyhmeister (2001:145-149), the case study approach in pastoral-theological reflection involves four parts: observation, analysis, interpretation, and action. In observation, the researcher notes and writes down in simple sentences all that has been said and done in relation to the case being observed. At this stage “What a person said should be recorded, not how the researcher thinks the person felt” (Vyhmeister 2001:145). “Observable facts and activities are written into the case; they will form the basis of the study” (ibid.). All related details are included in the report, including the general location of the case because of “the importance socio-cultural factors involved in the case” (Vyhmeister 2001:146).

In case study design, analyzing the “events, interactions, and reactions of the person or persons involved in the case” follows the documented observation stage. In analysis, the research does not place value judgments on observations, but simply understands it as such and describes the factors responsible for people’s manner of thinking and acting within the context of their environment, cultural values and theological perceptions (Vyhmeister 2001:147, 148).

The third part of case study design is interpretation. In theological reflection, interpretation occurs in the light of theology by asking for what “the Bible, theology and the church’s tradition and doctrine say about the case” ((Vyhmeister 2001:148). Action planning is the fourth activity involved in a case study. Actions already taken on the case are evaluated and relevant pastoral strategies for responding to the case in the future are presented. This is where a newly proposed model comes into play. It suggests what should be done and reasons for the suggested strategy. Vyhmeister counsels that “the strategy planned must be realistic, contextual, and appropriate to the local situation”. Furthermore, it must be correct in the light of principles derived from the research of the interpretation section (2001:149).

1.10 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

1.10.1 Data collection

Theory and method influence researchers in the control of data collection for a study. Theories decide the type of research information needed “by defining the phenomena and hypotheses of interest”, while methods establish the way the necessary information will be obtained “by defining appropriate data-collecting procedures” (Brewer and Hunter 2006:59). A prominent method of collecting data in qualitative case study research like this is field work, which allows for behaviours to be observed in natural settings so that a realist theory could be constructed, using workable and fitting ideas (ibid.59, 60).

Outlined below are “four operational requirements” in data collection, as identified by Brewer and Hunter:

- Decision on and gaining access to the research site.

- Selection and enlisting of the cooperation of a sample of subjects.
- Invention and application of measurement techniques.
- Establishment of and following a schedule of observation that is specific on time, place and persons for whom and by whom particular variables will be measured.

In cognizance of the observation by Brewer and Hunter (2006:60) that “although fieldworkers may employ a variety of measurement techniques, the most characteristic ones are participant observation and informant interviewing, because they promise an inside view”, data collection for this research involved the use of self-administered questionnaires and personal interviews. The instruments were designed to elicit information from two groups of respondents: church members and church leadership. The leadership consists of the pastors-senior and associates, members of the eldership boards and group/departmental leaders.

The questionnaire used in the research contained both open-ended and closed-ended response items (Appendix 1), and was divided into two parts. The qualitative questionnaire part was open-ended to allow for expression and additional information pertinent to the respondents. The second part, which was a quantitative questionnaire, was close-ended because it dealt with demographic data within a specific period (Sogaard 1996, 130-131). The questionnaire, which contained 35 items, was administered to selected church members by the Senior Pastor of each congregation during the church Sunday worship service.

Since the study is primarily designed to be a qualitative study, but needed quantitative data, the instrument used for the verbal interviews with the leaders was both an open-ended and a close-ended interview guide. This helped to procure both qualitative and quantitative data. The instrument is divided into four sections. Section A is on origin and expansion of the church in Nairobi city. Section B is on the factors of church stagnation in the various churches. Section C addresses the factors responsible for church revitalization and growth in the Church, while Section D solicits information on what the leadership and follower expectations are in each congregation. Altogether the four sections have twenty questions (Appendix 2).

1.10.2 Population of study

The entire group or population that a researcher wishes to study is called universe, while “a more clearly identified portion or sample of the universe of possible respondents or units” is the population of study for a research (Chadwick, et al 1984:53). The population is the summation of all the objects or cases “that conform to some designated set of specifications”, with each element in the aggregate being referred to as a “population element” (Judd et al.1991:130, 131).

The total population for this study consisted of all the pastors and leaders who witnessed the turnaround of each of the select six churches that constitute the population elements, together with all church members presently involved in the on-going revitalization of the congregation.

The six select churches had the following average regular membership by 2009: African Inland Church (AIC)-600; All Nations Gospel Church (ANGC)-3000; Deliverance Church (DC)-750; Gospel Revival Centre Church (GRCC)-3000; Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG)-700; and Uthiru Pentecostal Church (UPC)-600. The pastoral and leadership cadres constitute the core eldership that moved the churches from stagnation to revitalization. The members are principal stakeholders in the on-going sustenance of the revitalization agenda of each congregation.

1.10.3 Sampling the population

Non-availability of sufficient resources and time constraints always limit research work and makes sampling the entire population that could have been involved in research a necessity. By sampling, a small but sufficiently representative group is selected from a larger population for study, and the results are then extrapolated from the sample to the population (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:42).

Furthermore, a phenomenological study such as this research is an attempt to understand the perceptions and understanding of a specific group concerning a given situation. Such

study calls for exclusively lengthy interviews with a carefully selected sample of participants by the phenomenological researcher (Leedy and Ormrod 2003:139). Precision in the selection of the samples would help the researcher to be able to “see all the characteristics of the total population in the same relationship that they would be seen were the researcher in fact to inspect the total population” (Leedy 1989:152).

Sogaard (1996, 112) insists that “every person in the total population must have a known chance of being selected for the sample” in order to achieve precision. This means that the sample must be “chosen in a representative way” (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:42), which when carefully and accurately done, would increase “the feasibility, cost-effectiveness, accuracy and manageability” of the study (De Vos et al. 2005:204).

However, while a representative sample or probability sampling is preferred, researchers often face the dilemma of not knowing who is included in the entire population. The population is defined by all the universal sets of similar characteristic within a well demarcated natural boundary (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:43). Also, institutions in the developing economies of Africa often do not keep recorded information or would not readily grant access to such information, even if available. In these instances a researcher may not know the precise population, and thus have to resort to using non-representative (non-probability) sampling, which could be the convenience, snowball, purposeful or quota sample (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:43).

Purposeful sampling selects a small sample for an in-depth study. The researcher makes a prior assessment of the population of the study based on peculiar characteristics and decides on whom the sample would include. His judgment, though subjective, determines the extent of the representation of the sample (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:43). On the other hand, quota sampling involves choosing research participants “with characteristics representative of the total population”, like selecting an equal proportion of males and females as the total population for a gender related study (ibid.).

In order to achieve accuracy and effectiveness in this research, the researcher employed purposeful sampling in the choice of churches and quota sampling in the administration of questionnaires to male and female members of the six churches.

Participants for the research were selected from six churches in Nairobi city that have experienced a turnaround. Since the average membership of these congregations was too large to interact with, the researcher selected a sample of 600 members to answer the questionnaire across all six congregations. With the assistance of the Senior and Associate Pastors in each congregation, members across the two genders and in different age groups were called on to volunteer to participate in the open Sunday worship service after the day's Sunday's sermon.

All the members in the church had equal opportunity of volunteering and receiving the questionnaire. The sampling was carefully done by taking equal numbers of members from both adult and youth groups, divided equally among male and female participants to give a true representation of the whole population (Best and James, 1989:10, 11). The 600 respondents thus included men and women, and both male and female youths. After an explanation on the purpose of the research by the researcher, the assigned pastor read and explained the questions in English and Kiswahili as they were being filled out by the respondents. All the forms were submitted immediately afterwards to the researcher, except in two churches where the researcher was not present. In these instances, the Senior Pastor did the explanation after he had been adequately briefed by the researcher. The churches returned the forms immediately after they have been completed by the members.

The limited number of pastors and elders in the leadership of each of the churches made sampling of their particular population for interviews unnecessary. All the pastors were interviewed and voice recorded personally by the researcher. Also, all the leaders in each church participated in the study by being interviewed on different days of the week on the church premises, with the exception of three who invited the researcher to their places of employment to carry out the interview.

1.10.4 People Interviewed

Humans generally interact through conversation. Such conversations reveal feelings, experiences, attitudes and deep-seated worldviews of individuals on subjects of interest to both parties in a conversation by one posing questions and another responding with answers. This kind of conversation is the subject of research interviews, and it assists in

the construction of knowledge through the inter-change of views or interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee engaged in sharing themes of mutual interest (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:2). It is this “interdependence of human inter-action and knowledge production” that defines interview research and highly recommends it for phenomenological studies.

Basically, in qualitative research the interviewer seeks to understand the object of study from the subject’s perspective before embarking on scientific explanations (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:1, 2). This makes the procedure go beyond spontaneous normal conversations to one with structure and purpose, “a carefully questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge” (ibid.3). The researcher introduces the topic, poses the questions and lets the subject do the talking, significantly following the answers provided in reaction to the questions asked.

Data collection from such interviews may take various forms: “sequential, group or life-history interviews” (Dunne, et al 2005:40). Though research manuals often only site interviewing as a qualitative research approach, it is always possible to produce numerical texts as in quantitative research methods from interviews conducted as a verbal questionnaire (Dunne, et al 2005:41).

One prevalent form of research interview, which the researcher also used for this study, is “a semi-structured life world interview”, which is “defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:3).

For this research, a total of 100 people were interviewed by the researcher, consisting of Pastors, elders, departmental leaders and some long-term members. They come from all the six select churches, i.e. AIC (11); ANGC (19); DC (17); GRCC (17); PAG (25); UPC (11). These respondents (apart from the pastors and elders) were randomly selected from an approximately equal cross-section of church leaders and long-term members that witnessed the stagnation period and the activities that initiated the turnaround. The variation in number is due to the differences in the sizes of the six churches at the time of stagnation and the number of members in the eldership board of each congregation. In view of the separate and combined small size of the churches before they experiences the

turnaround, the researcher evaluated the number 100 to be moderately representative for sampling purposes. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at different times in the courtyard of each church. This methodology is judged appropriate as “small numbers of people are involved” (Gillham, 2000:11).

The interview for the Senior Pastors, Associate Pastors and elders in the Eldership Board were voice recorded. The group/departmental leaders’ interviews were personally conducted with diligent notes taken to ensure the accuracy of their words.

1.10.5 Questionnaire administered

Efficiency is one factor that lends credence to the use of questionnaires as a scientific apparatus (Dunne, et al 2005:41). Its time and cost effectiveness allows for the administration of the instrument to many more participants than would have been possible using interviews. Due to the sheer size of the group of respondents, the use of questionnaires makes a significant quantification of data possible, thus providing more efficient quantitative data that helps to identify underlying patterns in the object of study than would have been the case with other qualitative and ethnographic methods (Dunne, et al 2005:41).

The focus of most questionnaires is measurement. It therefore needs to be easily comprehensible in order to gain response from large groups of respondents. Its design should make standardization easy as data needs to be “amenable to various kinds of mathematical manipulation” (Dunne, et al 2005:43).

For this research, the questionnaires were personally designed and administered by the Senior Pastor of each of the six select churches. Altogether, questionnaires were administered to 600 church members (though 603 were returned because two congregations made extra copies) i.e. AIC (80); ANGIC (135); DC (118); GRCC (126); PAG (53); UPC (91). The respondents were randomly selected from an approximately equal cross-section of adult men, adult women, teenage males and teenage females in each church. This was done in order to have a balanced view of sexes and age differentiation on the factors of revitalization. The variation in number is due to differences in the sizes of

the churches after the turnaround period. Questionnaires are useful when a “large number of people are involved” (Gillham, 2000:11).

The researcher observed the distribution of the questionnaires to 420 respondents in four of the six churches during the Sunday worship service and collected these from the pastors immediately after their completion. The remaining 180 were distributed in his absence at Sunday worships of the other two churches and were handed over by the Associate Pastors of those congregations.

1.10.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics, according to Webster’s New Dictionary is “conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group”. It deals with the issue of morality or matters of right and wrong. In qualitative research, ethics starts from obtaining permission for access to research object, as well as consent and protection of fundamental human rights of participants (Punch 2006:56). In the case-study method, names of individuals involved in the case are usually changed in order to protect their privacy. This is to ensure that no one is hurt or embarrassed by the research contents in the case study analysis (Vyhmeister 2001:146).

In administering the questionnaire for this research, each of the 600 respondents (church members) raised his or her hand voluntarily in the open Sunday service to signify willingness to participate in the study. The 100 leaders interviewed were given the option of not mentioning their names during the interviews in order to keep the information confidential. In each stage of the study, informants could decide which questions they felt comfortable to answer. They were neither forced to participate nor given any financial reward for participation.

Furthermore, in describing the research context and analyzing data, the researcher opted for the use of composite characters and thematic presentations of perceptions of the church members and leaders in order to safeguard confidentiality, while at the same time ensuring merit in the research product (Sinding et al. 2008:464, 465). Other ethical considerations highlighted by Babbie (2004:63-67) and observed in the process of this research include:

- Ensuring that the participants know what they are getting themselves involved in, especially where the findings may be published.
- Making use of volunteers only without exercising any power over them in any way.
- Giving fair treatment to all participants along with consideration, respect and honesty.
- Ensuring that no harm or risk is caused to cultural or property values of participants.
- Adhering to confidentiality in data dissemination.
- Acknowledging all assistance provided.
- Acknowledging all sources used by means of complete references and bibliography.
- Presenting the research findings without distortion.

1.10.7 Reliability, validity, and objectivity

Reliability is both a moral and methodological concept. In qualitative research, it borders on “the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:245). This is a question of whether research findings would yield the same results if carried out by another researcher at other times. This is why Mugenda and Mugenda (2003, 95) describe data reliability as the “measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials”.

However, data validation or verification “is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study” (Mugenda and Mugenda (2003, 95). Epistemologically, validity deals with issues of “the truth, the correctness, and the strength of a statement”. In behavioural and social sciences, it pertains to the exactness of a research method, measuring what it sets out to measure, investigating what it sets out to investigate. Qualitative research is thus valid to the extent to which it results in measurement (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:245).

Objectivity touches the domain of morality. It is reliable and controlled knowledge that is free from personal bias and prejudice (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:242). When research instruments are well-crafted and produce knowledge that is systematically cross-checked and verified, such instruments are judged objective, being unbiased (ibid.). Objectivity also speaks to the situation of the researcher being reflective in making informed judgments as his/her contribution to knowledge. Such contributions arise from objectively striving against subjectivity arising from insights gained in research. In this sense “objectivity in qualitative inquiry here means striving for objectivity” (ibid.). Objectivity could also mean “letting the object speak”, being faithful to the researched phenomenon by accurately presenting its real nature. It is to this extent that qualitative method truly reflects “the real nature of the social objects investigated” and “the qualitative research interview obtains a privileged position in producing objective knowledge of the social world” (ibid.43).

Following the recommendation of Engelhart (1972, 101), the researcher tested the questionnaires in a pilot study on members of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC), Nairobi, where the researcher was a mission director for three years. In addition to the promoter, he gave the questionnaires and interview instruments to four faculty members of the African International University (AIU), Nairobi, Kenya. Also, the interview was administered to the late Secretary General of Evangelical Association of Africa (EAA), a graduate of AIU who is cumulatively a secretary-general of one of the mission churches in Nairobi, and a former research fellow at Daystar University, Nairobi. Each of these informants responded with some feedback that necessitated some adjustments to the instruments before they were finally administered in the field.

Since the story of the turnaround churches will become the revitalization model to bring new life to the stagnant churches, the researcher ensured that findings from the interviews and questionnaires were the perceptions of the selected churches, not what he wished or thought. The interviewees were required to comment on the researcher’s findings and his evaluation and interpretation of the findings in order to avoid bias on the side of the researcher.

1.10.8 Data analysis

Generally, data analysis could be carried out by using different techniques that offer an effective way of presenting information when combined with appropriate graphs. Two of the main instruments of representing quantitative data (which are often employed in qualitative and mixed method analyses too) are frequency distribution and cross-tabulation (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:44, 45). In frequency distribution, a single variable is distributed across categories to view diversities from the central tendency, with the number of times of occurrence of the variable in each category recorded and the data presented in graphs. On the other hand, cross-tabulation examines the “relationship between two variables and is a continuation of the use of a frequency distribution” (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:44, 45).

Data analysis ensures that order, structure and meaning are assigned to the collected mass of information from the field, specifically in qualitative research. This occurs through coding and analysis, which enables the researcher to make sense of the assembled data (Mugenda and Mugenda (2003:203). Such codes would consist of “a word, abbreviation or phrase, which represents a link between raw data (field notes or interview transcripts) and the researcher’s theoretical concept” (ibid.205).

Given that the instruments used in the study comprised both closed and open-ended items, data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Each group of related questions were analysed together with the aim of answering the research questions on the perceived growth factors in the turnaround churches in Nairobi, and establishing what possible revitalization model is feasible to revitalize a stagnant church in the city.

On questionnaire returns, a total of 600 questionnaires were handed out personally to the different Senior Pastors of the selected churches and were administered during Sunday worship services. Four of the churches administered the questionnaires in the presence of the researcher so that they were immediately returned, while the remaining two administered them in his absence and returned them through the Associate Pastors of the congregations. All 600 questionnaires were returned together with three extras, putting the percentage of returned questionnaires at 100%.

On the interview instrument, the researcher interviewed 100 church leaders and long-term members involved in church work. The pastors and board members' interviewed were voice recorded while the group and departmental leaders were verbally interviewed with the researcher taking diligent notes. The interview response reflected a 100% participation rate. The interview helped to provide both qualitative and quantitative data (Appendix 2 and 3). It was also aimed at eliciting additional information to substantiate or refute some of the responses from the church members reflected in the questionnaire on factors of revitalization in the select six churches.

In this research, the researcher systematically organised and analysed the relevant interview items, coded them according to categories and presented the simple frequency counts and corresponding percentages by the use of tables. The cross tabulation instrument was used to analyse the variables of relevance and irrelevance of each category of questionnaire item rated by respondents, employing a scale of 0 to 10 (6-10 for "relevant" and 0-5 for "irrelevant"). The responses from the different church's leaders and members on factors of revitalization were compared, and these results were used to answer the main research question and to propose the model for revitalization of stagnant churches in the urban context of Nairobi, Kenya.

Collectively, the data collected from the interviews with the pastors, church leaders and long-term members serving the church in different capacities were analysed and the reported findings in response to the research questions on factors of stagnation and revitalization were discussed under the headings of each of the six churches in chapters four and five of this research.

CHAPTER TWO

2 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON URBANIZATION AND URBAN MISSION, CHURCH PLANTING, CHURCH GROWTH, STAGNATION AND REVITALIZATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to understand what the Scriptures reveal concerning the phenomenon of urbanization and urban mission, church planting, church growth, church stagnation and revitalization. The chapter will undertake an analysis and synthesis of relevant literature on each subject of reflection, together with historical grammatical exegesis of selected biblical passages where it is considered necessary in order to gain understanding.

Through the study of literature and Scripture, the chapter aims to address the first research question: What light does Scripture give concerning the phenomenon of urbanization, urban church planting, church growth and revitalization? However, since these subjects do not exist in a vacuum, but emanate from a view of mission as theocentric, i.e. originating from God's heart (Botha, 2008:51), the chapter will reflect on both the mission of God (*missio Dei*) and the mission of the church (*missio ecclesia*) in its analysis of the sociological subject of urbanization.

2.2 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON URBANIZATION AND URBAN MISSION

This section of the chapter presents the theoretical framework, definition and Scriptural basis on which urban analyses are based. It goes on to survey some relevant Scriptural passages in both the Old and New Testament on the subject of urbanization and urban mission, before concluding on the principles underlying urbanization and the city ministry.

2.2.1 Conceptual Framework

The New Testament church was born and thrived in the urban context of Jerusalem (Acts 2:36-41; Dubose 1978:43, 44). However, according to Biblical record, a rural habitat called the Garden of Eden housed the beginnings of the human story (Genesis 2:8, 9). As recently as 1800, the percentage of humanity that lived in what could be termed a modern city was only 3% (Economist, 2007). However, with the coming of the Industrial Revolution, the demographics of Europe and North America were transformed in such a way that by 1900 the urban population of the world reached a peak at 13%.

From then on, “Homo sapiens” became transformed into “Homo urbanus”, with about 50% of humanity dwelling in the world’s urban settings by the turn of the 21st century. With an unprecedented rapid rate of urbanization of about a “15-fold increase from 150 million to 2.2 billion since 1900” (Njoh 2003, 167), it seems the city is the only place to find “the World” that Jesus has sent the church to disciple (cf. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 10:1).

In the Bible, the city is always the strategic centre of human and divine activities. Dubose (1978:22) identified four major features of the expression of urbanization in the ancient cities. They include religion (symbolised by the temple), commerce (evidenced by the market), defence (evidenced by garrison) and politics (symbolised by the palace). Nicholls agrees, stating that cities of old served as centres of theocratic rule, refuge from hostile invasion and places for sacrificial offerings (Nicholls 2004:48).

Notable among the ancient biblical cities where much of the divine activities revolved include Tyre (1 Kings 5; Ezek.26), cities of Mesopotamia (Nahum 3; Jer. 50; Jonah 3); Jericho (Jos. 6); Jerusalem (Psalm 22); Babylon (Daniel 1-5; Jer.29), Nineveh (Jonah 3), Athens (Acts 17) and Rome (Acts 28). Each of the cities show notable urban features, ranging from being centres of trade, learning, economy and culture to serving as seats of religion, world powers and influential moral decadence. Amazingly, they combined the perfection of godlessness with “the ultimate expression of God’s saving mercy and grace” (Nicholls 2004:49, 50).

The fact that God paid special attention to both the human beings and social affairs of those cities laid the foundation for urban mission for the church. That God specifically sent prophets and emissaries to those cities to proclaim his judgment or mercy makes it paramount for the church to make the city a centre for the declaration of both the mission of God (*missio Dei*) and that of the church (*missio Ecclesia*).

The continent of Africa houses some of the world's earliest cities, following the formation of urban centres in the Euphrates, which are believed to be the world's first (Hance 1970:211,212). The cities, dating back to about 3,000 B.C., are formed in Egypt and along the Mediterranean shores. These pre-16th century cities and 'notable towns' include Cairo and Alexandria (Egypt); Ibadan, Benin, Ife and Kano (Nigeria); Mogadishu (Somalia); Zanzibar (Tanzania); and Mombasa (Kenya) (Peil and Sada 1984:15). Others that trace their origin from the 16th century include Accra (Ghana) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). Among the cities of the 19th and 20th centuries are Khartoum (Sudan), Nairobi (Kenya), Harare (Zimbabwe) and Bamako (Mali) (O'Connor 1983:25). Some of the cities are more indigenous in outlook, with strong traditional way of life, some religious, while a good number share the features of a colonial, European, dual or hybrid city (cf. O'Connor 1983). They all keep growing at phenomenal rates.

All these cities, along with others, grow at such a phenomenal rate that with a projected 71% urban growth rate for 2000-2015, the African continent has the highest and fastest growth rate of urbanization in comparison with other continents (Earthscan 2006). This is the reason why Harvie Conn observes that African cities "are cities in a hurry" (Kim 2009:41). As Henry Mutua rightly observes, the challenge for the church to make a difference through its mission to the African urban society of the 21st century becomes considerable (Kim 2009:49). This is more so as global urban population projection vis-à-vis the rural doubles by 2030, and the cities grow by 130% over the same period ((Daniels 2004:502).

The missiological implication of the harsh economic conditions confronting the majority of these urbanites will be an unfavourable spiritual environment that promotes constant revolt, rising crime and political upheaval. This is constantly witnessed among the millions of inhabitants of the low income settlements across Africa. In Kenya, for example, the 2008 political unrest was more pronounced in these settlements, which are

found mainly in Nairobi's slums of Kibera, Mathare Valley, and Mukulu Wakwanjega. The inhabitants account for an estimated 70% of the population of the city (Kim 2009:49). It makes the city the main frontier for the Gospel to cross and points to where the greater number of the labour force of the church ought to be located for mission and church revitalization. But has the 21st century church understood and endorsed this theology of the city?

We argue in this research that the church's theology of the city would be scriptural to the extent to which it accurately reflects the light that the Bible sheds on the city. This could either be positive or negative (cf. Dubose 1978, Nicholls 2004). A positive perception of the city will invigorate the evangelistic fervour of the church and cause it to grow. A negative view of the city would lead to church stagnation, decline or even death.

Urbanization is the immediate realistic future of the globe, and the city dictates what becomes the missions and future of the church (Egger 2006:1; Greenway and Mashau 2007:1). Though cities provide opportunities for upward social mobility, they are "frequently the battlegrounds of class, religion, race, ethnic, and other interest-groups" (Peil and Sada 1984:1). Missiology should accurately define the city and proffer a contextually relevant approach to win cities for the Lord Jesus Christ.

2.2.2 Urbanization defined

Urbanization refers to the proportion of the people living in cities compared to the percentage of the total population (cf. Dan Smith, Earthscan 2006). The percentage could be as moderate as 40 (the 1980 figure for the world, according to Smith) or could be as high as 60% (his projected figure for 2020). Urbanization, in this sense, is defined more by the urban-rural percentage than by the proportion of the urban dwellers just being greater than that of the rural, a position held by Greenway and Mashau (2007).

Greenway and Mashau (2007:6), unlike Smith, emphasise the continuously increasing proportion of urban population in comparison to the rural population as a clearer picture of urbanization. They assert that urbanization is "the process in which the number of people living in the cities increases compared with the number of people living in rural areas".

Any nation that has over 50% of its inhabitants in the city is considered urbanized (Greenway and Mashau 2007:6). The definition is centered on national demographic posture and migratory movement, especially from rural to urban centres.

Egger (2006:1) partly agrees, arguing that urbanization and the global domination of the city constitute a two-fold phenomenon. There is the demographic trend where more dwellers come into urban areas than those living outside it. There is equally the accompanying fact of the dominant posture of the city as the leading provider of socio-economic, educational and technological services. He claims that cities like Berlin and London have been declining over the past half a century, yet remained developed metropolitans. The development is as a result of increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rather than an absolute population component. Urbanization is thus a component of a city's population and 'influence'.

Sharing the same sentiment, Susan Parnell, David Simon and Coleen Vogel (2007: 361) argue that a number of cities of post-industrial countries like London are reported to have stabilized or "even lost populations over recent decades through suburbanisation and counter-urbanisation, although augmented more recently by new waves of international immigration". Such cities do not sustain urbanization by attracting a rural native population, as claimed by Smith, Greenway and Mashau. Rather, their functioning has to do with issues of sustainability via provision of holistic social services and informational modes of development. The limitation of the definition, however, is that it only finds relevance in the advanced economy of the West. The context of the Majority World is different.

Varis (2006:199) maintains that the ratio of the urban to the rural population in Asia and Africa is approximately 1:3. This implies that rural-urban migration is expected to be constantly provoked, and urbanization expected to be the most rapid on the two continents in comparison with other parts of the world that have higher proportions of urban to rural dwellers. In Varis assessment, the estimated 70 million that are added to the world population per annum are mostly found in the developing world. This would lead to a high migration rate to the city. Coupled with this is the low fertility rate in the urban centres. Consequently, urbanization becomes the uncontrolled "growth of large urban

agglomerations” (Varis 2006:201) rather than a comparison of total urban population with the rural, as others tend to suggest.

Varis’ view agrees more with that of Smith. Both view urbanization along the UN indicator of sizes of cities within national boundaries. For example, megacities are places with more than 5 million inhabitants, and big cities are urban habitations with more than 1 million dwellers.

However, Henderson and Wang (2007) feel that the premise of defining urbanization by size of megacities is wrong. They claim that “urbanization is not concentrated in megacities and urban hierarchies are not becoming increasingly unbalanced with urbanization” (2007:284). They advance this view based on two major claims:

”First, the worldwide relative size distribution of cities has been rock stable over the last 40 years. Second, much of urbanization occurs through the development of new cities and growth of smaller metro areas and little of the world's urban population lives in mega-cities” (2007:284).

Moreover, Henderson and Wang define the rate of urbanization as ‘increases in the percent of the national population that is urbanized’ (2007: 287). They preferred the concept of ‘full urbanization’, which they argued lowers the urbanization rate as a nation develops. The range for such urbanization is not 40-60 percent (as Smith argued) or just above 50% of the urban-rural ratio (as indicated by Greenway and Mashau) but “from 65 to 85% of the population being urbanized” (Henderson and Wang 2007: 287).

This kind of huge population rate seems to be the influencing factor in Bakke’s definition of urbanization. He describes it as a scenario depicting the city as a giant magnet attracting people from rural areas (Conn et al. 2002:30). He opined that urbanization equally needs be defined along a second perspective, that of urbanism. This is a state where the city serves “as a transformer, transmitter, and magnifier of culture” (Conn et al. 2002:30). This takes urbanization beyond statistical data concerning people movement (see Henderson

and Wang 2007) to holistic transformation and communication regarding the wellbeing of urban dwellers. It points to urban centres as having a complex web of both “inventions” and “interventions” that are constantly provoking changes of urban landscape in political expression, social mobility, economic innovation and cultural vitality (Robinson 2006:251). This, also, is more of a Western reality.

Within the discipline of social sciences, different views on urbanization emphasise one or more of the three interrelated facets of the urban phenomenon: ‘changes in the size distribution of cities’, ‘growth in individual city populations sizes’ and ‘growth in city numbers’ (Henderson and Wang 2007:283). Some authors have argued for a combination of population figures and urban way of life as the main keys to understanding the city and the phenomenon of urbanization (Peil and Sada 1984:49).

Missiology is interested in the city’s social dimensions of autonomy, distinctive institutions, deviant subcultures, mobility and class conflict, because in one way or the other they contribute to the acceptance or rejection of the Gospel and influence how it is presented and contextualised in the urban setting.

A seemingly new definition of urbanization is coined around the socio-economic and political peculiarities of Africa. Obeng-Odoom (2009:49) identified some of the labels put on the continent’s brand of urbanization: “urbanization of poverty”, “parasitic urbanism” and “premature urbanization”. The underlying assumption (and post-Apartheid South Africa is a relevant example) is in the potentiality of the city becoming abodes of “struggling over space, services and livelihoods” by national and non-national migrants seeking refuge and a livelihood in previously “forbidden” metropolis (Landu 2005:1116). Urbanization is defined away from an increasing number of people to an increasing level of suffering.

What cannot be refuted in any of the definitions is the fact that urban dwellers are proportionately more than those in the rural settings, the ratio notwithstanding. Also, urbanization is a product of a massive drift from jungles to cities in search of better conditions of living that involves a drastic change of lifestyle (Hiebert 1985:289). This “drastic change of lifestyle” associated with urbanization is what has been termed the transforming, magnifying and transmitting power of city culture. It is a phenomenon that

was a reality of the Western world (in the positive sense) and presently imparting, albeit negatively, the Majority World of Asia, Latin America and Africa.

This is not to undermine the fact that in all continents of the world urbanization is turning the city into a metropolitan centre of privileges, power and prosperity. One such privilege that has redefined urbanization is the spread of the Gospel. This accounts for Hiebert's (1985:288-291) view on the 20th century phenomenon of urbanization as a trend beyond sociological or historical drift. He called it a massive movement that has never been witnessed in human history. His conclusion from this is: "If God is in control of history, then there must be a purpose in this massive movement of people to metropolitan centers" (Hiebert 1985:290). Conn (cf. Greenway, ed. 1992:15) echoed the same sentiment in his claim that "The cultural mandate given to Adam and Eve in the garden to fill, rule, and subdue the earth (Gen.1:28) was nothing more than a mandate to build the city."

Urbanization provides the tool to obey the divine injunction to 'build the city'. Ortiz writes: "Urban growth is more than a sociological reality; it is the fulfilment of God's intentions since the beginning of time" (Conn et al. 2002: 43). In a similar vein, Bakke (Conn et al. 2002:29) argued that a missiological hermeneutics of Psalms 107:1-7 could only imply a universal act of God to solve the problem of humanity by gathering them to cities on all continents. The claim of these missiologists is that there is a scriptural dimension to defining urbanization.

Biblically perceived, urbanization could be defined as an invisible divine order of human history according to which the mass of humanity is concentrated into specific geographical areas where the urban mission work of church planting and church growth could be effected. It is an occurrence that propels the Gospel to target different classes of people, cultures and a 'growing social turmoil' that permeates both the Western "civilized" world and the "poor" Majority World (Hiebert 1985:291).

In conclusion, one can assert that beyond geography and sociology, urbanization is a missiological development for urban mission. The city, and by implication urbanization, is God's primary focus of initiating, enabling and effecting holistic change through the instrumentality of the urban mission work of the church.

2.2.3 Urban mission defined

Urban mission is a subset of mission. A proper understanding of its nature, scope and biblical basis demands an analysis of what constitutes the subject matter of mission (or missions) and its Scriptural foundation. Two key mission theologies underlying most of the contemporary mission thinking are considered appropriate here. First is the theology of *missio Dei*: the perception of mission as God's initiative. Second is *missio ecclesia*, a missiology that focuses on the church's role and actuality in mission. These categorisations suggest a broad-based interpretation among Christians concerning the distinct approaches to mission thinking (Kirk 1999:229).

2.2.3.1 Mission as *missio Dei*

- The notion of mission

What constitutes the notion of mission was not so clear in the beginning of the evolution of mission theology. The fact that the New Testament does not have the word "mission" makes it a subject of varied definitions (Hesselgrave 1999:283). Some schools of thought define *mission* and *evangelism* separately, while others see the two terms as synonymous with the word *witness* (cf. Mashau 2007).

Leading the theological debate, the West for a long time only understood mission as the exportation of the Gospel to heathen lands (defined as Africa, Asia and Latin America). On the other hand, evangelism was perceived as the activity of the church among already converted Christians who were no longer interested in the issue of church (Bosch 1991:409,410). The all-white Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference accentuated this more than any other gathering. It emphasised the distinction between the 'more backward races of mankind' and the 'more advanced'. There was the notion of divine providence placing the West in superior might and in control over other nations (World Mission Conference 1910, 7:115) (Botha 2005:132).

This development led to the concept of 'mission field' and the enlistment of long or short term overseas mission volunteers (Kirk 1999:20). While mission was thus a fundamental

church responsibility, it was not perceived as its indispensable being (Kirk 1999:20). In other words, the understanding of mission was not that of the church being missionary, *per se*, by its very nature (cf. Saayman, 2000), but rather as a transference of civilization from “advanced peoples to backward peoples” (Botha 2005:133). Nothing could be more misleading.

Conn alluded to the falsity of this perception when he claimed that the decade of the 1980’s had witnessed “more Christians in Asia, Latin America and Africa than in the Anglo-Saxon world” (Conn and others 2002:4). Statistically, he asserts that the world’s centre of Christianity has not only shifted dramatically to the South, but the percentage differences in church attendance and the number of Christians is also unbelievably large. While 10% of the adult Scotland population attended church regularly, the proportion was 70% in the Philippines. Back in Africa, there were seven times as many Anglicans in Nigeria as Episcopalians in the United States, while Asia had as many as four times the Presbyterians in South Korea alone as were in the whole of the United States of America combined (Conn and others 2002:7-8).

There was also the debate of whether everything the church is sent to do in the world should be considered mission. The World Council of Churches holds the affirmative. Lesslie Newbigin, a representative of that voice, holds the view that everything the church does in the world, from the proclamation of the Gospel to concern for the sick, the poor, and defence against socio-political injustice, should fall under the umbrella of mission (Mashau 2007:329). The view is borne out of the theological thoughts of the Liberals that mission should be understood as the founding of the social harmony (*shalom*) of society (Hesselgrave 1999:278, 279).

John R.W. Stott attempted to modify this view by leaning towards the concept of “holistic mission”, i.e. mission via the instrumentality of ‘word, deed, life and sign’ (cf. Stott 1975). This, however, did not totally redefine mission from the grabs of the Liberals. He merely scratched the surface of a redefinition of biblical mission by stipulating that though everything the church does in the world is not mission, everything it is sent to do is (Stott 1975:15-20).

In his defence of Stott and the proponents of holistic mission, Myers (1999:286,287) insists that the core of mission is in loving God and ones neighbours in a relational manner that marries the physical with the spiritual, i.e. uniting the work of evangelism and disciple making with social actions. What he failed to identify is the extent to which the church can do all of these without loosing focus of the missionary mandate embedded in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). His model does not seem to reckon with the mission precepts of Jesus, the practice of the apostolate of the early church, and especially of the mission paradigm of Paul the apostle. The fact is that nothing will be mission if everything the church does is considered mission (Bosch 1991:511).

Hesselgrave (1999:284) offers a cautionary bias on holistic mission that is worth noting in redefining mission among evangelicals. He writes:

“We can feed some of the hungry, but we cannot feed the whole world. We can help heal some of the sick, but we cannot heal the whole world. We can support the rights of some disenfranchised people, but we cannot enfranchise the whole world. But we can evangelize the whole world, and no one else will do it if we do not. In Matthew 24 our sovereign Lord tells us that it can and will be done; and in Matthew 28 he tells us both that we must do it and how it is to be done”.

Hesselgrave did not invent this revolutionary frontier of mission. The 1947 Whitby Conference seemed to pioneer this understanding of mission within the ecumenical circle. In its declaration entitled ‘Christian witness in a revolutionary world’, it says:

As Christians, we are pledged to the service of all those who are hungry or destitute or in need; we are pledged to the support of every movement for the removal of injustice and oppression. But we do not conceive these things, good in themselves, to be the whole of evangelism, since we are convinced that *the source of the world’s sorrow is spiritual, and that its healing must be spiritual*, through the

entry of the risen Christ into every part of the life of the world (*italics mine*) (Botha 2005:144, quoting Ranson 1948:215)

In defining the nature of mission, there is also the argument of whether what the church is involved in should be regarded as mission (in the singular) or missions (in the plural) (cf. Bosch 1991, Muck 2004). Moreau, et al (2004:72) argue that missions (plural) is traditionally the proclamation of the Gospel to win converts from outside the faith of Christ and planting multiplying functioning local congregations that will testify Christ in word and deed to their communities. This puts missions in the realm of the church's activity of proclamation and demonstration of God's kingdom cross-culturally among nations (cf. Wills, Avery T., and Henry T. Blackaby. 2002).

According to Moreau et al (2004:72), the larger umbrella or bigger set is mission (singular). They describe this as a combination of the total assignment of the church in the world. This assignment involves winning souls and addressing the issues of justice, poverty, inter-faith dialogue and political liberation, among others. It is a re-echo of the claim by Peter (1972:11) that mission deals with the "upward, inward and outward ministries of the church".

Both Kirk (1999) and Muck (2004) share the sentiments expressed by Moreau, et al and Peter on the dividing line between mission and missions. Muck, however, expanded the term mission to include *missio Dei*. According to Muck (2004:419), mission in the singular is *missio Dei* (God's mission). He calls it the answer to the question of what God is doing in the world. Van Engen echoes the same view and claims that "mission is *missio Dei*" (Van Engen 1996:27). Muck insists that taking mission out of the singular is a trap capable of taking the church out of "genuine" mission to accommodating multiplied human endeavours by churches, missionaries and humanitarian organizations as part of mission.

Nevertheless, Muck understood the diversity in Christian calling and gifting as well as differences in audiences that are targets of the missionary endeavour. These, he claimed, justified the talk of missions (plural) within mission (*missio Dei*). Missions then become the activities of the different parts of the body of Christ in the vineyard of the missionary

God (Muck 2004:420). Bosch holds the same view on the distinguishing marks of mission and missions. According to him, mission is *missio Dei* (God's nature, activity and good news unleashed on the world), while missions is simply *missiones ecclesiae*, defined as the church's missionary endeavours in the world (Bosch 1991:10).

Kirk (1999:28) sees mission (embedded in *missio Dei*) as the revelation of God's nature that is demonstrated in his attributes of love, mercy, justice, equality, community and forgiveness. Unlike Muck, who singles out mission in the singular as representing *missio Dei*, Moreau et al see *missio Dei* as the universal set that includes all that is involved in mission and missions. In other words, *missio Dei* should be understood beyond what the church is sent to do in the redemptive purpose of God (mission), and the main thrusts of the church's activities: evangelism, discipleship and church planting (missions) (Moreau 2004:83-88).

These divergences in view call for a more thorough analysis of the term '*missio Dei*'.

- Notion of *missio Dei*

Missio Dei is Latin for "the sending God" (Moreau 2004:73). The term was first used as a missiological term in a 1932 lecture by Karl Barth before it gained entrance into the Willingen conference of the International Missionary Council of 1952 (see Kirk 1999, Muck 2004, Botha 2005)⁴. Central to the idea is that "mission is the singular work of God expressed and carried out in many forms not only by the church, but in all human institutions and actions" (Muck 2004:419).

The 1963 World Council of Churches Conference in Mexico popularised the term to reflect the thinking that God's mission is broader than the church, and that the church is only privileged to participate in it (Moreau, et al 2004:73). Without diminishing the fact of the centrality of the role of the church in Gospel dissemination to the unreached, *missio Dei* puts an end to the traditional view of mission being church-cantered or people-cantered to being God-cantered (Moreau, et al 2004:73).

⁴ Botha claims that the term was not so verbally expressed at Willingen 1952 until soon after. In his view the concept's 'auctor intellectualis' is Hartenstein (cf. Botha 2005:145).

Furthermore, *missio Dei* is the revealers of the nature of mission. It reveals God's purpose, intentions and activities for and on behalf of his created universe. This, summarily, ensures the lordship of his son, Jesus Christ, over the entire created universe (Kirk 1999:25). Since there can be no Christianity outside the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, *missio Dei* puts the governance of the world in the care of the Trinity.

Van Engen shares Kirk's Trinitarian view of mission. He identified it as *missio adventus*: the breaking of the Trinity in and through the church to produce unexpected surprises, changes and transformation in all the dimensions of human life (Van Engen 1996:28). This Trinitarian basis of the missionary enterprise is what brings the WCC, Evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism into a convergent point in missiological thought (Bassham 1980:239).

The non-negotiable central focus of all the definitions that *missio Dei* has been subjected to, is the eternal perspective in doing mission. Christianity is a missionary faith that owes its very existence and nature to mission: the incarnation of God in the humanity of Jesus (cf. Bosch 1992:9). Only by reference to this essence and foundation can we rightly evoke a biblical hermeneutic of missions.

Furthermore, the context of mission is borne out of divine intervention in human affairs. It is aimed at achieving a fulfilled relationship between God and man on the vertical axis, and between fellow humans on the horizontal line. Both axes converge on the object of mission, personified by the cross of the Saviour Jesus Christ.

God is focused on restoring humanity into a living relationship with him (Moreau 2004:85-86). This is why he gives the church the Christian mission, which is a mission under the cross (Botha 2008:51). It is not a cross for conquest or crusade of the Constantinian world, but one of "service, responsibility, and sacrifice" in line with Kingdom demand from the cross of Christ (Bosch 1980:163). We cannot compromise the centrality of salvation in Jesus Christ with an emphasis on the needs of humanity in the work of mission (Verster 2002:44).

While the awareness and discussions of other religions is significant in doing mission, Jesus Christ needs to be clearly presented as the only way of salvation (John 14:6). Verster puts this clearly when he says:

“The aim of mission as the manifestation of the glory and grace of God cannot be put aside, but this glory is the glory of the Son of God, Jesus Christ and this manifestation of grace is the manifestation of the redemption in Jesus Christ. It is the substitution in Jesus Christ which is the radical transformation in Jesus Christ that must be mentioned and, on this score, it is also different from any other religion and any other expression of faith (Verster 2002:45).

Thus in *missio Dei* we see God in the revelation and demonstration of his infinite matchless love for humanity that is created in his image. In it, we understand God’s intention for mission: “And this is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent-Jesus Christ” (John 17:3).

Missio Dei defines the concept of *missio ecclesia*. By making *missio ecclesia* its derivation, *missio Dei* now moves the ecclesiocentric view of mission by theologians and churches to a God-centred one (Mashau 2007:337). As Kirk rightly affirms, *missio ecclesia* frees the church to persuade humanity, not to seek salvation in the church alone, but to belief and behave in particular ways that seek conformity between “God’s self-revelation and our human experience” (Kirk 1999:11). It is a picture of partnership, rather than tension, of the two concepts (*missio Dei* and *missio ecclesia*) that feature prominently in the discussions of the agent of mission (see Mashau 2007:336).

2.2.3.2 Missions as *missio ecclesia*

The church has a mission in the world, and this is to respond to *missio Dei*. The reason for this is based on the truth that it is God that called the church into existence through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 2:1-7). It is to this extent that no church can remain true to its being by executing a self-imposed mandate. The church’s agenda

can only be such that is God-given, which summarily involves witnessing the divine activities in the world through the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed (Kirk 1999:31).

Missio ecclesia is rooted in God's mission call to service. Jesus emphasised this by founding the community of diakonia (Mark 10:43-45). Pastors and teachers minister to the edification of the body and prepare a pure and blameless bride for the coming of the bridegroom (Ephesians 4:11; 5:25). At the same time, the whole church is charged to be salt and light in the world and to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 24:14). According to Jongeneel (2009:117), this implies that the church should incarnate Christ to all nations (Jews and Gentiles) in issues that border on political liberation, spiritual salvation and the eschaton. The Messiah figure in both the Old and New Testaments defines the nature and object of the mission of the church (Jongeneel 2009:117).

This is where the church-centred theology of three selfhoods seems to fall short of the God-given mission of the church. Even the recently proposed concept of self-theologizing for the African church is at best an improvement of what *missio ecclesia* is, but it is not perfection. The neo-Pentecostal/charismatic doctrine of health and wealth may even serve as distraction from the core of *missio ecclesia* and the divine empowerment to the church at Pentecost to carry this out in the world (cf. Kirk 1999:36).

The call of the church is to be involved in "genuine mission" (Muck 2004:419). Yet this 'genuine' mission, as Muck qualifies it, is the very essence of the church. When a church ceases to be missionary, it ceases to exist. The call of the church is to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and share it to the ends of the earth until the end of time comes (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20, Kirk 1999:30).

Mission is the only legitimate reason for the sustained existence of the church on earth. Kirk is right to claim that "the church is because mission is: *missio sit ergo ecclesia sit* (Kirk 1999:232). The mission is accomplished as the church proclaims the good news, finds appropriate contextualization for the expression of the Gospel, engages inter-faith dialogue and builds peace in our war-torn world (Kirk 1999:205).

Going further than Kirk into the so-called social gospel, Hedlund wants the church's mission to be understood beyond the narrow confines of the gospel-peace partnership of the evangelicals. He argued that within the contexts of "extreme diversities and innumerable divisions", the church is called upon to be a catalyst of peace and reconciliation by "fighting on the side of the oppressed backward classes" (1991:13). Quoting Kanjamala (1983), he went on to say, "It is part of the Christian striving for a just society to use *every means* to heal the structural evils in our society" (own italics) (Hedlund 1991:13). The implication of this touches on the metaphor of the church as salt and light in a corrupt, unjust world where it is called upon to be the voice of the voiceless.

The point to bear in mind is the unbreakable bond between the church and the mission of God. It explains how indispensable the body of Christ is to the fulfilment of God's mission in the world. While this is not to subscribe to the Roman Catholics' view of 'no salvation outside the church', it nevertheless underlines the missiological context of *missio Dei* being inseparable from the institution of the church.

Furthermore, the 'shalom' or wholeness of humanity is achieved by the church as it strives for justice, equality and compassion. No human institution is so adequately equipped or universally endowed to bring such healing and peace across human divides. Jesus evidently knows this fact and viewed the church as the community to fulfil this purpose on earth (Matthew 16:18; 18:18). Christ's mission is what the Christian community is sent to do (Acts 1:8). Its circumference is the entire globe without geographical boundaries or cultural limitations. This serves as motivation to urban mission.

2.2.3.3 Urban mission and its biblical base defined

- Defining urban mission

The only possible foundation for mission is the Bible itself (Moreau, et al 2004:76). Whether in the rural or urban context, the Bible guides the church on the questions it faces. In the urban setting such questions impact on but are not limited to issues of spiritual and physical needs of salvation, education, and socio-economic empowerments of the urbanites (Mashau 2007:334-335). In appropriate contexts, these questions do not

exclude what Botha called “fighting for others” within the political dimension of solidarity with the urban victims of oppression, racism and social injustice (Botha 2002:28).

Bakke’s definition, departing from the views expressed by Mashau and Botha, leans more on the work of the church within the context of the democratic West. He described urban mission as dealing with the execution of the mission and evangelization program of the church within a complex network that combines the interplay of missiology, sociology and demography (Conn and others 2002:35). Though not expressively leftist, Kirk share the sentiment of Bakke on doing the work of urban mission through listening to the voice of God (as recorded in Scripture) and the cry of the people (recorded in national dailies) (Kirk 1999:14).

Bakke and Kirk are however not novel in their socio-spiritual definitions of urban mission. Webber (1964:10) had earlier argued that the church needed to take cognisance of the interplay of the Gospel of the Lord and the world the church is sent to evangelise in doing urban mission. He argued that urban cultures present ‘immense human problems’ to humanity. A proper perception of the urban society that would ensure effective witness and adequate service to its needs, demands an interdisciplinary resources of sociology, social psychology and anthropology (Webber 1964:10, 16).

Botha, possibly influenced by the Apartheid experience of the South Africans, felt the voice of the urbanites should be heard more pungently than what Bakke, Kirk and Webber present. He held that (whether in Johannesburg or Nairobi) the cry of the urbanites is heard in their daily ambush of “poverty and want, disease, unemployment, homelessness and illiteracy” (Botha 2008:57). It is this voice that defines and informs urban mission in a world where the galloping rate of urbanization is predicted to push three out of every four people born on planet earth into the city (Elliston & Kauffman 1993:127).

Urban missions, properly defined, are the positive responses of the church to challenges posed by urbanization. This manifests itself in both vertical and horizontal dimensions of faith. Vertically, the urbanites are brought into the saving faith of the Gospel through Jesus Christ. Horizontally, the consequences of human sin and depravity, such as poverty, sickness, and injustice, are addressed. This means that the church seeks the basic notion of

shalom for the city. This places the church in dual capacities: a gift from God and a performer of responsible tasks.

Pasquariello et al (1982:7) identify what the four concepts of the notion of shalom of the church in its urban missions ought to be. They are:

- Communal well-being rather than possessive individualism.
- A special bias in ethics towards the needs of poor people, the powerless and other marginal folk of society.
- Empowering persons to join together in a common pursuit of peace, justice, and compassion in society.
- A divine challenge to human beings to look at their lives together, as a whole, in an expanding sense of responsibility for a neighbourhood that ultimately includes all humanity and the created world.

However, the Pasquariello group miss out what Greenway and Mashau (2007:42, 43) are quick to identify. God is the spring and giver of shalom. Only in Him can humanity find wholeness, which shalom implies. The culmination of peace is in the personality and sacrifice of Christ, who is described in the Bible as “the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). His person and work are the bases for the urban mission of the church.

- Biblical basis of urban mission

Urban mission is primarily to live the life of shalom and labour in order to proclaim it to urban dwellers. Ecclesia militaria must attack whatever confronts shalom. Its mission is to defend the peace of the city. It is within this framework that the biblical basis of the urban agenda of the church is defined and framed.

The researcher reflects on selected Scriptural passages and draw inferences that identify seven of these scriptural bases for the city mission of the church. They are itemised below, though not in any particularly fixed order.

- Community

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common... continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:45, 46).

Believers of the early church committed themselves to a life of communalism born out of their desire for fellowship with one another in a hostile society. This was no communism of Christianity or “of the Essenes of Qumran” that demands an obligatory giving up of personal properties (Neil, 1973:82). Rather it arose out of a sense of being in trust of God’s provision which needs to be willingly shared with the needy; and of practising such acts by seeking for fellowships at households’ level rather than in the not so convenient umbrella of the Solomon’s porch in the Temple (Bruce 1954:81). The latter approach could not have solved the problem of isolationism with which the new sect of Nazarenes was already exposed to both among the Jews and the Romans in Jerusalem city

Similarly, contemporary city dwellers suffer from loneliness and nervous breakdowns (Bakke and Hart 1987:41). The culture of individualism, the unwillingness to be responsible to anyone or for anyone, and the economic demand to make ends meet do not favour community life in the urban setting. The establishment of churches and the resultant effect of the promotion of fellowship and welfare as demonstrated in the urban church of Jerusalem, is a panacea to isolation and a forum for practicing the Great commandments of loving God and loving one another (Matthew 22:36-40).

This makes urban mission a channel through which to become one another’s keeper. The reality of this is more pronounced within the African’s context where the culture of communalism is a core value. As Henry Mutua rightly argues, the extended family unit that urbanization tries to erode is assisted in thriving by it. It keeps surviving as a way of life “among contemporary migrant African urbanites” (Kim 2009:47).

- Conversion

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Act 6:7).

Interest in Christianity in the city of Jerusalem became so intense that for the first time (and perhaps only time) the priests, on a large scale, were reported to become associated with it. It is interesting that the priests (whatever their priesthood category) were not coming to the Christian faith out of mere curiosity like Nicodemus (see John chapter 3) or for personal gains as it was reported of Simon the Sorcerer in Samaria (see Acts 8).

Arguably, urban mission is a vehicle of mass conversion to the faith of Jesus Christ, who is the Shalom of the city. On Pentecost, three thousands were converted with Peter’s preaching (Acts 2:41). Another five thousands were later added to the faith (Acts 6:7). In the absence of conversion to Jesus Christ, the Bible unequivocally states that there will be no peace to the wicked soul (Isa 57:21). Urban mission thus helps to bring spiritual conversion to city dwellers individually and collectively in order to promote the spread of shalom and the reduction of chaos.

- Confrontation

“A curse is on the town of blood; it is full of deceit and violent acts; and there is no end to the taking of life” (Nahum 3:1 BBE).

As God, in the passage above, sent the prophet Nahum to Nineveh to confront and condemn their acts of violence, arrogance and man’s inhumanity to fellow man, so has the church the responsibility to confront the injustice of the city where the congregation is divinely located. The suburban in many cities of Africa is undeveloped. There is inadequate housing, poor public health services, and unpredictable employment opportunities, amongst other things (cf. Hance 1970).

In Nairobi, for example, modern road networks serve the residential areas of the upper class of society (Lavington and Karen are examples), while secondary roads that are poorly and rarely maintained link the estates of the economically deprived and politically isolated groups (Kibera and Mathare slums are points in case). Though Kibera is alleged to have more churches than toilet facilities, the body of Christ is yet to be seen as an agent of change for the oppressed, the marginalized and the dwellers in the shanty town.

- Consolation

“And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away” (Revelation 21:2-4).

God builds the New Jerusalem as an urban setting of consolation and reprieve. It is personified as a beautiful bride coming into the waiting arms of a long waiting bridegroom to comfort him. This is well depicted in the coming of Rebecca into the life of Isaac, who for three years had mourned the death of Sarah before the new comfort came to balance the scale of his cross (Genesis 35:62-67; Henry 1847:67). That God would situate his personal dwelling in New Jerusalem is, among other things, geared towards consoling the redeemed community, comforting it away from experienced grief, pain and death. Every city needs such hope in the face of the consequences of its sin. Unfortunately, urbanites are many times captives of their miseries without sufficient hope of a way out of the desolation. It is to such predicament that urban mission needs be addressed.

God repeatedly tells Israel and the nations of the world of His delight in seeing them getting saved rather than dying (Ezek.18:23; Isa.45:22). The climax of this hope is the assurance of the New Jerusalem: “a person-oriented city that shows acceptance,

friendship, enough money to live freely, and a prevailing justice” (Pasquariello et al 1982, 199). This hope, which underlies the work of urban mission, assuages the hurt inflicted by the chaotic urban crisis.

- Compassion

”And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it” (Luke 19:41).

Jesus showed pain and compassion when he wept over the plight of urban Jerusalem. Here was a city that was awaiting destruction on a magnitude that would surpass the A.D. 70 events (from Luke’s reflection), yet oblivion of the presence of Jesus the Messiah and the need for repentance and right relationship with him to ensure peace with Jehovah (Laymon 1971:698). Although Jesus would predict the fall of the city, he laboured much to cleanse it and stayed on to minister to its inhabitants.

Similarly, urban mission endeavours to identify with the dilemma of city dwellers by obeying the call to weep with those who are weeping (Rom.12:15). God’s people need to seek the well-being of the city as their own welfare is tied to it (Jeremiah 29:7). The church cannot be aloof over the plight of the sick that need healing, the homeless that need shelter, the ignorant that need knowledge, and the oppressed that need deliverance.

- Condemnation

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones to death those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you didn't want to! Look! Your house is left to you deserted. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'How blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Luke 13:34, 35).

Jesus pronounces desolation on Jerusalem if it does not repent from its sin and its continual refusal of the offer of salvation. This is after much labour to salvage the coming doom of judgment from God. The church in the city cannot be less forthright. It must speak out loudly to denounce the iniquities that pervade urban habitation in a bid to spare it of divine judgment. To preach otherwise will be a compromise of the urban mission precept from Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

- Contextualization

“And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law” (1Co 9:20).

Paul applies what has been termed ‘appropriate contextualization’ in his mission work in the cities of Asia Minor. He communicates the Gospel within the cultural understanding of the recipients. This explains his circumcising of Timothy in order to facilitate his acceptance and of the gospel he would have to preach among the Jews. By being flexible, Paul could observe the Jews’ laws that were unnecessary for salvation. He could identify with the Gentiles in their particularities while remaining subjected to Christ’s laws. Though he would not give up on godly biblical principles, he became weak with the weak so that by sharing in their circumstances, he could enter their lives and bring the gospel to their particular circumstances.

The example of Jesus Christ is equally illustrative. He speaks in Aramaic, preaches in imageries of agriculture, and gives illustrations in parables that appeal to the day-to-day life of his hearers. The church-in-mission must be contextually relevant to city congregation. Generally, religion is understood within the cultural interpretation of hearers. While the church remains faithful to the text, it is context that ensures enculturation of faith.

One primary agent of contextualization is language. The city has its own ‘language’, which according to Kraft is “a vehicle of cultural and primary means of enculturation or

socialization” (2004, 250). If Kraft’s statement is true that “people are like fish swimming in cultural water” (Kraft 2004, 8), it implies that the church, as fisher of men, must evolve a needs-based urban mission strategy that is relevant to catching the ‘city fish’ of perishing souls (Matthew 4:19).

Evidently, not every church has the means to carry out an entire city agenda. However, no one is without any means to effectively reach its own macro community within the larger urban setting.

The encouraging examples of how the congregations of the New and Old Testament times undertook the urban mission work of their times are models for the church of the 21st century.

2.2.4 Urbanization and urban mission in the Old Testament

The Bible is an urban book (Linthicum 1991:21). Its recorded events qualify it to be described as a book of missions in the cities. Almost all the major events involving the nation of Israel, the prophets of the Old Testament and major nations of the non-Jews heritage took place in the “polis” (towns or cities). Not only was the world of prophets like Moses, Jeremiah and Daniel an urban one, kings like David, builders like Nehemiah, and vice-presidents like Daniel, among other notables, lived their entire lives in an urban world.

The growth of Bible cities was as remarkable as such growth is in contemporary times. Abraham’s city of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen.11:27, 28) rose to a population of about 250,000 (Linthicum 1991:21). Nineveh was an urban centre of over 120,000 inhabitants (Jonah 4:11). Babylon was “an amazing city with eleven miles of walls and a water and irrigation system”, and Rome hit the one million population mark as early as the time of Christ (Linthicum 1991:21). Yet it was not until Calvin that theology had a voice to attempt a “theological formulation for an urban environment” (Linthicum 1991:23).

This leaves our urban missiological engagement of the Old Testament time to a synoptic literature study of some of the prominent cities in selected books of the Old Testament and

the mission work that God executed in them, either through the instrumentality of the Trinity, or of the prophets, priests and people of Israel (his chosen race and contact to the world of their time).

The exegesis of selected book chapters will be done to clearly highlight the city theme they portray. The nation of Israel will feature prominently as a unique nation. The uniqueness, however, is not in terms of purity of blood, but rather their covenant with God, dating back to the patriarchs, namely Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (cf. Hedlund 1991).

- BOOK OF GENESIS: THE CITY OF BABEL, Gen.11:1-9

The fourth chapter of the book of Genesis recorded the first city built by man in the Bible, the city of Enoch (Gen.4:17). The builder was Cain and the motive was based on rebellion and urge for self-rule (cf. Dubose 1978). However, the first notable city that attracted the initial urban mission of God was Babel (Gen.11:1-9).

Babel was the first sky scraper city built with an obsessive hope that it would house the humanity of the then world. The Babel Tower forged, albeit temporarily, a united front against the divine command of geographical spread. With growth in population comes the greater urge to disobey God an accelerated joint efforts to be like him. The expressed mission statement of its builders was unambiguous:

“And they said, Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen.11:4).

Babel’s motive was rooted in pride and arrogance. It attempts to confine supremacy on man-made gods and towers that are believed to connect unseen heaven to the visible earth, the very bane of contemporary humanity in its false beliefs in false gods of power, governance and its likes (Farmer, 1998:369, 370).

Babel portrays a search for unity outside God. This is the feature of urban dwellers. Urbanites are easily prone to enthroning themselves against God (Hedlund 1991:32). Urban culture harbours rebellion against constituted authority, whether of society or of God.

God caused the Babel project to halt. The once unified earth is now at disarray. While the builders boast “come, let us build”, the maker says “come, let us---confuse”. He scattered the city dwellers “over the face of all the earth and they ceased building the city” (Gen.11:8). The scattering was achieved by confounding their language. They were forced to toe the line of obedience to multiply and “fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen.1:28). This act of judgment gave the city its name:

“Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because Jehovah did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did Jehovah scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Gen.11:9).

However, though God’s justice and nature of holiness caused the scattering of Babel, the dispersion had an underpinning mission. Israel, as the people of God, was later equally scattered among the nations where these dispersed groups were sent, and they became Jehovah’s agent of mercy, compassion, righteousness and restoration (Hedlund 1991: 31).

The discipline meted by God over Babel reinstated the universal control of God and promoted his pre-eminence over nations. It sent a clear signal that God would not tolerate or accommodate the nation’s idols and idolatrous practices. His divine plan would be sustained even if it means putting humanity “into conflict and struggle with each other and leaving us with problems of communication on even the most basic level” (Farmer, 1998:370).

But beyond discipline, Moses in the 8th verse of 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy described this as an act of God to demarcate national boundaries “according to the number of the children of Israel” (cf. Hedlund 1991). Humanity learned from Babel the danger of starting

projects that cannot be finished and of erecting foundations of “a humanistic society without spiritual roots” (Hedlund 1991:30).

- BOOK OF EXODUS: THE PHARAOHNIC TREASURE CITY OF RAAMSES, EX.1:1-14

The Hebrew, led by Jacob and his children, were settled in Rameses in the land area of Goshen on arrival in Egypt (Gen.47:6, 11). Goshen has been identified by Bible commentators as a district with Raamses or Rameses serving as its capital city (cf. Adam Clarke’s Commentary). The city was built for Pharaoh as a supply or treasure city by the slave labour of the immigrant Jews (Ex.1:11).

The population of Raamses city rose so fast within a period of 200 years that from an initial number of seventy settlers on arrival, the Israelite population alone was about 600 000 ‘foot’ men (Exo.12:37) besides women, children and the aged at the time of the exodus. Estimates put the total number of the Jews at their departure from the city between 1 200 000 (cf. Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible) to 3 000 000 upwards (cf. Adam’s Clarke Commentary).

The rapid urbanization of Raamses coincided with the prevailing socio-cultural revolution brought about by the enthronement of a new leadership over the nation (Exo.1:8). Both events provoked a situation of tension and conflict that negatively impacted on the Hebrews. They were mandated to fend for needed raw materials and build treasure cities for Pharaoh. Slave labour was introduced, and the resultant oppression and affliction precipitated the exodus mission.

The work of building the treasure city was not just oppressive in nature, but also in the manner of execution. Labourers were abused and wages were denied. The appointed overseers or job supervisors had a clear order from Pharaoh to afflict the Hebrew slaves and hinder their population growth rate through rigorous, oppressive service (Exo.1:10-14). It was in this context that the spiritual need of the Hebrews became awakened and they cried out to God for help and justice (Exo.2:23-25).

As witnessed in most cities of Africa, like in Nairobi (Kenya) during the Mau-Mau uprising, Johannesburg (South Africa) under the Apartheid regime and in the cities of the Ibos of Nigeria after the civil war, conflict and oppression always open up the door for ministry in urban centres. The cry of the Hebrews got a positive response from God. It led to the call of Moses and the beginnings of the first urban mission work in Egypt. Moses recorded the mission circumstance:

“Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exo.3:7-10).

It has been suggested that Moses was the first human missionary in Biblical times (cf. Hedlund 1999). He was ably assisted by his siblings: Aaron and Miriam. The mission was to seek redress of oppressed slaves under a regime of hostility, xenophobia and extreme injustice. With the full involvement of God in the search for justice, Moses performed miracles, Aaron served as chief spokesperson and Miriam had time to coordinate the women’s affairs and to lead worship (Ex.4:9,14-17,27-31; 15:20,21). They all served as agents of *missio urbanus*.

God eventually liberated Israel from Egypt under an intense series of judgments. However, it is interesting to note that while delivering Israel, God did not restrain mercy from Egyptians who conformed to his instructions via Moses. They were subject to the same tokens of mercy as were the Jews.

For example, not all the rivers in the cities were turned to blood, otherwise the magicians would have had nowhere to try their enchantments (Ex.7:22-24). Also, the judgment of hail fell only on those who disobediently chose to go to the fields instead of staying in the house (Ex.9:18-21). The deviants were always punished, but the faithful were spared on most occasions. It speaks about the nature of God in urban mission work.

In doing urban mission, God has all the city dwellers in mind. His nature is to work beyond the covenant community and to send rain on the just and the wicked (Matthew 5:15). There is no racial undertone in the uniqueness of Israel in the Old Testament. The church needs to embody these characteristics and constantly practice biblical faith, which though exclusive in the worship of one God, remains inclusive in its embrace of all people (Hedlund 1991:81).

The church must proclaim “the Messiah of Israel and the gentile nations” to all people, languages and kindred of the earth, all over the cities of the world. This is the “axial significance in world history of Jesus of Nazareth” (Jongeneel 2009:132).

- **BOOK OF JOSHUA: THE CITY OF JERICHO, Joshua 6:1-26**

The book of Joshua introduces its readers to one of the most notable cities of the ancient time, the city of Jericho (Josh. 6:1-26). The city is located “six miles north of the Dead Sea and west of the Jordan River”⁵. It has rich historical antecedents that Laughlin claims to be very important for understanding the beginning stage of the rise of human “civilizations” (2006:162). Excavations of the city revealed a “plastered skull of pre-pottery Neolithic” period, which together with the stone wall and tower qualified the site to be called a city (Laughlin 2006:159). The climatic condition is mild and the city has abundant supply of water, which all combined to make the environment an ideal location for a city. The fame of the city is however attached to its destruction by Joshua in the conquest (Joshua 6:1-26). Hiel undertook the rebuilding of the city in the 9th century BCE under the reign of Ahab the King (1 Kings 16: 33, 34).

⁵ About.com: agnosticism/atheism, internet source, assessed 10 November 2009

Beyond geographical serenity, Jericho is a strategic location, forming a route linking Judah and the other side of Jordan. The city is presently identified with Tel es-Sultan, and archaeologists estimated its existence to have lasted about 11 000 years. This would make it “one of the oldest sites of human settlement in the world”, and “with evidence of one city build overtop of another for several millennia” (About.com: agnosticism/atheism). The markers at each end of the city actually proclaimed it the oldest city in the world (Laughlin 2006:157).

The urbanization and civilization of Jericho manifested in its large and high walls dating back to 7,000 BCE. Information from excavation of the city reveals abundant numbers of graves, household equipment, beads and pottery (About.com: agnosticism/atheism). Biblical accounts show it was a fortified city with not only impregnable walls, but also of an invincible gate (Joshua 6:1). Its economic wealth was stored in much silver, gold, vessels of bronze and of iron; so precious that Joshua commanded (even before the conquest) that all should be consecrated and kept in the treasury of Yahweh (Joshua 6:19).

But like most cities in biblical and contemporary times, Jericho had more evil to it than good. The King ordered the arrest of the two spies sent by Joshua to survey the city (Jos.2:3). Its passage gate was locked against the advancing party of Israelites (Jos.6:1), and was probably part of the idolatrous nations whose magnitude of iniquities God considered as full and meriting divine judgment (Gen.15:16).

The Hebrews, under the military command of Joshua, marched around the city seven times as God instructed (Jos.6:15, 16). The walls of the city collapsed and almost the whole city was wiped out, including humans and materials.

However, the mission of the two spies sent to the city was not limited to military surveillance. It included an offer of salvation to a harlot woman called Rahab. She believed and received the message and the messengers sent to the city, and had her life and the lives of her entire family spared from the destruction (Jos.6:24-25).

Also, during the times of the kings the prophets Elijah and Elisha performed significant acts in Jericho. For example, Elisha healed the polluted water of the city that was a major health concern to the citizenry. He equally worked a miracle that turned the tide of the

city's barren ground (2 Kings 2:18-22). Jericho served as a resettlement camp for the exiles that were returning from Persian captivity (Ezra 2:34; Neh.7:36). When the messengers of King David were psychologically traumatized with the shaving of their beards and cutting off of their garments at the buttocks by the people of Ammon, Jericho served as a rehab to restore their dented image and heal their broken spirit (1 Chronicles 19:4,5).

The story of Jericho demonstrates the nature of urban mission as scripturally prescribed. It is to offer life in the midst of destruction. It is to lift up the banner of salvation for the willing and show the merit of biblical faith over stubbornness of racial prejudice and resistance to divine will and ways. Urban mission properly perceived and implemented will heal life and the environment. Fighting for basic social amenities for the urbanites has a good place in the curriculum of a biblically executed urban mission enterprise. Again, that a whole city is given to evil does not excuse negligence. One receptive soul, like Rahab, can open the way of salvation to a whole household or sector in the society.

- BOOKS OF 1 KINGS: THE CITY OF SAMARIA (18:1-46)

Samaria was part of the single-entity nation of Israel until the end of the reign of King Solomon (1 Kings 12:12-17; 13:32). It became a prominent city for the ten tribes that constituted the Northern Kingdom after the division of the Kingdom of Israel, and especially from the reign of King Omri (1 Kings 16:23, 24). The city is founded near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, among the tribe of Ephraim. It was a city decked and fortified by the Kings of Israel.

A house of ivory was built by Ahab in the city of Samaria (1Ki 22:39). Its international repute is evidenced by the fact that “the kings of Syria had magazines or storehouses in it, for the purpose of commerce” (1Ki 20:34). “And it appears to have been a place of considerable importance and great strength” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary).

Historically, the idea of King Omri in the purchase of Samaria was “to found a new city, to which he might transfer the seat of government”. He chose the hilly country house of Shomer for that purpose (Adam Clarke’s Commentary). From perhaps a single building on the hill, “Shomeron, or, as it is corruptly written, Samaria” “became the capital of the ten

tribes, the metropolis of the kingdom of Israel, and the residence of its kings” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary). The Kings of Egypt took control of Samaria as their property after the death of Alexander the Great. The ownership later shifted to the Kings of Syria before Herod the Great restored the city “to its ancient splendour, and placed in it a colony of six thousand men, and gave it the name of Sebaste, in honour of Augustus” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary).

Religiously, Samaria was a city prone to gross idolatry and the worship of Baal, especially at the time of Elijah the prophet. Ahab and Jezebel had particularly great evil grips over the city. Ahab was the worst of all kings that ruled the city (1 Kings 16:33). His wife was “a zealous idolater, extremely imperious and malicious in her natural temper, addicted to witchcrafts and whoredoms (2 Kings 9:22), and every way vicious” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary). Both brought the wrath of God upon the city.

Perhaps not many cities in the Old Testament could lay claim to missionary activities that span the entire Bible like the city of Samaria can. A number of prophets carried out urban mission work of preaching repentance and suing for reconciliation with Jehovah in Samaria. The most effective was Elijah’s ministry. He brought down fire and destroyed four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. This led to a great national revival of repentance and restoration of worship of Jehovah. Through Elijah’s ministry, an end came to famine in the city as God, in response to prayer, poured out an abundant supply of rain on the drought-ridden land (1 Kings 18:22-45).

Elijah’s ministry further confirmed God’s concern over the city, even when it was wholly given to evil. Though the people would not respond to the prophet’s questioning over their idolatrous allegiance, the theophany of fire did not fail to transform them into believers in Yahweh who for long had remained sceptics under the influence of Baal. The theological claim is emphasized in the way the people quickly and joyfully acclaim God when they see his ability to answer prayers. They were moved to respond immediately to the request of Elijah to seize and execute those who would not cease to struggle, even unto death, in the evil of apostasy.

Seeking compassion for the suffering, supplying in the needs of the poor and restoring the wayward to righteousness are as much integrated into urban mission as reprimanding the erring and punishing those who choose to go the way of perdition.

- BOOK OF 2ND KINGS: THE CITY OF BETHEL

Apart from Jerusalem, the city of Bethel (“house of El” or of God), enjoyed the greatest mention in the Old Testament. In biblical times, it was located 9 miles north of Jerusalem in the tribal territory of Benjamin (Laughlin 2006:52). Laughlin noted that Edward Robinson identified the present city of Tell Beitin as Bethel in 1838 (1991:52).

Regarding the civilization and urbanization of Bethel in biblical times, the prophet Amos describes the city as having ‘houses of ivory’ and monuments of ‘great houses’ (Amos 3:15). Laughlin (quoting D.G. Dever’s “Beitin Tell”, 1992) reports that “Bethel was probably one of the most prominent Bronze-Iron Age towns in central Palestine, and it is also significant in biblical history” (2006:53). Despite the destruction inflicted on the city, it thrived until the post-exilic period of Ezra (2:28) and Nehemiah (7:32; 11:31). It remained a significant city site and was occupied “from the Hellenistic through the Byzantine periods” (Laughlin 2006:53).

Historically, Bethel as a town dated back to the flight of Jacob from the then Beersheba to Haran as a result of threat to his life from Esau (Genesis 28:10-22). At Bethel, which was formerly called Luz (Gen.28:19), God appeared to Jacob and made a generational covenant with him for blessing and protection. He later returned to the town (on God’s instruction) and built it as a dwelling city for his family and household. An altar was erected there for worship and God reappeared there again to Jacob with more promises (Gen.35:1-15). From then onwards, Bethel remained closely associated with religious revival, either on the side of Israel’s Yahweh, or with the gods that the Canaanites worshipped (Laughlin 2006:53).

Bethel, like most cities of the world, degenerated spiritually from a place of divine appearance to one of idolatrous worship. It became a centre of apostasy that exercised great negative influence on the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam, who set up the “golden calf” to counter the altar in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26-29).

The institutionalization of idolatry in Bethel attracted a variety of decisive urban mission efforts by major godly rulers and prophets in Israel. During the conquest, the city conspired with Ai to fight against the Hebrews and was promptly destroyed by Joshua and his army (Josh.8:17). The same fate befell the city at the time of the judges (Judges 1:22-28). During the 8th century BCE, leading prophets of Jehovah, like Amos and Hosea, proclaimed ruthless verdicts on the city and its rulers for their continuous rebellion against Yahweh (Amos 3:13-15; 5:4-7; 7:10-17; Hosea 10:15).

There were also positive mission efforts in the city of Bethel. In the 7th century BCE, King Josiah destroyed the pagan tradition of the city (Laughlin 2006:53). He stirred up the revival of religion and by personal example turned the heart, soul and might of the people to the law and the Lord (2 Kings 23:15-17, 25). Bethel equally served as a judicial centre at the time of Samuel, as a place for the dispensing of justice and equity (1 Samuel 7:16).

- BOOK OF PSALMS: MISSION TO NATIONS IN THE CITIES,
Psalms 2:1-12

Linthicum (1991:22) observed that the Psalter is filled with city psalms. This can be understood considering the background fact that its major author (David) and most of other contributing authors (especially Moses and Solomon) were urban dwellers writing from the city perspective. This equally explains why these psalms have been identified by Hedlund (1991:83) to have distinct missionary content that makes the book a missionary document of no comparison in the world.

One of the great urban mission chapters in the Psalms is chapter 2. It was written within the context of the rebellion that characterizes nations that form the cities of the world. Cities are known to revel in class, race, religious and socio-economic struggles. It is the mode-de-vie of urbanites to deviate from societal norms on dress code, cultural morality, edifying speech, and religious ethics (cf. Peil and Sada 1984:52-55). The chapter reveals city characteristics and the manner of doing mission in the context of *missio Dei*. Some of these tactics include, but are not limited to:

- City rebellion, v. 1-3

The rebellious act described by the Psalter in this chapter is orchestrated by the kings and rulers of the earth. They are the leaders of the people, not only in the good but equally in evil deeds. The madness of the rebellion is in the objects of attack: Yahweh and his anointed Messiah. The urbanites would not want to have anything to do with the rule of God or accept any of his limiting and restricting commands. It is the picture of Sodomites rejecting the sent angels from heaven and revolting against the warning words of righteous Lot (Gen.19:1ff).

- Carnal liberty , v.4-6

The futile attempt to seek liberty outside God invokes divine wrath and displeasure on city dwellers. The consequence is stress in every aspect of city life: occupational, vocational, spiritual and relational. Rather than God being persuaded to reconsider the carnal demand of urbanites, he reinforces the Lordship of the Messiah over nature and humanity. He mocks human foolishness and keeps pointing *homo urbanus* to the King on the holy hill of Zion, the giver of true liberty.

- Call to do mission, v.7-9

God points the way to the truth and the life for all urbanites to see. It is in his son, the Messiah. He has been given the nations to rule over and the ends of the earth to possess. He has been given the mandate to carry out that mission. This is a confirmation of the theocentric nature of mission. The goal of that mission is to break down all rebellion against God and his anointed messenger, Jesus Christ.

- Core of *missio Dei*, v.10-12

City mission is an invitation to divine mercy. All were called upon to ‘be wise’, ‘be instructed’, ‘serve the Lord’, ‘rejoice with trembling’ and ‘kiss the son’. This is the core of *missio Dei*, an offer of mercy, justice, compassion and salvation to the urban dwellers. Whether they will accept it or not, it has to be offered if the work being carried out is God’s mission. There is room also for warning on consequences of continuous rebellion.

Mission cannot be complete without rebuke on the evils of the city. However, the blessedness of mission concludes the severity in all warnings.

Many other urban mission chapters in the Psalms speak to the issues addressed in Psalms chapter two. Basically, these include the call to worship God alone (Ps.66); the counsel to put hope in the Messiah and his reign over nature and humans (Ps. 72); the command to praise Jehovah in life and deed (Ps.96); and the mandate to the church (represented by Israel and envisioned in the body of Christ) to do mission among all nations (Ps.2) (Hedlund 1991:83). God desires the salvation of nations in cities, and the prophetic stance that upholds this must be uncompromising (Hedlund 1991:103).

- BOOKS OF JEREMIAH AND DANIEL: THE CITY OF BABYLON,
Jeremiah 29:1-13; Daniel 2:46-49

The first mention of Babel was in Genesis chapter 11 during the confusion of language at the building of the skyscraper the Tower of Babel. (This was fully discussed at the beginning of this section of the chapter). The site later became the location of Babylon the capital city of the Babylonian Empire (Linthicum 1991:24).

The civilization of Babylon, especially under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, was one of the most astonishing wonders of the ancient world. It was “an amazing city with eleven miles of walls and a water and irrigation system” (Linthicum 1991:21). Its institutions and influence extended to the whole Babylonian Empire. The political, economic, social and religious influences dictated the pace and determined the fate of other cities and regions in the Empire. It had a structured educational system that trained bureaucrats, diplomats, and ‘wise men’ in science and languages (Daniel 1:4, 5).

Biblically, Babylon is made popular by its notoriety in idolatry, politico-military oppression of nations, and gross destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar forced the Jews to exile in Babylon and subjected them to mockery and defilement of the religion of Yahweh. Psalms 137 captures one of the scenes of suffering to which the Jews were subjected in Babylon. They gathered to weep and lament their loss by the rivers of Babylon and prayed to God against their enemies (Ps. 137:1-9).

However, it is interesting to note that though the god of Babylon was Baal, Satan, and he dominated and controlled every fibre of the city life, the influence of God and godly men of urban mission was not less pronounced. Two such missionaries were Daniel and Jeremiah.

Daniel served as city mayor of Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar (Linthicum 1991:22). He influenced the appointment of his Jewish colleague and class mates at the 'university of Babylon' to positions of power in the government of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan.1:5-20). Daniel knew the evils of Babylon and the judgment of God that was to come upon the city, yet he offered himself to serve in the government as a missionary. His life promoted the glory of God in a pagan city. The life he demonstrated in leadership was above reproach, and he had a genuine concern for the marginalized. This led to an increase welfare package for the poor people of the land, as he became their advocate before the King (Dan.4:27).

In all, Daniel and his three Hebrew colleagues in government made Yahweh revered throughout the Babylonian empire (Dan.3:28, 29). By the decree of the King, they caused an end, however temporarily, to the worship of idols and the thirst for the true God (Dan.6:21-27). They gave urban mission a lesson, that accepting leadership responsibility in an earthen community is a way of promoting shalom in the city and influencing empires for God.

Another great urban mission influence in Babylon was prophet Jeremiah. Though he was not part of the exiled, having been generously spared by Nebuchadnezzar for showing divine approval to the exilic invasion, his prophecies, especially in chapter twenty-nine of his book, point to urban promises from an urban God to his urban people. Four such promises, among others, are identified below:

- Promise of hope, verses 4-6, 11

There is hope in the city. This is the insight that Jeremiah seems to give to the hopeless Hebrews who prefer to look back to the blissful life in Zion rather than to hope in the bleak future of Babylon. Exile has just begun and Israel was devastated by the merciless way in which Nebuchadnezzar had plundered Jerusalem in quick successive instances.

With Jerusalem razed and the best of Israel's leaders wallowing in captivity, Israel became a people of lost hope, depressed psyche and grieving spirit.

Jeremiah brought an urban promise of hope to the exiles in Babylon. They are urged to take an interest in the economy of the city, to build houses, to become involved in agricultural sector and to rejoice in the institution of marriage and the family life of Babylon. He told them there is hope within the institutions and structures of the city.

- Promise of shalom or wholeness, verses 7, 11

Jeremiah assured the Jews that God had their welfare at heart, but that the welfare of Israel is tied to that of Babylon. The city defines the people and vice versa. The urbanites' desire for peace calls for a determined participation in the peaceful welfare of the city. Israel must do two things to get to wholeness: seek the shalom of Babylon, and pray to the Lord on behalf of Babylon. The city cannot heal its own wound. God's representatives in the city are the healers appointed for every city.

In essence, Israel had to see itself beyond being forced to exile by Nebuchadnezzar (Linthicum 1991:147). They were the witnesses of Jehovah, sent as emissaries for the healing of the land. The call of Jeremiah was for the Jews to live up to their urban call (Linthicum 1991:148). They were a fulfilment of God's desire to have his presence in the evil city. The journey to Babylon was thus a divine desire. Jehovah merely used the repressive regime and tools of Babylonians to get Israel to the land (Linthicum 1991:148). Their blessing was conditional to obeying this divine demand. How much God awaits the Christian urbanite to comprehend this mystery and respond accordingly.

The biblical mandate of Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon is a reminder to Christians that they should be salt and light to the city. The captives had to seek the peace (shalom) of the city where they were, rather than lamenting over their loss and becoming judgmental over the lifestyle of their hosts. Living the God-kind of life and showing the way for others to live it will help to sweeten and preserve the city from its decay and corruption. As Israel in Babylon remained a people with a mission from God and defined by God, so are Christians who by choice or coincidence find themselves in the cities of the

world. Believers must accept that they do not find themselves in the city by human chance, but by divine design.

- Promise of truth, reconciliation and restoration, verses 8-10, 14

Cities are generally homes of deception and falsehood. This is part of the systemic evil that plagues the city structures. However, in the midst of the loud voices of false prophets and deceivers, the still, small voice of God keeps whispering the truth to those who have ears to hear (Rev.2:7,17,29). Jeremiah was Israel's voice of truth in Babylon through the prophecies that he was delivering to them against the background of false prophets that wanted to derail the people from their urban ministry. It was the same experience as in the city of Samaria where Elijah's voice of truth withstood the 450 false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:22). In Bethel, God had to send a young prophet from Judah to counter the false voice of the backsliding prophets around King Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:1ff).

The promise of restoration formed part of the urban promises given to Israel in Babylon. God promised to bring the people to their own city after they fulfilled their mission call in Babylon. Though the first audience of the prophecy might not all live to witness the fulfilment of this promise because of its 70-year time-lag, their children were already on God's agenda.

Evidently, the city holds promises for generations to come. As children of the righteous are trained in the way they ought to go, they grow up positively influencing the systems in the city through life and deeds. The ministry of a single godly urbanite has been well demonstrated by the life and labour of D.L. Moody. Analyzing his city influence over Chicago and London, Linthicum wrote:

“Untold numbers of the citizens of those two great cities professed Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord for the first time. In addition, under Moody's moral leadership, the problems of poverty, of unemployment, of inadequate education of the lower classes, of the social sins of prostitution and alcoholism, and of distress of those people whose lives had been broken by such sin were profoundly addressed” (1991:148).

- Promise of answered prayers, verses 12-13, 14

Subject to a positive response to the urban call from God, Jeremiah assured Israel that God will work for their good. He will hear when they call in prayer. Though the temple of Solomon, the symbol of the presence of Yahweh and the rallying point of Israel's spirituality was no more, the God of the building was well with them in far away Babylon to respond to their distress call. The temple of God was limited, but not the God of the temple.

This is one of the most interesting parts of the story of urban mission. God was not asking Israel to come over to Jerusalem before they would find divine peace and blessing. He assured them that it would meet them right where they are in the city of Babylon. How great to know that God is in every city - the good and the evil - blessing the city and its inhabitants. He is not limited by the evils of a city or partial to the good of another. His blessings, though conditional as they may be, extend to all in every city that looks unto him. There must be a voice like Jeremiah to pass the good news to the city.

- BOOK OF JONAH: THE CITY OF NINEVEH, Jonah 3-4:11

Nineveh was the capital of ancient Assyrian empire. It was situated east of Tigris and opposite the modern Mosul (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary). From biblical record, it was one of the most ancient cities of the world (Gen.10:10-12). As the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, Nineveh's beauty was reported to be unique and globally recognized. Its parks and public buildings were subjects of praise, worldwide (Greenway and Mashau 2007:24).

Though Nineveh was a heathen city, it was great. Its eminence was visible in the extent of its circumference, which took a three day journey to complete (Jonah 3:3). The city had "walls one hundred feet high and so broad that three chariots might run abreast upon them" (Adam Clarke's Commentary). The inhabitants of Nineveh at the time of Jonah were more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons (Jonah 3:11). It was also great in wealth, stored in much gold and silver (Nahum 2:9). The greatness of its power and dominion extended over 'all the kings of the earth'.

However, the great city was a wicked city. It was a bloody city that was extremely prone to falsehood and robbery (Nahum 3:1). The empire plundered nations and oppressed with cruelty. Its military might was deployed to build its wealth, sustain its security and boost its economy. It excelled in injustice, using the total strength of ten thousand slaves in a period of twelve years to build the palace of the King (Greenway and Mashau 2007:24). Eventually the sin of Nineveh came to a climax, warranting vengeance from God. However, God warns before he destroys.

God urges Jonah to arise quickly and go to cry against the city of Nineveh. The Contemporary English Version of the Bible states the urgency and danger in God's command to Jonah in very succinct language. It writes:

“...go to the great city of Nineveh and say to the people, "The LORD has seen your terrible sins. You are doomed!" Jonah 1:2

It was a message of judgment and of mercy. God was grieving over the wickedness of the city and was searching for a way of offering forgiveness that would prevent destruction (Linthicum 1991:36). Unfortunately, Jonah saw the whole episode differently. He joined a ship going to Tarshish rather than heading to Nineveh for an urban mission duty. His disobedience pictured the situation of many Christians and churches called to the city and opting to remain outside it.

God's concern for Nineveh causes him not to abort his plan on the grounds of Jonah's rebellion. He disciplines Jonah by sending a fish to swallow him (Jonah 1:17). He restored Jonah to the call to Nineveh in response his prayer of repentance (Jonah 2:9, 10). For three long days, God strengthened his servant and anointed his message as he walked through the city proclaiming the coming divine judgment (Jonah 3:3, 4). The message met with contrite hearts and a broken spirit from the lowest person on the street to the king on the throne (Jonah 3:5-9). The result was the manifestation of God's nature to the city: “A gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, one who relents from doing harm” (Jonah 4:2). Nineveh was spared.

The great lesson from the interaction of God, Jonah and Nineveh showed that God is more concerned about the city than is the missionary he sends (Jonah 4:10, 11). He revealed his love and concern to both Jonah (in the fish belly and over the vine tree illustration) and Nineveh (a 'great' city of 120,000 souls, along with multitude of animals). Israel and Jonah may want all the heathen nations destroyed, and the Assyrians in particular (Amos 5:18-20) but not so with God (Linthicum 1991:181). The greatness of every city in evil is always more than matched by the greatness of God in compassion and mercy. He is as concerned over Jews and Jerusalem as he is over the gentiles and Nineveh.

Jesus confirms that Nineveh genuinely repented at the preaching of Jonah (Matthew 12:41). They actually turned from their evil ways (Jonah 3:10; 4:11). However, their deliverance from the wrath of God got Jonah angry. He was passionate for the survival of the Hebrews and was comfortable with God enlarging the Jewish territory (2 Kings 14:25-27). What he could not fathom is seeing God show the same grace to wicked Assyrians. He decided to have nothing to do with the new converts in the city of Nineveh. After waiting a while at the border of the city and discovered that God would not reverse his mercy, he probably returned to Judea disappointed (Jonah 4:1-9).

The lack of spiritual nourishment and a discipling program for the newly converted led to Nineveh sliding back into idolatry and former evils. Nineveh was eventually judged and was ruined (Nahum 3:1, 4, 5-7, 18). In urban mission the proclamation of God's word is necessary, but not sufficient for the salvation of the city. It must always be backed with teaching the word to the converts and making disciples through the acts of baptism and incorporation into the body of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

Conclusively, the book of Jonah presented the city as God saw it, a place deserving of mercy for both humans and animals. It laid the foundation for what urban mission ought to be from the divine perspective. Though Nineveh was doomed for destruction and has been so prophesied, God would reconsider his decision in the face of their repentance at the preaching of Jonah:

“And Jehovah said, You have had pity on the plant for which you had not laboured, nor made it grow, which was the son of a night and perished the son of a night, and should I not have pity on Nineveh, the great city in which are more than a hundred and twenty thousand of mankind who do not know between the right and the left hand, and many cattle?” (Jonah 4:10, 11).

In his patience and miraculous dealings with Jonah, God showed that there is no price too high to rescue a “city of blood, full of lies”, and which has become “the mistress of witchcraft and a capital of vice” (Nahum 3:1, 4). Though God saw the wickedness of the city, He at the same time initiated a missionary program that would stir the people to repentance and bring a city-wide salvation. We can only comprehend the depth of this divine strategy by noting that Nineveh, as national capital, held the destiny of the entire Assyrian empire.

2.2.5 Urbanization and urban mission in the New Testament

Both the New Testament and Jesus greatly value the city as the place to do gospel work. Biblical records show major events that form part of the Gospel story taking place within the urban setting. For example, the founder and chief shepherd of the Christian church, Jesus Christ, “was born in the city of Bethlehem, grew up in the city of Nazareth, and was crucified and resurrected in the city of Jerusalem” (Dubose 1978:43).

The congregation of Jerusalem, being the first post-ascension Christian church, was born in the city (Acts 2:1ff). The gentile churches that Paul planted were principally urban churches. He planted churches throughout Asia Minor, focusing on cities and using them as teaching and training centres for church planters and financiers. Paul saw the city as the bedrock for raising congregations, maintaining contacts, promoting communication, and mobilizing workers for community service. The importance of the city is illustrated by the declaration of the apocalyptic book that the end of just and righteous humanity will not be a return to the garden, but an abode in a new celestial city that would be founded by God at the end of the eschaton (Rev.21:2).

The following section of the study will examine the urban mission work in some of the notable cities in the New Testament. The aim is to identify the strategic place of the city in the urban mission work of Jesus, the apostolic church and that of Apostle Paul. They serve as models of urban mission for the church of the 21st century.

- THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is prominently above all the cities mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. Starting from the book of Joshua (10:1) to the end of the Hebrew Bible the city is mentioned 672 times. The first mention in the English Bible (Gen.14:18) portrays the traditional interpretation of the Hebrew word given to the city, “shalem”, connoting “city of peace” or “foundation of shalem” (Linthicum 1991:25). It is a unique city that has been occupied for about 6,000 years and has played and is still playing a major role in the world’s three theistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Laughlin 2006:163).

The city of Jerusalem was an urban centre as early as the days of David the king. Though there is no consensus on the origin of the name, it actually seemed to have received the name “Jerusalem” after it had been annexed by Israel and made its capital by King David (2 Samuel 5:6-12, Linthicum 1991:26).

The urbanization of Jerusalem had spiritual significance. As an idealized city of God meant to witness the shalom of Jehovah, its economy was intended to portray the virtues of equity and stewardship (Ps.122:6-9; 147:2). The elements of communalism and justice were the principles upon which the politics of the city was supposed to be based (Ex.35:4-36:6; 1 Sam.8:4-22).

Jerusalem was also an ordained spiritual service centre for the entire world. It was “a model city living in trust and faith under the lordship of God” (Linthicum 1991:25). Though the urban story of the city is rooted in the Old Testament, its climax of significance in the eschaton is centered in the New Testament. It was there Jesus offered himself for crucifixion at a time when Rome’s political power and the Jewish religious manoeuvring were at their prime (Linthicum 1991:22).

However, Jerusalem was never totally what it was meant to be in the sight of Jehovah and the world. Its features were constantly a mix of good and evil, just like every other city in Biblical times. Perhaps this could be understood from the tension in the formation of the city. Shalem was “the local god of pre-Israelite Canaan”. It has been claimed that it was King David that came up with the name Je-rusalem by pre-fixing Yahweh to shalem (Linthicum 1991:26).

There is also the view that Jerusalem was a derivation from the name of the city Jebus, a name associated with the leader of the Jebusites. Whichever way, the circumstance gave the city the picture of a dual influence and made it a city for both Baal and Yahweh. This has continued to this day in contemporary Jerusalem. Raison d’être for the city serving as battleground for the raging opposing forces of good and evil, of God and of Satan.

The structural evils of Jerusalem corrupted the socio-political and religious systems of Israel. King Solomon’s example is a sufficient synopsis of the wickedness in the city and nation. Solomon perpetrated urban corruption by amazing wealth at unimaginable proportion (1 Kings 10:26-29). His daily palace provision seemed enough to feed several households that suffer in poverty, even in modern times (1 Kings 4:22-23).

Nationals and foreigners in Israel were exploited under Solomon through forced and slave labour. Were he to live in contemporary times, he would be guilty of human trafficking by the regimented shifts of duty he enforced on the 10,000 strong labour force that worked monthly for him on Israel and Lebanon soils (1 Kings 5:13-18). It was a replica of Egyptian’s cruelty against Israel before the exodus.

There was also the economics of privilege and class distinctions introduced to Israel by Solomon (Linthicum 1991:55). The city and nation descended into idolatry so grossly that worship centres were built for the idols of Moab and Ammon (1 Kings 11:1-7). Added to idol worship was the sin of immorality and unbridled passion for strange women. It led God to break up the kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 11:8-11).

But Jehovah did not give up on the city of Jerusalem. He initiated different urban mission enterprises at different times to redeem the city. Jeremiah and Isaiah ministered to the city as committed prophets seeking the wholeness of the city and the will of Yahweh.

When Nehemiah was permitted to rebuild the city after the destruction by the Babylonian army, he served as the “planner, community organizer, and governor” (Linthicum 1991:22). In the New Testament, the focus of the mission of Jesus and of the first church was on the city of Jerusalem. They were the lost sheep that must first be sought for mercy and restoration (Matthew 10:6).

Jesus declared that the redeeming voice of a prophet must never stop in the city of Jerusalem (Luk3 13:33). When there was nothing more to say, he was overwhelmed with compassion and wept over the city (Luke 19:41-44). It demonstrated the extent of God’s love for the city. Love that comes with tears of pity and concern is what the church needs to show to the city to see revitalization of congregations.

- CITIES OF DECAPOLIS

“Decapolis” was an amalgamated league of ten Hellenized cities created by Alexander the Great and his successors. The most prominent of them in the biblical account of Jesus’ ministry was Gadara (Mark 5:1-20; 7:31-37). The cities were located along the edge of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee (Mark 7:31) and bore the same name than the region where they were located. This region is the present Kingdom of Jordan and the Golan Heights⁶.

The urbanization of Decapolis assisted the spread of Greek civilization and fostered the ability of Rome to control the region and to quell rural revolts. Educational institutions, philosophical thoughts and the entertainment industry were part of the Greco-Roman culture that the cities of Decapolis helped to spread within the region. It showed the extent of the cosmopolitan nature of these cities, especially in serving as a point of convergence for the cultures of the Greek, Roman and the indigenous people of the land. Excavations of the cities by archaeologists revealed the co-existence of pagan temples with Jewish synagogues and Christian churches⁷.

⁶ About.com: agnosticism/atheism. Internet source. Accessed 13-11-2009

⁷ About.com: agnosticism/atheism. Internet source. Accessed 13-11-2009

The writer of the Gospel of Mark recorded the urban mission of Jesus in the cities of Decapolis. As a heathen city with pagan temples, it was not strange to find demonic torment and manifestation like the violent mad man of Gadara. His pathetic case as described by the gospel writer indicates his helplessness. He was living among the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones (Mark 5:2-5).

Jesus ordered the demons out of the man and he was healed instantly. However, instead of the natives showing gratitude and welcoming Jesus to do more work in their cities like in the case of Sychar in Samaria (John 4:39-42), they pleaded with him to depart from their region (Mark 5:15-17). Perhaps this explains why Jesus had to commission the healed man to go and tell the city dwellers what God has done for him rather than hanging around the crowd. He excellently performed the commission and proclaimed the good news to all ten cities in the region (Mark 5:18-20). Such proclamation is what every city needs in order to be saved.

That Jesus specially loves the city and would not give up easily on account of its evils and recalcitrant conduct is shown in his travelling again to the coasts of Decapolis to perform more miracles. The writer of the Mark Gospel reports:

“Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly” (Mark 7:31-35).

Though the urbanites of Decapolis resented Jesus, he received them and granted their desire to heal their deaf and dumb man. He demonstrated compassion and mercy towards their ignorance and fear. Through the channels of spiritual warfare against spiritual forces

of darkness, He confronted the demons disturbing their citizens and healed the sicknesses that enfeebled them.

While they could not reject his miracles, but unwilling to have him stay in their cities, he commissioned one of them to take the good news to the cities. The effect of his preaching is seen in the attention they eventually paid to Jesus' ministry, the expression of their wonders over the miracles, and the glory they eventually gave to God (Mark 7:35-37).

- CITY OF SYCHAR

The city of Sychar was one of the metropolises of the New Testament where Jesus undertook urban mission work (John 4:4-7, 39-42). It was a city of Samaria (John 4:5). Like the rest of the region of Palestine, it was under the control of the Roman Empire during the New Testament times. During the time of Herod, the Jews and Samaritans had little contact with each other, their shared common heritage notwithstanding. This informed the question of the woman from whom Jesus asked a drink of water: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?", for Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (John 4:9).

The moral decay of the city could be imagined from the marital story of this woman as revealed in her dialogue with Jesus. She had already had five husbands before she met Jesus (John 4:16-19). What followed was the manifestation of God's love for city inhabitants. Jesus patiently clarified her doubts, answered her questions and went on to reveal himself as the awaited Messiah. She did not only believe the truth, but helped the entire city to come to Jesus and believe in the Saviour (John 4:39-42). A revival broke out in the city and Jesus took more days, at their request, to get them established in the truth.

The revival that broke out in the city of Samaria at the preaching of evangelist Philip could well have been prepared by the urban mission work previously done there by Jesus (Acts 8:5-8). Though Samaritans were prone to the deceit of witchcraft and sorcery, and were long exploited by the magic of Simon the sorcerer, the city was full of joy as they listened to Philip, believed the good news of the kingdom of God and were baptized into Jesus Christ (Acts 8:8-13). The Jerusalem church complemented the effort of Philip by sending

Peter and John, who came to join him in the city work and assisted the converts in getting baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

The Sychar story provides a number of lessons on urban mission. First, individuals in the city matter as much to God as the whole city itself. Second, Jesus sacrificed the satisfaction of his hunger and thirst for the spiritual needs of the woman as an example to follow. Third, Jesus looked beyond the overt sinful state of the woman and saw a potential saved vessel for urban mission. Fourth, he endured possible misinterpretation of his talking with a Samaritan woman (John 4:27). A misinterpretation based on the ignorance of the disciples on the mission of God.

Jesus showed that God is the Lord of all nations and that a racial barrier is a frontier for the church to cross if it wants to do urban mission as God intends. That effective evangelization of one sinful woman could lead to the salvation of a whole city is a great lesson learnt in this regard. Yet complementary team work rather than isolated individual effort is the key to perfection of urban mission. Unlike Jonah in Nineveh, Jesus and the early church knew the importance of staying back to teach, disciple and incorporate city converts for an abiding fruitful mission.

- CITY OF ROME

Rome had a population of one million people at the time of Christ. Until the 5th century, it was the largest city in Europe (Linthicum 1991:22). The city served as capital of the Roman Empire, an empire so evil that the book of Revelations pictured it as archetypical of Babylon, a city wholly given over to Satan (Rev.17:1-19:10). Narrating the systemic evil of the city of Rome, especially regarding the circumstances surrounding its commitment to emperor worship, Linthicum (1991:280) writes:

“In order to maintain the empire, Rome had to make space within it for Hellenistic culture, the Oriental mystery religions, and Greek philosophy. These forces provided the psychological cement that held the empire together. Dependence on such movements to make the empire cohesive, however, was not enough because these elements did

not centre sufficient focus on Rome itself. Thus it was that the Romans were forced to invent a central focus for the empire: they established the worship of past emperors and the celebration of the divinity of the present ruler”.

The urban way of life in Rome was so peculiarly evil that the book of Revelations figuratively called the city: “the mother of the evil women and of the unclean things of the earth” (Rev. 17:5). By attributing divinity to a human emperor and the institution of the Roman Empire, the city violated the first commandment of God and gave approval to the very sin that led to the downfall of Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Other features of godlessness that necessitated a concentration of urban mission in the city of Rome include:

- Sin of spiritual adultery, a pseudonym for idolatry, Rev.17:1-5
- Murder of God’s prophets and the saints of Jesus, Rev. 17:6; 18:24
- “Unconditional exploitation of the world in order to foster her own economic security and luxury” (Linthicum 1991:281; Rev.18:11-19)
- Greedily amassing the wealth of the rest of the world to herself and leaving nations “helpless and destitute, unable to cope either nationally or individually with the exigencies of life” (Linthicum 1991:282)
- Misuse of political power for suppression of potential threats
- Social perversion of morality and uncontrolled sinful pleasures, Rev.18:21-19:4
- The lure to freedom of worship, thought and association for those who complied with emperor worship and the decree of death for dissenters, especially Christians. An example of a non-conformist martyr was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna (Linthicum 1991:281).

Rome established the structures on which all cities of the world are built. Such structures open the door to an influx of demonic principalities and powers in the city. They constitute the reason why urban mission must not just be an integral part of the church, but the very essence of its being. It seemed Paul realized this urgency when he told the brethren the

obligation he had to go and preach in Rome (Acts 19:21). Jesus later appeared to him in a night vision encouraging and affirming that Paul's ministry would extend from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 23:11).

Paul's urban mission work in Rome was mainly twofold. He wrote 'The Epistle to the Romans'. This seemed to be his deepest theological exposition on justification by faith and the equality of Christian Jews and gentiles before God. This is perhaps a follow-up on the news he got about the spiritual situation of the church in this metropolis of the world from Aquila and Priscilla who had been believers there before being deported according to the decree of Claudius (Romans 16:3-5; Acts 18:2).

The second part of Paul's ministry in Rome centred on preaching and teaching the kingdom of God in his rented house as he awaited trial on the charge brought by the Jews against him before the emperor (Acts 28:30,31). Though Paul had not been to Rome before he wrote the epistle to the Romans, he cited many believers who had been involved in the mission work in the city. Most acknowledged apart from Aquila and Priscilla was Phoebe, who he described as a sister, a servant of the church and helper of many (Romans 16:1, 2).

- THE NEW JERUSALEM CITY

The New Testament gives the final word on the city. It offers a revelation of the celestial city, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to become the habitation of the redeemed (Revelation 21:1-2). The New Jerusalem is the perfect picture of what God intends the city to be. It is a city entirely dedicated to the person and pursuit of God. The writer of Revelations gives an eye witness account of the city as seen in the vision he received from Christ:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" Rev. 21:1-4

The New Jerusalem City is relevant to contemporary urban missiological engagement to the extent to which it is a prototype of God's intent for the city. It gives the church the benchmark to aim at in urban mission. Some of these points of reference, as detailed by the angel to John and as processed in the mind of the researcher, include:

- Holiness of life and acts as against corruption and pollution in conduct, v.2
- The city being prepared as bride of Christ, not brothel of Satan, v.2
- Urbanites and urban centres becoming dwelling places of God, not of devils, v.3
- This makes the city an abode of social justice, compassion, mercy, righteousness and everything that negates the cities of Baal (Samaria), Babylon or Rome.
- Absence of frivolous death, pain and grieve as a result of lack or insufficient provision of basic socio-economic infrastructures and gainful employment opportunities, v.4
- End to regimes of injustice, class distinction, xenophobia and cost of living that discriminate against urban dwellers in slums and shanty towns.

The New Jerusalem city will be entirely built by God, and will therefore be devoid of all the evils and wickedness associated with cities of humans. The church will not contribute to its urban mission work. Though cities since ancient times have been characterized by religious paraphernalia (cf. Dubose 1978), there will not be a church or temple in the New Jerusalem City because they are temporary and transitional created institutions that presently serve as foreshadow of God's coming kingdom (Linthicum 1991:287). All events will be pre-ordained and enabled supernaturally by God.

Giving a more exhaustive description of the New Jerusalem City as yardstick for contemporary urban mission work, Linthicum (1991:285-289) posits a number of features that characterize the city, some normative and others descriptive. As processed through the mind of the researcher, the following attracts quick attention:

- The newness of the city. This is not a repaired or refurbished dwelling, but is completely new in construction and institutional order. The modern world on almost all the continents still boasts of cities constructed from scratch. Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, is a recent example in Africa.
- The divine ownership of the city. The angel was emphatic that it is God's own city (Rev21:2). Unlike all other cities of the world and in the Bible, the New Jerusalem is the first and only city whose builder is God. The book of Hebrews record that the patriarchs were in search of such a city (Heb.11:8-10). The researcher opines that cities where urban mission work leads to over 70% evangelical Christians would be close to this ideal city.
- The abundance of human and natural resources in the city. It is interesting to note that the absence of death, pain, poverty, grief or any of such calamities that define human urban habitats make the worship of God and his praise frivolously exciting in the New Jerusalem. It points to the claim by Hedlund (1991:79) that "social concern does not diminish redemptive concern when kept in biblical balance".

God constantly shows his distaste for poverty and oppression in his dealings with his chosen people (Ex.22:25). He enjoins lending and giving within his instituted economy (Deut. 15:7-10). He does not compromise on justice in human relationships (Deut.16:18-20; Ex.22:22, 23:6, 9). Missiologists like David Bosch, James Engel, Stuart Murray and William Dyrness have long doubted the biblical truism of the extreme ecclesiocentric nature of gospel-without-social action (cf. Hibbert 2009). While church planting and multiplication is crucial to the mission of God, the 1989 Manila Manifesto is right to insist that the Gospel has "inescapable social implications" (Hibbert 2009:321).

- The magnificence of the New Jerusalem City calls attention to the dislike of God for low income settlements of slums and shanty towns that characterize many cities of the Majority World. Henry Mutua rightly observes that many of the African urban poor make the slums their homes without minding the deplorable social conditions of such settlements (Kim 2009:45). He points out the particular case of Kenya where the shanty towns of Nairobi (Mathare Valley, Mukulu Wakwanjega and Kibera) attract an estimated 70% of the city population into settlements noted for deep poverty and squalor (Kim 2009:49). Most probably the poor choose the slums because the cost of living, immigration and emigration controls, class structures, among others, discriminate against them in the city centre. This is contrary to the image of existence in the New Jerusalem City.

Besides social and economic infrastructures, the New Jerusalem City equally relishes in physical magnificence. With a square dimension of an approximate 12,000 stadia, Linthicum estimates the land measurement to stretch geometrically from a city like Nairobi in Kenya to the city of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Linthicum 1991:286).

- The new understanding of the institutional church. Church or temple structure is absent in the New Jerusalem city. The absence is due to the direct presence of God among his people, who worship him without intermediaries. The implication for city mission is the need to avoid taking the institutional church for God's kingdom itself. It is comforting that most missiologists agree that the goal of mission is the entrance of the kingdom of God. The church serves as means and "central expression of the kingdom of God until Jesus comes again" (Hibbert 2009:325).
- The political dimension of the New Jerusalem City speaks to the pacifism of many evangelicals on issues of governance in urban mission. Politics under God distinctly marks the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:23-25). The political structure will be universally beneficial while "everyone will play a part in the city's governance" (Linthicum 1991:289). This should not be interpreted as a

democratic dispensation, because the political order will be theocratic. The inhabitants are the redeemed of the Lord who neither have nor desire to have voting rights against the reign of God and his rule of justice. The city needs such a united front among believers in Jesus Christ to institute and sustain the reign of God in the political realm of urban settings.

However, though many of the features of the New Jerusalem City are normative, they are ideals that urban mission work should be engaged with on a day-to-day basis. Unlike in the city, socio-economic activities and institutions like the health care system, funeral services, electricity supply, and security network that dominate modern urban settings will not go in oblivion while the city lasts. Also, there will be no need for the sun or night in the New Jerusalem. The present atmospheric concern regarding the solar system and the fear of global warming from excessive heat and flooding rivers are a far cry from the rule of the New Jerusalem City.

On the other hand, Linthicum missed the point of Scripture when he described the functioning structures of the New Jerusalem City as “transformed systems” (1991:289). On the contrary, all structures are completely new creations because “he that sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Rev.21:5).

Similarly, it will be unbiblical to assert as Linthicum does that “the principalities and powers remain a part of the city’s life” (1991:289). If these represent the powers of darkness, as alluded to in the rest of his book, they would have been cast into the lake of fire after the White Throne Judgment (Rev.20”10-15). This precedes the descent of the New Jerusalem City from heaven (Rev.21:2). It is totally unbiblical to insinuate, as Linthicum does, that there will be a second chance for the fallen angels who served Satan to be re-commissioned into “the service of God and humanity in the city” (1991:289). The New Jerusalem is the city of God and of his angels, together with “the nations of them which are saved”. (Rev. 21:24). No unclean person or thing shall be found in the city (Rev.21:27).

2.2.6 Biblical principles on urbanization and city ministry

The city is people

Perhaps the first element to understand for effective urban mission work is to know that city essentially refers to people (cf. Dubose 1978). Urbanites are not just a mass of humanity camping in a crowded geographical space, but are “socially heterogeneous individuals” living their lives according to the demand of urban life (Peil and Sada 1984:49). When Gugler and Flanagan (1978: 20) claim that the mark of a Yoruba urbanite in the West African region is “to belong to many associations”, they were simply asserting what the city dweller does in socio-economic terms is the city.

A city’s evil is personal

Much of the evil perpetrated in every city is personal (Linthicum 1991:41). It is the accumulation of personal sins that produce corporate evil. The case of Sodom and Gomorrah is a classic example (Gen.19). Ezekiel analysed the dimensions of such individual sinfulness and told Israel that God will not only hold individuals accountable for his/her evil deeds, but will punish accordingly. He declared “for every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son-both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.” (18:4).

While urban mission may not want to miss out focused group outreaches, it is important to realize that the individuals hold the ace to the good and evil that rule in a city. Individuals must be helped to accept personal responsibility for their deeds and misdeeds as well as for general national calamities. It is the weight of the cumulative sin of each individual, for example, that resulted in the exile of Israel to Babylon.

Systemic evil of cities must be contended with

To significantly impact a city through effective urban mission, the church must go beyond concentrating on individual salvation to fighting against the evil structures that corrupt every city. The tri-alliance of socio-economic, religious and political institutions has the capabilities of serving either good and evil purposes depending on whether they form a

holy or an unholy alliance (Linthicum 1991:62, 63). In the urban centres, evil tends to dominate. Cities are homes of personal as well as corporate, systemic evils. The scale of corruption, oppression, prostitution and destruction of moral fabrics could be so deep in a city that the corporate evil outclasses the sum of individual sins in the city (Linthicum 1991:46, 47). Urban mission would have to deal a great blow to the root of such endemic evils before it can expect to see expected individual transformation in the lives of the citizenry.

God has long involvement in the city story

Bible records reveal that cities have existed from the beginning of the Bible with God being deeply involved in its affairs. From the Tower of Babel to the New Jerusalem, God and city form an unbreakable union. God judges cities, lays them to ruin when they sin and dispatches its inhabitants into captivity. However, God never abandons the city. His dealings with Jerusalem, Babylon, and Nineveh among others are examples of God remaining relevant in the history of cities along their times of woes and blessings. Urban missionaries that share the sentiments of God would not only be patient with cities, but empathize with it until the goal of God for the wholeness of humanity is achieved.

Jesus paid special attention to the city

Jesus had a positive view of the city despite its attendant evils. To him, the city was where the need was. It was where the problems were. This is why he would not permit his disciples, after his departure, to go and hide in a remote rural setting or on the mountain side where he was used to retreating with them during his earthly ministry.

Though conscious of the suspicion of Rome, the wickedness of the Sanhedrin, the promiscuity of the Gentiles, and the hostility of the Jews, he insisted in his post-resurrection instruction that the city must be the centre of action. It would be from there that the Pentecostal power influence would spread from local geographical boundaries to national and international frontiers (Luke 24:19).

His aim of calling the attention of the disciples to the abundance of the city harvest was an alert on where the labour force should be concentrated (Matt. 9:37, 38). Jesus' peculiar

attention and insistence on the city despite its anti-gospel disposition was a confirmation of his philosophy of ministry: "healthy people don't need a physician, but sick people do" (Matthew 9:12).

As far as Jesus was concerned, there was no other place to get the pool of the sick that needed human-divine assistance like the city. Like the historic pool of Bethesda, the city harbours all kinds of impotent, powerless folks waiting for mercy from Christ, the giver of the living water (John 5:2-9; 4: 10-14).

Emphasise repentance from dead works

Though the city is inherently evil, it is also potentially saintly. The saintliness is a function of the revolution the church carries out. An insistence on a return to the 'revolution age' of 1947 for the purpose of church revival, as suggested by Van Dusen (Botha 2005:144), may reform a church but being inward-looking, will not lead to the salvation of the city. What Webber called the sin of "morphological fundamentalism" or "the rigidity of the structures of church life" (Webber 1964:13) is the bane of many urban missions and the cause of church stagnation and death. The salvation of the city is in preaching repentance from dead works, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and taking an uncompromising prophetic stance as demonstrated by Peter in Jerusalem and Jonah in Nineveh (Acts 2:37, 38; Jonah 3:4).

Cities are reminders of human nature

The cities that men built in the Bible are a reminder of the sinful nature of humans. Cain built Enoch, the first city mentioned in the Bible (Gen 4:17). The name connotes initiation, a new beginning. It was a product of his complaint against the severity of God's punishment for his crime of murder. Though under divine curse, he was seeking for a new beginning of greatness and an end to his father's home that he has abandoned. This criminal characteristic spread down his lineage (Gen 4:23, 24).

Many of the 1,227 cities mentioned in the Bible that were built by humans follow a similar pattern. Babel, Sodom, Gomorrah, the storage cities of Pharaoh, Nineveh, Babylon and Samaria were cities that demonstrated great capacity for evils. They were centres of

idolatrous artefacts, architectural pride, human injustice, sexual perversion, extreme lawlessness and violent challenge to godly principles. These are the issues that urban mission must confront with the Gospel.

Major in prayer and get engaged in spiritual warfare

The very nature of the city as centre of tension between Baal and Jehovah means the existence of constant spiritual warfare. There is the need to wage war against the systemic evils of the city in order to bring about change. This exposes urban mission workers to attack from principalities and powers. After a three-year successful ministry in the city of Ephesus, Paul the apostle declared that these dark powers are what the church has to combat with all the armour of God (Eph.6:12).

The Psalmist knew this and called for urban prayer for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalms 122:6). Similarly, Jeremiah appealed to the Jews exiled to the city of Babylon to pray to the LORD for the welfare of the city (Jer.29:7). Prayer will restrain satanic attacks that target the vulnerability of the urban missionaries and their audience.

Presence of godly people saves cities

God needed his presence in Babylon to save the city, so he sent Israel there in exile. The forceful exile carried out by the cruel regime of Nebuchadnezzar was an end to fulfilling God's desire to influence the Babylonians. The same scenario was repeated in the case of Nineveh. The intention of God to show mercy to the 120,000 persons that could not discern their left hand from the right led to the forceful push of Jonah to serve as missionary to the city.

When godly people are in a city, God is disposed to saving the city. This is the principle behind the plea for Sodom by Abraham and the search of God for ten godly people that would make him spare the city (Gen.18:32). The situation of Jerusalem was more critical. God searched for just one godly person that would move him to show mercy. He told Jeremiah:

“People of Jerusalem, run through your streets! Look around! See for yourselves! Search the marketplaces! Can you find one person who does what is right and tries to be faithful to God? If you can, the LORD will forgive Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 5:1 GNB).

The implication of this is clear: whatever the number of the godly in any city, their presence will save a city from destruction as they plead the case of the poor and deprived. Abandoning the city for the rural is no solution to city vices. The presence of evil could be overwhelming in the city, but God will not permanently deliver it to Satan on account of the existence of the righteous.

Cities have a capacity for good

The city is God’s bedrock for human advancement. It is no coincidence that God constantly used the world powers in Biblical times to take Israel captive to cities⁸. Cities in contemporary times equally have the capacity for good as did some in Biblical days. When God told Joshua to build “cities of refuge” for the children of Israel (Joshua 20), he had in mind the principles of legal justice, divine mercy and eventual redemption and salvation of the guilty. David the king built the “city of Zion”, which served as a centre for the worship of Yahweh and the projection of divine glory in the days of Solomon. At the end of age, the New Jerusalem city would be filled with humans with the perfection of shalom (Rev. 21). All these are what the cities are capable of becoming when urban mission realizes that cities are people, and that hope for urbanites is never lost.

Proclamation of God’s Word saves cities

God commanded Jonah to preach against the wickedness of Nineveh (Jonah 1:2). The proclamation led to a city-wide repentance that had no equal in biblical times. Even animals were made to abstain from food and drink as a sign of collective repentance (Jonah 3:6-8). At Bethel, the sharp rebuke and prophecy of judgment by the man of God

⁸ Jacob and his household lived in agriculturally prosperous Goshen in Egypt (Gen.47:6). The Assyrians and the Babylonians kept the cream of the Jews in their capital cities as captives (Psalms 137:1). In the New Testament, Jerusalem and Rome served as “judgment seats” for the persecuted Christians of the first century (Acts 23:11).

from Judah caused a change of heart in King Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:6, 7). The city of Samaria only confessed “Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God” after a descent of fire following the proclamation of Elijah of the need for them to decide between Jehovah and Baal (1 king 18:30-39). When the people of Gadara did not want Jesus to continue his ministry with them after healing the demoniac, Jesus commanded the man to go and proclaim what God had done to his people. The result left the pagan federation of ten cities of Decapolis in marvel of God (Mark 5:19, 20).

Though there is wisdom in subtle dissemination of peaceful counsel, Babylon did not witness the dramatic revival of Nineveh or the miracles of Bethel, though the exiled Hebrews obeyed the counsel of Jeremiah of becoming involved in the affairs of the city. This shows the superior power of proclamation against the evils of the city in order to witness urban transformation of life and structures.

Make disciples of all nations in the city

The only lasting way to “counter the destruction of the cities and the fabric of communal life” (Pasquariello, p.188) in urban settings is when the church is aggressively involved in evangelism and mission that is centred on making disciples. Every city has an imprint of Babylon on it: lust, independence, arrogance and multifaceted evils. Babylon seems to be the Bible’s name for every city of the world. Transform this into the resemblance of the New Jerusalem and a habitation of the eternal God would require that every church focuses on proclaiming “this gospel of the kingdom” (Matt.24:14) and incorporating the believers into the fold of Christ through the sacrament of baptism (Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12; Gal 3:27; Acts 26:16).

Instruct city disciples

This is the end product of the church’s mission in the city: the production of deaconate who will live out the life of Christ before the world and carry the banner of the Gospel to others. Greenway and Mashau call this “the reproduction system in discipleship training” (2007:84). More than half of the ministry time of Jesus was spent on training the twelve within the context of the city. They eventually took over from him and expanded the kingdom territory. Paul equally gave quality time to instructing the church in his epistles.

This raised the likes of Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus and many others who became his companions in labour to win the cities of Asia Minor to the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phi 2:25).

Beyond preaching, heal the sick

One great door to the heart of city dwellers is the ministry of signs and wonders. Jesus read the city well when he declared: “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe” (John 4:48). The miracle ministry opened the hearts of the Galileans to his preaching as an after-effect of the water that turned into wine at the wedding celebration (John 4:45). When the cities of Decapolis rejected his presence in their midst, he returned to them in response to their desire for having their sick healed (Mark 7:31-37).

The early church equally opened the door of urban mission in Jerusalem through the ministry of healing. The healing of the lame man at the temple Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:1-11) increased the church by thousands (Acts 4:4). It was the same experience in the ministry of Paul the apostle. The Vice President of the nation, a prison officer, and an entire city have been known to come to faith on account of the miraculous deeds of God through Paul with Barnabas or Silas (Acts. 13:12; 16:27-34; 28:5-10).

2.2.7 Conclusion

The city is the world. Every mission that will eventually win the world must have its root in the city. It is not by coincidence that the Bible story of the world started in a garden (Eden), but ended in the city (the New Jerusalem). Even the patriarchs of old looked for a coming city of God (Hebrews 11:10).

There is no doubt from biblical record that God intends for the city to be transformed into his habitation (Isa.60:14; Ps.48:1, 2; 46:4). It is equally expected to be a prosperous habitat for humans (Ps.107:4-8). This demonstrates the capacity of the city to change from good to evil when the church’s mission effort is concentrated in it with a good balance of text and context in message and ministry.

Though the politics of the New Jerusalem will not be democratic, as Linthicum (1991: 289) insinuated, the theocratic dispensation it portrays is an urban mission goal the church can create in a miniature in every city. The possibility lies in the fact that God made the city by his hand. He gave man the ingenuity to create urban dwellings and all the networks in them.

If the church stops condemning the city and starts working for its shalom; if instead of fleeing the city, the believers accept their urban mission call in it, then the rule and reign of God will soon make every city a bride prepared like the New Jerusalem city for the coming of Christ the King.

2.3 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHURCH PLANTING

2.3.1 Meaning of the church

A biblical understanding of the church is crucial for an accurate theological reflection on church planting. This is more so in the face of unabated debate over issues of quality versus quantity in determining the true church (McGavran 1980:36,). The conflicting views have promoted the theological argument on whether it is discipleship or church planting that the church needs to accord priority to its mission (cf. Kim 2009, Seipp 2009).

The Church is the body of believers in Christ Jesus. It consists of people who have practically committed their lives to him as Saviour from sin and Lord in lifestyle. This implies that the church is neither a building where people congregate to worship nor the totality of those that may be found in worship structures. Only 'the Lord knows those who are his' (2 Tim.2:19). From the perspective of divine ownership, the church refers to that invisible group of men and women who are identified by God to be in a relationship with him.

The church has its distinctive that differentiates it from the larger society or related religious movements. Even as a religious movement, it retains its distinctive in "using the translated truth of Christian faith to effect transformation of justice and transfer of power

to the marginalized of society” (Kim 2009:134). Christ is the builder and owner of the church (Matt.16:18).

But can the church be planted within the context of this definition? According to Erickson (1983:1041), the word church stems from the Greek word ‘kuriakos’ meaning ‘belonging to the Lord’. The New Testament word ‘ekklesia’ chiefly refers to a group of believers in a specific city or household. This explains Paul’s constant use of such phrases as “the church in God in Corinth” (1 Cor.1:2; 2 Cor.1:1), “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess.1:1) in his writings. The same goes for the churches that met in the homes of individuals like Aquila and Priscilla (Rom.16:5; 1 Cor.16:19). From this we know that the church is also visible and could be localized. Each of the assemblies is whole and complete in itself and the membership is identified by those who have a saving knowledge of Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Malphurs (2004:25) agrees, defining the local church as “a gathering of professing believers in Christ who, under leadership, have organized to observe the ordinances and obey Jesus’ Great Commission”. The most important emphasis here is that the people who are professing believers in Christ are gathering and obeying Christ’s commands. This is what a planted church basically is. Its first area of obedience is in observing the ordinances of water baptism (Matt.28:19; Acts 2:4) and the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor.11:23-25; Matt.26:26-28) as acts of devotedness to Jesus Christ. The second is carrying out the Great Commission by making disciples of nations (Matt.28:18-20).

Church members have their names written in heaven (Heb.12:23) and the total membership forms the universal church, which incorporates both the presently visible members as well as the departed saints. In many instances the local church would include both the saved and the unsaved. The church does not refrain from multiplying itself to prevent or address this ‘anomaly’. The separation of the two groups is the prerogative of Christ and he has promised to do that at the time of the harvest of the world (Matt.13:30).

The Bible also describes the church as God’s own people (2 Cor.6:16). The implication here is that the initiative to becoming a church member actually comes from God, irrespective of the church planting method employed. It is by the extended arm of grace of God that a repentant sinner finds salvation in Christ and becomes chosen as God’s own

person to share in the divine life (Zoë) and the nature of holiness (Eph.5:25-27). Also, the church represents the body of Christ (1 Cor.12:27). It is his focus and centre of activity. Every believer is a member of this body and Christ is the head. In the body there are both vertical relationships as well as horizontal interconnectedness. The outcomes of this relationship are the cord of unity, the warmth of fellowship, the grace of restoration, the provision of edification and the evangelization of the dying world of sinners.

Metaphorically, the church has been said to be God's kingdom on earth and the new Israel with whom the new covenant of spiritual relationship has been made. It is the family of God with Christ as the bridegroom and the church the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27). It is compared to the 'branches on a vine' (John.15:5), an 'olive tree', (Rom.11:17-24), 'a new temple' (1 Pet.2:4-8), a 'royal priesthood' (1 Pet.2:5), and 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim.3:15). Little wonder the members of such a church are wholly committed to the call and work of the master, Jesus Christ. The uppermost of this is, perhaps, is church planting.

The church has a duty. It does not exist as an end in itself. God wants to see humanity restored to him. His heartbeat is displayed in the Great Commission work he gives to the church (Matt.28:19; Mark 16:15). The church also exists for the edification of its members (Ephesians 4:11, 12; 2 Tim.3:16), worship (Acts.13), and for social concern (Matt.10:8). Perhaps there is no greater duty of the church than planting and replanting itself. Donald McGavran, David Hesselgrave and Kenneth Mulholland are unanimous in contending that where it is well-defined "church planting is the heart and primary purpose of Christian mission" (Hibbert 2009:322).

2.3.2 Church planting defined

The variety of meanings that different scholars and various theological persuasions assign to what the church is necessarily lead to differences in the definition given to church planting. The Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council (2004:29) attempts a working definition that seems to have appeal across the board with few limitations. The Council states: "Church planting is creating new communities of Christian faith as part of

the Mission of God, to express his kingdom in every geographic and cultural context” (2004:29).

Three ideas are germane to this working definition. The first idea is church planting as the creation of new Christian communities. To create is a deliberately planned activity of establishing a new congregation as compared to simply merging declining or dying churches. It is a process, “a branch of practical mission theology, developing the thinking and disciplines that underlie the creation of fresh expressions of church” (Church Council 2004:32).

The second idea embodied in the definition is church planting as part of the mission of God. Theologians are not unanimous on whether church planting is simply a part or a central activity of the mission of God. This is extensively discussed under the sub-head of ‘church planting and God’s mission’ in this chapter, and would therefore not be repeated here.

The third component is the expression of church planting as kingdom expression in every geographical and cultural context. There are diverse expressions of culture in different geographical contexts. This calls for the inculturation of the Gospel at the deep worldview level of the recipients. The church must adapt to changed social contexts without cultural conformity against the faith. It is a balance of faithfulness to text and respect for context.

Many missiologists identify with different parts of the Church of England Council’s definition of church planting. Aubrey Malphurs’ (2004) view coincides largely with the first part of the definition. David Bosch, Stuart Murray, Johannes Verkuyl, James Engel and William Dyrness (cf. Hibbert 2009) will rather see church planting as partner in God’s mission than consider it as central or the main duty of the church. Mainstream evangelical scholars of the Church Growth Movements (CGMs) led by Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner disagree, insisting that church planting is first among equals in the call of the church, and agreeing further with the Council that this needs to be done bearing in mind the diverse cultural expression of groups.

In the latter group is Malphurs’ definition of church planting as “an exhausting but exciting venture of faith that involves the planned process of beginning and growing new

local churches based on Jesus' promise and in obedience to this Great Commission" (2004:19). Hibbert (2009:317) sees this definition as incorporating three major ideas. First, that church planting is an intentional activity that involves human planning. Second, that church planting is a dynamic process. Third, that church planting involves both starting new churches and helping those churches grow. The fourth element, which Hibbert did not identify, is the theological foundation embedded in the definition of church planting given by Malphurs, the truth that church planting is anchored on the Great Commission of Christ to the church.

Hill (1984:12) echoes the view of Malphurs when he concludes that church planting is the natural consequence of proclaiming the Gospel in obedience to the Great Commission. Garrison shares a similar view. He argues that a church planting movement is "a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment" (Payne 2003:221). The emphasis of the definition, like others, is on new churches coming to be in rapid succession when a congregation is engaged in multiplying itself. This multiplication, according to Garrison, is more effective within an indigenous setting.

The focus on indigenous people groups in defining church planting is expressed not only by Garrison and Payne, but also by Patterson and Currah (2003). They claim that "church multiplication-or a church planting movement-happens when God prepares many people within a cultural group to embrace the good news" (2003:210). This definition, as processed in the researcher's mind, has three elements to it. There is the existence of a cultural group. This is a people group identifiable by a common way of life, ideals and goals. Then there is the aspect of divine preparation of a good number of people within the group to become receptive to the Gospel. This preparation, many times, could be fostered by positive or negative circumstances of life (cp. Acts 10; 16; 28). Thirdly, there is the embrace of the good news by many people within the group. According to Patterson and Currah, this happens as the people "trust in Jesus Christ and pass on his promise of forgiveness and life to relatives and friends" (2003:210).

Defining church planting through the spectacle of cultural or indigenous groups is the emphasis of scholars within the Church Growth Movement. Donald McGavran describes the plight of the unsaved. He writes, "If the lost are to be found, Christians must go where

the lost are, and church them in congregations which are agreeable and pleasant and uplifting to them” (Chaney 1982:9). He does not consider church planting to have taken place until both the clergy and the laity are constantly discipling indigenous peoples and multiplying new congregations in their midst using the worldview of these peoples.

However, the Catholic Church had equally long insisted on the primacy of church planting based on its theological standing that “salvation was available only to people who were within reach of a local church” (Hibbert 2009:318). Factors of geography and culture are implied in the definition.

Writing along the view of Donald McGavran, Chaney (1982:33) defines church planting as “an expression of the concern that the way into the kingdom be opened for all men, for every tribe and subtribe of humanity” that are yet to be churchied. In answer to the question of how most readily the non-Christians could be helped to receive Christ, he points to the crucial factor of culture in planting new congregations. He counsels:

Plant congregations in every segment of society, so that men and women can find Christ among their peers without having to give up or renounce cultural distinctives which have structured a meaningful life for them in the world. Let the mature Christian cross the barriers to the unbeliever, not force the unbeliever to cross the barriers to come to Christ.

The rationale of defining church planting along the lines of indigenous people groups is theologically founded, especially in the book of Psalms. The nations are ordained to be Christ’s heritage (Psalms 2:8). God awaits the coming of all nations to worship him and glorify his name (Psalms 86:9). He knows and delights in the cultural diversity of the world’s ethnic groupings. He uses the diversities of culture and socio-economic conditions of nations as “occasion for the multiplication of churches and the building of the dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Chaney 1982:31). This is what the promotion of homogeneous principle of church planting seeks to achieve, despite being evaluated by some scholars of

having a tendency to play the number game above perfecting the church. Many authors have given a clinical review of the critique.

Michael Griffiths distinguishes between church planting and church perfecting or church renewal (Hill 1984:125). He argues that church planting takes place in “pioneer situations” while church perfecting “is the constant quickening of existing churches, already planted, but needing establishing, strengthening, pruning of dead wood and so on” (Hill 1984:125). He argues further that it would be more appropriate to speak of ‘church replanting’ “in the older countries of Christendom” rather than church planting. His argument is that these nations already have densely packed denominational roots, which makes their case more one of looking over an existing garden rather than attempting to start one from scratch (Hill 1984:126).

Griffiths’ point of view has merit where the church is perceived as denominational entities moving into “earthen” lands among the never-before Christians. This view would find support in “the Second Vatican Council’s decree on mission, *Ad Gentes*, which describes the goal of mission as ‘to preach the Gospel and plant the church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet been established’ (Hibbert 2009:317). Within the confines of the Catholic theology, salvation is “available only to people who were within reach of a local church” (Hibbert 2009:318).

However, an evangelical understanding of the church (as previously stated in this chapter) goes beyond denominational identity of Griffiths’ inclination. The church refers to people of God in the grace of Jesus Christ. Within this description, Griffiths fails to consider the fact that nations that could not count a ten percent church attendance (he referred to an average five percent church attendance in some rural areas in Britain) do not qualify to be labelled existing gardens of God, but uncultivated and unreached mission fields.

Furthermore, the church as a people cannot be replanted. Individuals could be brought back to the fold in restoration from backsliding (Gal. 4:19), and a once churched but now secular people group could and should be re-evangelized. Both cases need members of the planted church. As at the time individuals or corporate entities are no more in the faith, they cease to be the church of Jesus Christ. The view that mission is for the never-in-

church heathen of the Majority World and evangelism for the not again-in-church in the West (Europe and North America), lacks merit in evangelical circles (cf. Bosch 1991).

In defining church planting, the major contribution of Michael Griffiths' paper on 'Evangelism and church planting-future directions for church growth' is in distinguishing between "three forms of church re-planting in Britain" (Hill 1984:127,128). The three forms, as processed through the mind of the researcher and explained below, seem to have validity for church planting in all lands.

The first form is what Griffiths calls "Denominational outreach". This is a church planting approach where an established church goes out of its comfort zone to create a daughter congregation in a new area. It is a 'natural growth' phenomenon as the new congregation is legitimately owned by a 'parent' who is expected to provide initial care and nurture. The second form is "spontaneous schismatic outstep". It is the "stepping out" of an existing congregation by a group of frustrated believers who could no longer bear with the lack-lustre nature of their church. In many instances and from the experience of the researcher, the breakaway group finds fault with the local church's leadership style, disagrees with a doctrinal or moral stand, gets weighed down by an unresolved conflict or simply becomes fed up with lack of church growth and church renewal. Church replanting, according to Griffiths, could also be due to "spontaneous schismatic inpush", a situation of 'transfer growth' where outsiders crash in to lure existing church members to form a new one or join one so formed.

Griffiths disagrees with the "spontaneous schismatic outstep" approach to church planting, calling it "the works of the flesh" that only improves church statistics, but destroys the unity of the body of Christ as encouraged in 1 Cor.1:2; 3:17 and Gal.5:21 (Hill 1984:128). He equally finds fault with "spontaneous schismatic inpush" as "it is essentially partisan and sectarian, usually with some new doctrinal emphasis behind it, teaching that they are the only truly biblical Christians: thus existing Christians and existing churches are despised, regarded inferior, unenlightened and, at best, second-class Christians" (Hill 1984:128). He takes a much stronger exception to "transfer growth" as a common way of planting church because it brings "competition with older existing churches". While the approach increases quantitative growth of church statistics, Griffiths holds that it

“weakens existing churches” and introduces the works of the flesh in both the old and new congregations.

Theologically, we do not have biblical evidence to support Griffiths’ position that all churches that are planted by denominational outreaches are free from the works of the flesh. It would equally not be in the spirit of the mission of God to refrain from other forms of church planting outside the denominational approach on the grounds of its tendency to “encourage the works of the flesh” (Hill 1984:128). The truth is that if freedom from the works of the flesh is the yardstick for measuring a worthily planted church, many of the New Testament churches would be disqualified from list of acceptable planted churches. A few examples will suffice here.

There was murmuring in the first Jerusalem church even as the church multiplied (Acts 6:1). Paul called the Corinthian Christians carnal believers who could not be fed with the meat of the word (1 Cor.3:1-3). It was a church plagued with factions, immorality, different views on morals, the resurrection and spiritual gifts. Yet, the apostle addressed them as ‘the church of God’, ‘saints’, ‘sanctified in Christ Jesus’ (1 Cor.1:1-3). The Galatians were Christians, yet “foolish” and “bewitched” away from complete obedience to the truth of the Gospel (Gal.3:1-3). None of these cited churches was planted by “spontaneous schismatic outstep”, “spontaneous schismatic inpush” or by “transfer growth”, yet they were not free from the works of the flesh.

The manifestation of the works of the flesh is not peculiar to a specific form of church planting. Joe Aldrich has rightly concluded that the kingdom of God needs to grow and the way to reach the seekers of the kingdom is “to plant new churches and where possible, bring renewal (against the works of the flesh) to existing churches” (Malphurs 2004:9). This needs be understood from the background of the statement of Jesus Christ that he will build his church and it will survive against all odds, the very gates of hell not exclusive (Malphurs 2004:13). To partner with Jesus Christ on this goal involves planting new churches.

According to Wagner (1990:11) church planting is “the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven”. Though the works of flesh may characterize the church planting activities of some congregations, Malphurs (2004:13) holds that “it is far easier to

plant a new church than to renew a dying one”. The dynamics of renewal far outreaches that of church planting, if well defined and understood in its scriptural and cultural contexts.

In the light of these various analyses, the researcher holds the view that true church planting is a deliberate church mission that produces new converts within indigenous peoples and initiates them to maturity in spiritual life, fruitfulness in kingdom service and concern for social action.

2.3.3 Biblical and theological basis for church planting

Hibbert (2009:1) has rightly argued that “a biblical and theological foundation is essential if church planting is to fulfil God’s purposes for it”. The teaching and practice of Jesus in his earthly ministry, the acts of the apostles of the early church, and the history of the church from its inception all point to church planting and multiplication as God’s norm.

2.3.3.1 Perspectives from Jesus’ teaching and practice

Jesus did not speak much on the church and how it will be planted. Biblical records show he only mentioned the word church twice (Matthew 16:18; 18:17). It can be deduced from his teachings and practices that he centralized all plans of church establishment on the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). He indicated that “the Spirit’s ministry would be geographically to the end of the earth; chronologically, to the end of this age” (Hillis 1965:26).

We would not then be far from the truth to claim that urban church planting rests heavily on the Holy Spirit: he is the program, the method and the dynamics (Hillis 1965:26). This accounts for the variety of methods in use in every land, the unexpected results witnessed, and the diverse adaptations to context to meet audience needs and enlist acceptance of the good news (Hillis 1965:26).

Besides the influencing ministry of the Holy Spirit, there is the compassionate ministry of Jesus Christ as the biblical basis of church planting. Along the streets of Palestine, he was moved with compassion as he saw the spiritually hungry and scattered sheep that needed

to be fed with the word of life and folded into the fold of the Kingdom (Matt.9:36-38). His request for prayers for labourers in God's harvest is the most direct plea for church planters who will plant and grow the kingdom of God in the various harvest fields of the world.

Jesus chose a nucleus of 'apostles' or 'sent ones', whose role is that of a church planter (Chaney 1982:156). He chose the first twelve "that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" (Mark 3:14, 15)). He later on identified and appointed the 'other seventy' to go into every city and proclaim the good news of the kingdom (Luke 10:1). These and others that followed after them planted churches in all the cities throughout the Mediterranean Sea, with the proof of their apostleship being the multitudes of planted churches of the first century (Chaney 1982:157).

Also, the Triune God is a missionary Trinitarian. The Apostle Peter wrote of the longsuffering nature of God that would not want to see any perish (2 Peter 3:9). He thus patiently waits for any person or group of people who would call on his name and be saved (Rom.10:13). As soon as the people of Nineveh showed signs of repentance he waived the judgment that was to befall the "great city" and its animals (Jonah 3:10).

God seeks for city missionaries who will go beyond the self-imposed limit of Jonah (he would not do any discipleship and incorporation work for the Nineveh's converts) to creating and growing congregations in the cities. In no other place is the demand perhaps more urgent than in the megacities of Africa. Nairobi, for example, is adjudged Africa's most violent city of the 21st century (Joda-Mbewe and Hendriks 2003:278). Johannesburg is home to nominal Christians who neither live by Christian values nor attend church on regular basis (Hendriks and Erasmus 2005:91). The early church made itself relevant to such developments.

2.3.3.2 Foundational examples from the early church

The first churches give us the basic principles that are applicable in all cultures and human periods. A perusal of the books of the Acts and other New Testament writings provide first

hand experiences and a view of the most important period of church planting. That was a period of practical implementations of the Great Commission as expounded in Matthew 28:18-20.

As the early church obeyed Christ and faithfully proclaimed the Word in the temple and from house to house (Acts 5:42), the city of Jerusalem was filled with their teaching (Acts 5:28), a large number of priest accepted the faith of Christ (Acts 6:7), miraculous signs were performed, leaving the people filled with awe and wonders (Acts 2:43; 5:14-16). Many more thousands came to faith and more gatherings (churches) became obvious for nurture, edification and care of members (1 Corinth. 12; Eph.4:16; Acts 4; 5). Though individual salvation is emphasised, the church always exalted its corporate identity, the need to bear one another's burden and lift up one another as members of the body of Christ (Hill 1984:18).

The book of Acts particularly presents itself as a church planting book. Many of the activities carried out in the book took place in the context of planting new churches (Malphurs 2004:24). It is even of greater importance, as Malphurs observes, that contemporary believers are in the faith today due to the labour of church planting carried out 'yesterday' by the first century church that no longer exists (2004:240), particularly the first Jerusalem church.

Closely following on the heels of Jerusalem was the Antioch congregation which "became the centre of mission outreach to the Gentiles" (Hill 1984:16). The move of the Holy Spirit among the members and leaders (Acts 13) indicates that the Gospel is not confined to the Jews, but to as many as the Lord would call (Gal.2:28; Eph.2:19; 1 Pet.2:10). The planting of the church in Antioch and from there in the whole of Asia Minor confirms that "church planting in New Testament times was in a fundamental sense the planting of new communities" wherever the Gospel is preached (Hill 1984:16).

The practice of the apostles of the early church regarding church planting equally centred on the household unit under the Roman Empire vis-à-vis the urgency of the task received from Christ. In the Roman Empire, the household goes beyond blood ties to relatives, extended family members, friends, servants and slaves. The central authority usually rests with the head of the household. He decides on most matters, including issues of religious

beliefs and practice. When therefore the household head was converted, every other member became an instant believer (Hill 1984:17). A church congregation will usually begin in and for the household and others in their neighbourhoods (Acts 10:27, 44: 16:30-34). It does not matter if the household head is a woman. A city church was planted in the house of Lydia, the rich merchant of Philippi, when she believed and was baptized with her household (Acts 16:15, 40).

Hill (1984:18) is right in observing a particular kind of haste in the itinerary of the early church apostles, which necessitated the rapid multiplication of churches. Commenting from Acts 14:21-25 he states:

The apostles rarely stayed long in any one city. Their task was to preach the gospel, bearing witness to the resurrection of Jesus, proclaiming him Messiah, baptizing the believers, planting a church, appointing local leaders and then moving on from that city to another.

However, it is not difficult to identify with the haste that Hill identifies in the gospel work of the apostles. They preached in the context of an understanding of the imminent return of Christ. Paul, for example, wrote to imply that Christ would return in his day (1 Thess.4:15-17). They were committed to extending the rule of the Messiah through planting a new community of believers (Hill 1984:18).

Again, mass conversion in the early church demands multiplication of congregations. On Pentecost day, for example, three thousands new members were added to the church under the ministry of Peter (Acts 2). Some more thousands were later added within a short space of time (Acts 4:4). When Philip went to evangelize Samaria, the whole city responded joyfully to his preaching and heeded his message of salvation in Christ Jesus (Acts 8:5-12). Both in Ephesus and Corinth, as well as in many other cities where he ministered, Paul had a substantial following who believed in the good news that he proclaimed.

Baptizing and instructing those multitudes logically demand saturation church planting in localities close to the converts, with more teachers and pastors than the preaching

evangelists under whom they believed. This led to the spread of home cell groups where the believers met for care and to observe the ordinances. Many of these naturally evolved into local churches in the cities. Many contemporary city churches follow after this early church pattern and do have multiplying local congregations mushrooming all over the city. The old members supply the needs of the young babes in Christ, providing them with attention and dedication (Hill 1984:79).

As already noted in the ministry of Jesus Christ, except where churches are planted and multiplied, it would be difficult to reproduce leaders for the mission of God on earth. This is because the church provides opportunity to identify gifts in young converts that are being raised in a discipleship program. In the perfect example of Jesus, he chose Peter, James and John, who became the pillars of the early church (Gal.2:9). There was also the identification and recommendation of Timothy to Paul by the local church where the young believer maintained a good testimony (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy later became the pastor of the church of Ephesus serving on the mission field like Titus, who was placed in Crete for church administration and ordination (Titus 1:5).

Believers are saved to serve, and the role of diakonia influences the planting of churches (Hibbert 2009:326). Leadership qualities cannot be discovered in a vacuum. It is as members congregate in local churches and are put through training and service programs that the Holy Spirit reveals those whom he equips for different callings in ministry (Acts 13:2).

The dimension of the Holy Spirit will always run through any theological explanation for the phenomenal church planting work that was witnessed in the ministry of the early church. The coming of Pentecost brought along with it “authoritative preaching, the forgiveness of sins, healing of the sick, and victory over the powers” (Hibbert 2009: 326). The crowds gathered around the apostles as they witnessed such manifestation of the power of the kingdom. From biblical history, and particularly the mission of Paul the apostle, churches were the natural outcomes of such gatherings.

2.3.4 Pauline Mission of planting house churches

Paul evangelized the whole of Asia Minor and brought the Gospel to Europe by planting churches in houses of those who responded to his message. Frequently in his letters, he wrote to greet those churches “in the house” (Rom.16:5; 1 Cor.16:9; Col.4:15; Philemon 1:2). This was in addition to his worshipping in the synagogues with other Jews. His goal was that he “might by all means save some” (I Cor. 9:22).

The Pauline mission of house churches points out that the way to reach the city will no longer be through programs, but via biblical people incarnating Christ in the neighbourhoods. While not minimizing the potential of conventional ‘mixed’ congregations involving all classes of people in worship, the house church provides the opportunity for detailed attention to the needs of different social classes in the society. The house church attempts to meet these needs through contextualized outreach methods (Claerbaut 1983:52-55).

It seems that Paul had advance information about the relatives of Christians he had previously known before he got to the towns where they could be found (Arn and McGravan.1973:32). An example of this is in his greeting list in the sixteenth chapter of Romans. With these ‘approachable people’ and an emphasis on the family unit for salvation, he could easily establish house churches that became the foundation for many congregations in Europe and Asia Minor (Arn and McGravan 1973:33, 34).

2.3.4.1 Church planting and God’s mission

From about the mid 20th century, the thinking on evangelical missions has been deeply influenced by the Church Growth Movement (CGM), which emphasises church planting as the priority of God’s mission and the activity of the church. Donald McGavran, Kenneth Mulholland and Hesselgrave, among others, hold the view that the central purpose and mission of the church is to plant churches. Hesselgrave in particular contends that any church activity that does not significantly support church planting is not worth being regarded as part of the mission of the church (Hesselgrave 1980:31). This includes all medical and socio-educational services that attempt to fulfil the mandate of ‘working good towards all men’ (cf. Galatia 6:10).

Mainstream evangelicals of the CGM proclaim mission as evangelism and church planting. The Wheaton Declaration summarizes this view by stating that “The church’s work is to preach the Gospel and plant congregations in every community” and also that “church planting has the priority among all other mission activities” of the church (Hibbert 2009:320). To many evangelicals, the local church is identified as both the goal and instrument of evangelizing the world (Hibbert 2009:320). Credit has particularly been given to the church planting movements (CPMs) for having led more believers to Christ all over the world than has ever occurred (cf. Seipp 2009). According to Seipp, this is because believers produced by the CPM show greater tendency to be a “fisher of men” than would others. They actively share their testimony and are committed to the work of evangelism and the ministry of the church (cf. Seipp 2009).

The early Protestant missionaries of the 19th century also had their concerns regarding what to do with converts won on mission fields. This provoked the need to establish churches. Even in the Christian mission periods of non-denominational societies where the institution of church was perceived more as a spiritual rather than a physical entity, there was still a pressing concern to plant churches for the sake of converts won (Hibbert 2009:319).

On the side of the Roman Catholic mission historians, the history of mission is history of ‘the planting church’ and that of ‘the church which must be planted’ (Jongeneel 2002:142). The Louvain school “emphasized mission as the planting of the church” and the 1965 decree of the Second Vatican Council defined mission as Gospel proclamation that leads to church implantation (Jongeneel 2002:142).

Roman Catholics do not identify with the wedge that Jongeneel drives in between Christ and the church in the Great Commission, and between the differences in conversion to Christianity, to the church and to the Christian faith (Jongeneel 2002:255). Theologically, Paul seems to have opposed this view by elucidating to the Ephesians that the head (which is Christ) cannot be separated from the body (which is the church) in the mystery of the body of Christ (Eph. 5:23, 32).

Even the gospel-without-church of the pre-19th century did not last long. Evangelicals soon considered church planting as key to mission and the means to the three selfhoods (self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating) propounded by Henry Venn (Hibbert 2009:319). Every attempt by ecumenical movements to shift the focus of the mission of the church to social needs was regularly met with a re-emphasis of evangelism and church planting by evangelicals (Hibbert 2009:319). Evangelicals, according to Van Engen, fervently hold the view that the salvation of individual souls is the “only one major goal of mission” (Hibbert 2009:319).

However, not all missiologists agree to the central role of church planting in mission. Bosch criticizes the ‘ecclesiastical expansionism’ of the Church Growth Movement (Hibbert 2009:324). He found fault with the movement’s emphasis on “gospel-proclaiming, sinner-converting, church-multiplying evangelism” at the expense of deepening the calling of a church (Bosch 1991:332, 415). Seipp (2009) holds a similar view of the church planting movements. He argues that the “theological depth” of believers from the Church Planting Movements “is far less than optimal” and raised doubt on their level of “true repentance and holy living”. He concludes that the more traditional churches offer a better platform for “teaching, baptism, and communion” (Seipp 2009).

In the African continent, the argument of Seipp may only find strong validity among the African Indigenous Churches (AICs) of the Zionist/Prophet-Healing type. This group pays little attention, if any at all, to theological training and biblical exposition in church worship. Visions, dreams and prophecies are their preferred ways of hearing from God and communicating to their congregations. However, the same argument may not hold against Pentecostal AICs denominations and many other evangelicals where the teaching of the word and discipleship training are the lifeline of the church. It is not impossible to find many of these persons, especially those in the evangelical/holiness movements, maintaining a deeper biblical understanding and purity of life than many traditional mission churches.

Other missiologists like Stuart Murray, Johannes Verkuyl, James Engel and William Dyrness challenge the validity of evangelism that does not incorporate social action of justice and transformation. Such a gospel is viewed to be “too ecclesiocentric”, “one sided and unbiblical” (Hibbert 2009:322). They hold the view that church planting is a partner in

the mission of God and that many times, the focus of the New Testament is on issues of hunger, sickness or justice (Hibbert 2009:322). The researcher struggles with this claim, judging by the claim of Jesus that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt.4:4); and that in matters of priority, Christians are to "seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness (Matt.6:33).

Perhaps a more balanced view is the integration of social action (as junior partner) with church planting evangelism (as senior partner) in the theme of *missio Dei*. This is similar to the holistic approach to mission that John Stott emphasises, except that Stott makes evangelism and social action equal and independent partners in mission (Hibbert 2009:321, 322). Such a stand is suspect. Church planting and social action cannot be made equal partners in God's mission. Then the church will expect a quick and permanent manifestation of the kingdom in human communities. Hibbert rightly asserts that "While the blessings of the kingdom of God include the social, physical, and cultural dimensions, the planting of new communities of the kingdom is the primary means by which these blessings can be brought to new communities" (2009:325).

Most theologians seem to have a consensus that the goal of mission is the bringing in of the kingdom of God. The church is God's agent of bringing kingdom blessings to communities. This is a major theme of the Lord's Prayer (Matt.6:9, 10). Arguing against church planting is to argue against the expression of the kingdom of God, which the church represents. The more the kingdom is preached, the more church planting work will confirm its authenticity (Hibbert 2009:325). Almost all preachers of the New Testament that emphasised the kingdom in their messages witnessed the birth of churches (Acts 2; 8; 19; Col. 4). From all evidences "churches were the results of preaching" in the New Testament (Hibbert 2009:325).

The controversy as to the role the church plays in mission of God seems to have arisen out of the different perceptions of what the church is (this has already been dealt with at the beginning of this sub-chapter). If, however, Hibbert is right in the claim that leading missiologists "agree that the church is closely related to the kingdom...and that the church is an agent of and the primary manifestation of the kingdom today" (2009:324), it then follows that church planting must be the focus of every congregation that eagerly awaits the kingdom to come.

2.3.5 Church planting in urban mission

The city is the strategic base of influence for planting and spreading churches worldwide. It is the modern frontier, outside the challenge of Islam and unreached people groups, which presently occupies the attention of world missions. It seems that nothing is as presently urgent as planting churches among the yet-to-be evangelized millions that live in the cities of the world. This urgency is dictated by the fact that “as the city go, our world goes” (Greenway 1976: 5, 6).

Not only has the city become the fort for the future survival of the body of Christ, but nationally and universally, many missiologists seem unanimous that making disciples of all nations means evangelizing and churching the population in the cities (Greenway 1976:7). Take away the city and every church planting effort will at best be locally confined and embraced a community of believers that cannot entirely fit the universal metaphor of salt and light (Matthew 5:13, 14).

The city is a centre of racial and ethnic tension due to the influx of refugees and immigrants from both its national and international borders (Chaney 1982:119). Cities all over the world have become a “universal challenge”, and only by planting “thousands of new urban churches” could the challenge be adequately surmounted (Greenway 1976:8).

Africa poses a peculiar challenge. Harvie Conn points out that the African cities “are cities in a hurry” (Kim 2009:40, 41). Henry Mutua observes that the beginning of this century witnesses the African cities having “the highest and swiftest rate of urbanization” (Kim 2009:41). The under-developed nature of the African urban setting leaves it plagued with a web of politico-economical and ethical issues, ranging from abject poverty, social injustice, moral decadence, family breakdown to corruption in high and low places of institutional establishments. The situation has posed such great problems to the institution of the church that denominational stability and strength are often threatened (Chaney 1982:120). Missiologists of the church growth movement offer urban church planting as the solution.

Greenway opines that the rapid rate of urbanization in Africa demand major efforts to evangelize its cities through planting of new churches lest the ripened harvest goes to waste (1976:7). Commenting further on the strategic place of the city and urban mission work of church planting, he writes:

For until our Lord returns, the world to which we are sent to preach the Gospel in all probability will be an URBAN WORLD. The churches which we must plant will be URBAN CHURCHES, and the people whom we must win to Christian discipleship will be CITY people. Church life will reflect the life-style of the city, and the proclamation and service of the church will be affected by the needs of URBAN PEOPLE and the environment in which they live” (Greenway 1976:12).

Concisely, Greenway is calling the church in Africa (and elsewhere) to a realization that we live in an urban world and have to plant urban churches that will meet the gospel needs of urban people.

Chaney (1982:120) shares Greenway’s view, explaining that the way out of loosing the city is “to develop plans to plant churches among some of the new peoples in transitional communities”. He reports that in the West many old city churches have reached a plateau, others have greatly declined and hundreds have died and will still die (1982:120). The demise of these once-great city churches underscores the urgency of church planting in urban mission. Some of the keys he suggests to successfully implement this include, but are not limited to the following:

- Develop pluralistic strategies for a pluralistic world.
- Affirm and strengthen small house churches as key to having huge congregations.
- Train the laity and clergy in city church planting skills.
- Emphasise persistent and united prayer for the soul of the city.

- Cooperate with other urban churches to develop a metropolitan mission strategy.
- March boldly to the goal of making Jesus the Lord over the city (Chaney 1982:162).

Chaney, however, should have argued for planting ‘many churches’ among all the peoples in the city communities rather than “some of the new peoples in transitional communities”. The Church Growth Movement has persistently argued that only saturation church planting among all homogenous peoples will bring the reign of Christ to urban dwellers (cf. McGavran 1980; Wagner 1976). Paul the apostle aptly demonstrated this in his urban mission work in Asia Minor.

Paul’s urban mission model demonstrates the strategic place of church planting in city work. In Corinth, he reached out to Justus who in turn reached out to his next door neighbour, Crispus (Acts 18:1-11). Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, became one of the first converts of the city (Hill 1984:77) and eventually the church was planted there. Paul later referred back to this old neighbour in his first letter to the Corinthians (I Corinth.1:14). This is the kind of influence the Gospel exerts in urban centres, especially in the high density low income settlements where cell groups or home churches flourish.

The nature of the city makes church planting a *sine-qua-nom* in urban settings. Writing on “the experience of church planting on large housing estates”, Robert Scott-Cook explains that urban environment is particularly plagued with the feelings of isolation (Hill 1984:75). There are no communal meetings that characterize the African rural setting. Personal grievances and tales of woes find no listening ears and sympathetic attention. The situation sometimes makes people in crowded rented apartments go out of their way to establish personal identity in ways that could be suspect (Hill 1984:75). The early church found a way round this as “They ate at each other's homes and shared their food with glad and humble hearts” (Acts.2:46). When a community of believers is established through planting churches in an urban environment, the lives of the people are positively affected to have purpose and worth, and the impersonal factors of environment are countered (Hill 1984:75).

Embedded in the tendency of individualism as against the culture of community is the promotion of social vice as a feature of the city. Most urbanites are irresponsible to anyone or for anyone (Elliston and Kauffman 1993:123). Such freedom has removed moral restraint and has led to the cities becoming focal points of poverty, crime, prostitution and HIV/AIDS (Johnstone 1993:16). Johnstone has argued that the way to impact these cities for God is to plant churches that will transform modern urban areas (1993:16).

Urbanism threatens the basic foundation of every society, namely the family unit. This perhaps explains the reason for the one million street children in Mexico City and of hundreds of thousands of others in Nairobi and other African cities. Fellowship life in thriving urban churches, however, provides sincere care of a family bond that urban society structures do not provide. This is hastened when the kinsman or head of a household in urban settlement is integrated into a neighbourhood congregation, as seen in the examples of Cornelius (Acts 10), Lydia (Acts 16), and the jailer (Acts 16). The trend in the book of Acts is that household heads who become converted in the city help their kinsmen find the faith and settle in the church.

The city is implied in the call to witness given by Jesus Christ in his post-resurrection ministry. He said in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The coming of the Holy Spirit will remove pacifism from the church as every member is empowered by the Holy Spirit, both to live and serve like Christ. The Gospel would be proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit in the cities, regions and nations of the world, leading to the gathering of believers.

That the apostolic age church understood the city implication of this instruction could be noticed in the trend of planting churches in the large centres of population throughout the Mediterranean world. Each of these centres, Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, and Rome in turn grew to become an outreach centre to the adjoining areas (Hill 1984:17).

God is interested in the city, and the Holy Ghost could be depended upon to bring in the harvest through the church. However, pastors must go back to restudy the Pauline approach to cities. Paul evangelized the whole of Asia Minor by planting small house

churches in important cities of Europe and Asia (Acts 16:40; 20:20). Contemporary congregations and “pastors need skills in interpreting the city and the mission context” (Conn et al 2002:51). There is the need for appropriate mission strategies for the present century wherein the whole world has become “one immense city” (Conn et al 2002:43). The challenge imposes on the church the need to build according to given pattern from God (Ex.25:8, 9, and 40).

2.3.6 Review of some church planting cases in the Old Testament

The institution of the church as known in the New Testament was not the focus of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the Old Testament is where the mission of God to his universe started. This explains why De Ridder writes that: “No student of missions can long escape the necessity of examining the Old Testament antecedents to the Christian mission” (Hedlund 1991:19). The background of the New Testament and of the concept of mission could only be traced to the Old Testament (Hedlund 1991:19).

Furthermore, Jongeneel (2009:117) asserts that in both the Old and New Testaments, the Messiah figure defines the nature and object of the mission of the church. Jesus, affirming the authority and authoritativeness of the Old Testament in his New Testament ministry, declared that “until heaven and earth disappear, not one letter or one stroke of a letter will disappear from the Law until everything has been accomplished” (Matt.5: 17, 18).

Throughout the Old Testament, God is revealed as working for the salvation of lost humanity. He takes the initiative to bring humans out of divine wrath to divine favour (Hedlund 1991:19, 20). In many of these circumstances he uses the organ of the ‘church’ in its Old Testament imagery. In each of these instances, the basic triangular elements of the church’s purpose: glorification (worshipping God), proclamation (winning the lost), and edification (teaching the believers) are portrayed, albeit vaguely (cf. Chaney 1982).

In the Old Testament, many of the cases imaging the church dwell on issues that address not only spiritual salvation, but also social transformation, justice and hunger. This extra-spiritual goal of the church is considered most important by mission thinkers like David

Bosch, John Stott, James Engel, Johannes Verkuyl and William Dyrness (cf. Hibbert 2009:321-323).

Three cases of the church planting image in the Old Testament will be reviewed for sampling purposes.

- Noah's family in the Ark, Genesis 7-9

Church planting is a work of faith. It involves believing God as Noah and his family did. Noah demonstrated a willingness to believe God by building the Ark even though there was no sign of an impending flood (Gen.6:13-22). Furthermore, the Ark was a symbol of God's intention of a local church where the family unit will be targeted for mercy and salvation. Other family examples in the Bible include the salvation of Rahab and her household (Joshua 6:22, 23), the conversion of Cornelius' family (Acts 10:44, 45), and Jesus' call to the sons of Zebedee (Matt.4:21, 22).

According to Malphurs (2004: 21, 22), building the ark is analogous to "building a great church". The flood of judgment was to come upon the godless society of Noah's time and four activities similar to the rescue mission of a local church were carried out, as enumerated below:

- There was warning of impending doom by God through the instrumentality of Noah, who was described as the preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5).
- Faith in God and in his words was demonstrated by Noah throughout the construction of the Ark, at a period during which it never rained (Gen.2:5).
- Noah, as "preacher of righteousness" is assumed to have proclaimed God's warning and provision of safety that was rebuffed by the unbelieving people of his day, but accepted by his eight-member family that entered the Ark (2 Pet.2:5; Gen.7:13).

The manifestation of faith and act of entering the Ark could not simply have been due to family ties or pressure. In the previous case of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the married daughters of Lot and his in-laws mocked the plea to escape the judgment of fire and so could not be saved. It was the combination of individual and corporate faith that ensured the salvation of all that escaped the flood.

- God would not suspend judgment indefinitely, and so closed the door of the Ark and opened that of the heavens for rain to fall and flood the earth (Gen. 7:16). The implication is that though the church would preach the word, God has the prerogative of opening and closing the door of salvation as and when appropriate (Heb.3:7-15; Eph.2:8).

By preserving Noah and his family, God preserved the world (Conn 1976:3). From his three sons “came the people who were scattered over the earth” (Gen.9:19). Today, the church is being preserved by God to serve as salt and light (preservatives) to the world (Matt.5:13, 14). As Conn (1976:3) points out, “The selectiveness of God’s now prepares for the universalism of God’s later”. Noah’s blessing of Japheth: “God shall enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem” (Gen.9:27) is interpreted to mean a spiritual blessing just like the “dwelling in the tents of Shem” connotes the idea of nations, Gentiles, being received into the tent of Israel to worship the God of Israel, as indicated in Ephesians 3:6 (Conn 1976:4). Conn concludes that the table of genealogy of Noah’s children in chapter eleven of Genesis “anticipates nations, families, (and) tongues whose origins were yet to take place” (1976:4).

- The church in the wilderness

Stephen, in his address to the Jewish leadership, engaged in persecuting the first New Testament church, referred to the congregation (Heb 2:12) that God took through the wilderness as the ‘church’. He says:

This is that Moses, who said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me.

This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received living oracles to give unto us (Acts 7:37, 38 ASV).

Stephen's statement raised "a typological pointer to Jesus" with the use of the term *ekklesia* for the Jews assembly in the desert (Beale & Carson, 2007:563). In the literary sense, the word 'church' referred to the called out people. In the sense of Stephen's usage here it means the Assembly of God's people who were separated from Egypt and brought through the wilderness of Sinai to the Promised Land. The New Testament places the meaning in a spiritual context. The church is separated from the world, chosen as peculiar people to show forth the glory of God before the unbelieving world (2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Pet. 2:9).

The congregation of Israel was a typical church with Moses as its mediator (People's New Testament Commentary). He was the middle man between the Angel that spoke on Sinai and the people of Israel (the church in the wilderness), in the same way in which Jesus is mediator of the better covenant between God and the church in the New Testament (Heb 8:6).

- The City of Refuge Num.35:15; Joshua 20

The city of refuge symbolizes a place of salvation, justice, and mercy from Yahweh to his chosen people of Israel. It was equally a divine dwelling place for Jehovah (Is.60:14; Ps.48:1-2, 35; 46:4). If Hibbert is right in the claim that "in both the Old and New Testaments the community life of the people of God is a sign which points to God" (Hibbert 2009:325), then the institution of the city of refuge is a miniature church because all it symbolizes points to God. The church planting endeavour seeks to create communities that portray such kingdom qualities as love, mercy, justice and unity, which are pointers to God (Hibbert 2009:325).

Bediako rightly observes that “the goal of human existence is the biblical vision of *shalom*-peace, wholeness, salvation, wellness, in the kingdom of God” (Kim, 2009:150). This is what the city of refuge portrays. It is an institution that serves as foreshadow of the church, by bearing witness to the kingdom of God.

2.3.7 Review of some church planting cases in the New Testament

The New Testament pages are filled with a number of churches planted by the early church, and especially by Paul the apostle. They confirm the biblical foundation for church planting and recommend the same for contemporary congregations. Three of these churches will be reviewed for sampling purposes.

- The Church of Jerusalem

The church of Jerusalem in the New Testament is the first of the Christian era. It is the prototype of how Jesus builds his church the nature, process and dynamism involved in church planting. Julius Bergstrom (Hillis 1965:25) enumerates how this was accomplished and how it serves as model for today’s church planting work. As filtered through the researcher’s mind, the following processes and activities (not in order of occurrences) took place at different times in and through the congregation, all pointing to the objective of church multiplication:

- The Lord Jesus Christ who is the builder of the church sent down the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to equip and empower about 120 believers who constituted the foundation of the church (Acts 2:1-4). Some scholars see this model in the event of Num.11:25 when seventy elders of Israel received some of the Spirit that was on Moses from the Lord and they prophesized (Beale & Carson, 2007:531). Apostle Peter in his speech that followed the event called it the eschatological fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:16). Bergstrom may not only miss this connections but most importantly omitted the fact that these 120 believers had already become part of the planted church since their first response to the call “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” by Jesus.

- There was proclamation of the Word by Peter following the miracle of new tongues and three thousands were converted to the faith and incorporated into fellowship. They worshipped both at a central meeting place and from house to house (Acts 2:37-42). Based on the fact that these three thousands souls were newly converted on this occasion of the Feast of Weeks, otherwise called the day of Pentecost, the researcher would rather see the event as church planting work that continued what Christ started than merging the 120 with the 3,000 as a beginning work of New Testament church.
- A great number of priests became obedient to the faith, thus causing the Gospel to break barriers and the church to cross new frontiers among urban cultures, races and classes (Acts 6:7). There is no unanimity of view or confirmation of scriptures on the claim that these priests might belong to the lower rank group who could not have exercised much influence in the larger priesthood. Moreover, church planting works seem to usually find its first henchmen among the “uneducated and untrained men” (Acts 4:13).
- God permitted a great persecution to get the church out of its comfort zone and the congregation sent out to begin the fulfilment of the Great Commission (Matt.28:18-20; Acts 8:1).
- Saul of Tarsus became a known figure as a vessel in preparation for Gentile church planting, though unknown to him and the persecuted church of Jerusalem.
- New churches started springing up as believers increasingly suffered persecution and were scattered in thousands around the territory of Asia Minor.
- The Ethiopian Eunuch received the good news through the instrumentality of Philip (Acts 8:27-39) and probably took the message anew to Africa. (According to church historian, John Baur (1994:21), the church in Egypt was linked with the apostles, especially to a possible visitation of Peter and Mark to Alexandria).

- Saul of Tarsus became converted, filled with the Holy Spirit and was incorporated into the church (Acts 9:1-31).
- Paul, in the company of other apostles in Antioch, was called into pioneer missionary and planted churches throughout Asia and Europe (Rom.15:19).

From this point onwards the urban mission strategies of Paul became a pattern for many other congregations, then and now. Consequently, from a few people (about one hundred and twenty) in a city (Jerusalem), Christ built his churches across continents and cities of Asia, Europe and Africa.

- The Church of Corinth

The founding of the church of Corinth is recorded in Acts 18:1-11. Paul reached the city and was quick to identify with it. He aligned with the believers that were there before him, the family of Aquilla and Priscilla. Being conscious of the divine concern and his own responsibility towards the Corinthians (Hill 1984:76), he sought out the responsive group first and so “Every Sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and try to persuade both Jews and Greeks” of the faith in Jesus Christ (v.4). He demonstrated Gospel grace towards the Jews and aligned with the Gentile community. He was found in the house of Titius Justus, who lived next to the synagogue and assisted Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, to believe in the Lord Jesus along with his entire family (v.8). He was wise to collaborate with Silas and Timothy as co-labourers, gathering the new converts apart for teaching and baptism, and eventually getting the church of Corinth planted. To show that his work of city church planting has divine approval, the Lord appeared to him in a vision with words of encouragement, He says:

"Stop being afraid to speak out! Do not be silent! For I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you or harm you, because I have many people in this city." (Acts 18:9, 10).

Evidently Paul saw the people through the eyes of Jesus and was immediately involved in building a community of God through which the ministry of sharing, visiting, preaching and worshipping (church planting) could be practiced (v.3-6).

- The Church of Ephesus

Ephesus was situated in the low maritime regions of Asia Minor (cf. Albert Barnes' NT commentary). It was a great city in Asia, especially with the temple built there for the worship of Diana (Acts 19:34-36). Paul arrived in the city in fulfilment of his promise when he was initially there, before leaving behind Priscilla and Aquilla (Acts 18:18-21). This time he met some disciples of John's doctrine who probably had not met Priscilla and Aquila and were not aware of the arrival of the Messiah. They were definitely ignorant on the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-7). However, Paul helped them to receive the experience by catechizing and imposing hands on them (Acts 19:4-6).

The planting of the Ephesians' church was recorded by Luke in Acts 19:1-20. Paul used the city as the mission centre to penetrate the entire Asia Minor. He used both the synagogue and school halls, depending on which was available, to reach out to the city dwellers (Acts 19:8, 9). He eventually formed a church, trained disciples and raised elders through the preaching, teaching and healing ministries (Acts 19:11, 12). Paul perhaps spent the longest period of his ministerial work in any one place in Ephesus, demonstrating the strategic importance of the city to the regions and Paul's church planting ministry. He told the elders of the church in his valedictory speech:

So be alert! Remember that for three years, night and day, I never stopped warning each of you with tears. "I am now entrusting you to God and to the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified (Acts 20:31, 32).

Vernon Mortenson, in his analysis of Acts 20 under 'Paul's ministry in Ephesus' concludes that the landmarks to note should include the personal presence of transformed

lives as seen in Priscilla, Aquila and Paul himself; the public proclamation of the Gospel message; effective use of personal contact from house to house; teaching converts unto maturity; watchfulness over flock and warning against wolves; commitment to prayer and the ministry of signs and wonders; sacrifice of time to stay long enough with a newly planted church and entire dedication to the course of the Gospel without distraction.

Paul could boldly proclaim that he finished the task that was set out to be accomplished (Acts 20:26, 27). This could be interpreted as meaning that he had given an opportunity to hear, understand and decide on the faith of the Gospel to everyone in the Ephesian community. It is the needed model for the urban work of our cities in an age of globalization and rapid technological development that could foster the quick dissemination of the Gospel.

2.3.8 Biblical principles on church planting

From biblical record and church history, it is evident that the rule rather than exception is for healthy churches to reproduce (Patterson and Currah 2003:210). Truly, the Majority World of the 21st century is witnessing the kind of phenomenal church planting and growth that had earlier been associated only with the first century (Payne 2003:220). A review of some of the biblical principles underlying this is undertaken below.

- Maintain a scriptural understanding of the church

The take-off of effective church planting is to understand what the church is. Biblically, the church refers to a body of true Christian believers that is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and has Jesus Christ as the head (Eph.2:19-21). Hesselgrave (1982) defines the church as “any duly constituted local body of Christian believers who corporately attempt to worship, witness, and serve in accordance with the word of God” (cf. I Cor. 12).

If the church is poorly perceived, the consequence, according to Paul E. Pierson, will be the “institutionalization of the Christian mission and the neglect of evangelism and the planting and multiplication of the church” (Jongeneel 1997:97). On the contrary, a truly

understood missionary church will be well rooted, “coming to life as a new indigenous body of Christian disciples well suited to continue in mission” (Church of England 2004:32).

- Plan for church planting

The churches that Paul and his team planted in the major cities along the Mediterranean coast reveal a great deal of conscious planning. Church planting is a deliberate planned activity (Malphurs 2004; Church of England 2004). Seipp (2009:142, 143) rightly argues that “if we never plan for a new church, it will never happen”. However, this planning has to do more with raising disciples who will freely obey the Great Commission among the unreached peoples of their neighbourhoods and beyond than waiting until all resources are in the right place and in the right order before starting a new church. There is no doubt that to wait to plant a fully mature church is to never plant one (Seipp 2009:142-143).

- Plant indigenous-friendly churches

From the apostolic age, church planting among indigenous people has been the expected rather the exception (Hibbert 2009:321). There were the churches of Corinth (1 Cor.1:2), Galatia (Gal.1:2), Ephesus (Eph.1:1) and of the Thessalonians (1 Thess.1:1).

In order to plant these indigenous churches, the church planter often has to cross cultures, including worldviews. The resultant effect is that church planting brings about the clash of worldviews (Payne 2003:225). Even where the culture of the church planter and the mission audience seem similar, the church planter needs to bear in mind that “at the very least, the gospel and the nature of the unregenerate individual represent two divergent worldviews” (Payne 2003:225).

Church planters must then think in terms of culture and plant indigenous-friendly churches that take cognisance of style of sermon, organizational structure, music presentation and leader-follower relationship. Such congregations, according to Mark Shaw, make “inculturation takes place when the gospel is heard on the deep worldview level of the hearer” (Kim 2009:140).

The practice of many church planters of imposing their culture or neglecting audience culture has hindered church expansion in many lands (Payne 2003:224). Such missionaries have hindered the growth of the church by refusing to heed the axiom of Donald McGavran that “people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers” (Payne 2003:224).

- Maintain balance between text and context

Mission strategy and message must be validated by Scripture and the Pauline practice (Conn 1976: viii). No congregation needs to copy or clone the cultural approach of the early or later churches in Christendom. However, the underlying biblical principles of church planting transcend age and time. Church planting methodology must be relevant to our time and age, but without deducting from the image of the church as God intended it from the beginning of age. This implies faithfulness to the text of Scripture in the choice of methods to use and at the same time, a respect for context in order to have an enduring result.

- Effective church planting takes time

City work cannot be done in haste, if it aims to be an abiding labour. Paul stayed for eighteen months at Corinth, building and establishing the city church he planted (Acts 18:11). At another time, in the city of Ephesus, he spent three years teaching, warning, visiting, training and raising elders in the church (Acts 20:31). It points to the fact that urban church planting work takes time. However, Robert Scott-Cook argues that when such time is well invested in prayer, proclamation and the teaching of the word, the result could be incredible in the long run (Hill 1984:79).

- Focus on receptive people groups

Paul’s team was forbidden by the Holy Ghost from going ahead to preach in Asia and Bithynia, but received a vision to go over to Macedonia and help (Acts 16:6-9). We can reasonably presume that Europe was then ready for the Gospel while the harvest of Asia

was not yet ripe. The whole world would later be fully ready, seeing that the Great Commission calls on believers to go into the entire world (Matt.28:18-20). Jesus told the twelve not to waste their time in non-receptive towns (Matt.10:12-14). Wise church planters are conscious of the ground on which the Gospel seed is sown. The early church multiplied from responsive coordinating centres.

The establishment of the church in Antioch prepared the ground for the evangelization of the whole of Asia Minor (cf. Acts 13). In Samaria, a whole city responded positively to the preaching of Philip and led to church planting in “many villages of the Samaritans” (Acts 8:5-25). These biblical examples may have influenced the view of Kenneth Mulholland that the goal of mission should be the establishment of “indigenous church movements which are capable of so multiplying congregations...” (Hibbert 2009:322). Only a responsive audience is capable of self-reproduction.

- Rely on the Holy Spirit

True church multiplication is a factor of the Holy Spirit moving across a people (Payne 2003:221). This causes spontaneous church growth to depend on the sovereignty of the Lord rather than human labour and ingenuity. Indeed, neither the “sent ones” (Eph.4:11) nor the general members of the church is self-endured to confront principalities and powers that hinder souls from believing in Christ. The empowerment to win souls and plant churches come from the Holy Spirit. Raison d’être for the command by Jesus Christ to the early church to wait in Jerusalem for the enduement of the Holy Spirit before going out to the mission field (Luke 24).

The Holy Spirit initiates church planting. This is notable from the prophetic direction that the church of Antioch received regarding Paul and Barnabas (Chaney 1982:34). The book of Acts records:

And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (13:2, 3).

The work referred to here is the ministry of church planting (Chaney 1982:34). It was the call that led to church multiplication throughout Asia Minor. This was the continuation of the pre-eminence of the Holy Spirit in the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ. It confirms that the Holy Spirit, working in believers and churches, is the catalyst behind the reproduction of kingdom seed as illustrated in the parable of the sower as told by Christ (Patterson and Currah 2003:210).

Among the Pentecostal-Charismatic groups, reliance on the Holy Spirit in church work includes an emphasis on the ministry of prayer, healing and wonders (cf. McGavran 1980; Rainer 1993; Gifford 2009:139-143). The claim is that notable churches of the New Testament were planted by the first apostles through the demonstration of the supernatural (which Pentecostals claim to mean the ministry of healing, signs and wonders). The group insists that starting from the first planted church in Jerusalem; the supernatural plays a primal role in attracting and convincing Gospel hearers that attend crusades and revivals organised by Pentecostals (Gifford 2009:139).

Unlike the nominal West, Africans' deep religious disposition seems to fuel the central position given to the Holy Spirit in church planting on the continent. Mbiti affirms the dominance of religion on the African socio-cultural and politico-economic worldview (cf. Mbiti 1975). Stephen Sesi writes of the symbiotic relationship of religion and society in all facets of life of Africans (Kim 2009:20, 21). Kim observes that all people from the Majority World naturally grow up in cultural backgrounds with a religious underpinning (Kim 2009:239). The consequence is the central place of the invisible force in cause-effect analysis, leading to the crucial place of the dynamics of the supernatural in church planting work and Gospel proclamation, especially among the Church Growth Movement since the 1980's (cf. McGavran 1980; Rainer 1993).

2.4 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHURCH GROWTH

2.4.1 Church Growth defined

McGavran defined church growth as “the planting and care of self-propagating churches” (1970:32, 34, 67). His view of church growth was championed by the Church Growth Movement (CGM), which he founded in 1955 (cf. Wagner 1981). The theological assumption of the movement is that people need to hear and receive the Gospel in order to be saved (1 John 5:12). McGavran thus defined the notion and principle of church growth by placing evangelism as the top priority of the mission of the church.

However, this is not sterile evangelism of ‘search theology’ without addition to numbers of the saved. Evangelism, within the concept of church growth and by CGM, is only valid when it leads individuals to becoming committed to Jesus Christ as Saviour and to his church as a responsible member (Wagner 1981:57). This is the evangelistic mandate that defines the existence of the church growth movement and serves as impetus to the definitions of church growth promoted by its members.

Theologically basing his view on the statement of Jesus in Luke 2:49: “Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?” McGavran implied church growth to mean “the increase of Christians and churches that God desires” (1965:10). It passionately seeks to bring many people to penitent faith in Jesus Christ, as an expectation that God holds and for which every Christian mission is in a business partnership with God.

As his church growth theology advances, McGavran sees the growth of the church beyond mere sociological process. He defines it as “what happens when there is faithfulness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1980:7). This faithfulness is demonstrated in “the extension of the church”, the searching and bringing in of lost sheep to the fold, the stimulation of a congregation to vibrant growth as exemplified by the New Testament churches.

He criticized the neutralist position of ‘search theology’ that emphasises proclamation of the Gospel, but leaves the finding and incorporation of souls into the church to God’s prerogative. He argues that to shy away from diligently persuading the lost to be saved and be incorporated to the church or to simply fear and fight numbers in doing church work, lack theological foundation. His view of church growth as principally numerical is reflected in his disgust for the view of believers who minister among resistant people groups and conclude that:

“A church or a mission which over a period of fifty years leads fifty souls to the feet of Christ is as pleasing to God as one which in the same period wins fifty thousand and plants the church firmly in an entire countryside” (McGavran 1980:32).

McGavran disagrees, contending that to make a general proposition that “numbers are unimportant” lacks biblical basis. The spiritual soundness and worth of a church does not necessarily correspond to its size (1980:36).

David Bosch, Rene Padilla, Hans-Ruedi Weber, and Leslie Newbigin are among scholars who have criticized McGavran (and his CGMs) for being unbiblical in his theology and playing the statistical game on kingdom issues (cf. Wagner 1981; Hibbert 2009). However, what they seem to omit is the fact that beyond numerical addition to church, McGavran emphasises “folding” or conservation of the converts as well as multiplication of Christian churches in the community of the non-believers ((McGavran 1980:8). He calls “folding and feeding” the essential key to “lasting church expansion” (1980:6). His definition of church growth is a clear departure from the usual denominational views of church growth that emphasise other variables like water baptism, election by grace, the Holy Ghost or liturgy.

Furthermore, missiologist McGavran and the CGM he pioneered distinguish between two types of growth. The first category is spiritual growth. This describes the gracious internal growth of believers in Christ. The second is numerical growth, symbolized by “external growth of the local congregations and the churches” (Jongeneel 2002:22). Charles E. van

Engen seems to echo the view of the movement when he writes that “the New Testament not only emphasised spiritual growth, but also numerical growth” (Jongeneel 2002:22).

Peter Wagner seems to be the foremost disciple of McGavran ever since the church growth concept has taken root in North America. He would not compromise on the place of statistics in measuring church growth. In a much more bold tone than perhaps that of others in the movement, Wagner declares that “If a church is growing it is by definition attracting new members” (Wagner 1984:38). He defines church growth to mean:

“all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership” (italics mine) (Wagner (1976:12).

This definition makes the pursuit of church growth open to all approaches that bring humans into a relationship with Christ and the church. Wagner proposes a growth formula with three constant variables: celebration, congregation and cell (Wagner 1976:107). He reports the success story of the Whittier Area Baptist Fellowship in America that grew by 740% within four years by utilizing the “small group dynamic for church growth” (Wagner. 1976:108). It is a confirmation of the “homogeneous unit debate” that claims that churches grow healthier and faster when believers are grouped into cell groups in the neighbourhood without having to cross “racial, linguistic or class barriers” (Wagner. 1976:110).

Though the researcher would not encourage social or racial segregation in the larger church congregation to avoid schism in the body of Christ, it is a growth strategy that has worked in the over three hundred churches that he has planted (and helped others to plant) in the course of his twenty-year missionary and pastoral services in Cameroon, the Indian Ocean, Nigeria and Kenya. The church grows best in homogeneous unit environments.

Gibbs (1981:9) argues that churches grow in the three dimensions of numerical strength, spiritual vitality and sacrificial service to others. While identifying with McGavran and Wagner on the importance of numbers in church growth, he insists, unlike them, that it is

not primary. He defines church growth to include other variables like quality of character, sustaining gospel confidence and appropriate leadership styles. The problem with such definition is in the difficulty of measurement and universal acceptance of these variables. There is also the question of who is expected to show these variables and in which proportion before the church can be judged to be growing.

The same difficulty of measurement is encountered in Palmer's definitional approach to church growth. He interpreted the concept to mean "those churches that are growing in effectiveness, regardless of size" (Palmer 1976:11). Palmer argues that growth could be said to be taking place in "congregations of less than 100 members as well as those of more than 18,000". The important factor is "effectiveness", which he interprets as "doing an outstanding job of meeting the needs of (their) people (1976:11). He holds the view that "size of itself is not an effective measurement of success, nor the lack of it" (1976:12).

This, however, is not to mean that measuring the qualitative growth of a church has unanimous agreement and a universal standard. Goldsmith (1980:10-13) identifies three forms of qualitative growth in the institutional church. First is biological growth that involves winning the children of existing church members to the faith. It is a vital aspect of growth for any church that hopes to maintain its youth in the fold. Second is transfer growth or what he calls the inflow of Christians from churches of the same or different denominations. Sometimes this is a by-product of "urbanization and increasing fluidity of society" (ibid.11). Goldsmith writes that this is a vital but insufficient component of church growth for a nation or city as it produces losers and winners. The third component of growth is conversion growth. Conversion takes place when the church goes after the multitudes of yet-to-be converted and incorporate them into the church. He calls this the real pillar of church growth.

Wagner shares the views of Goldsmith on the three forms of growth, insisting that all contributes to growing in numbers and that a different percentage of growth of a church come from different sectors of the congregation (Wagner 1984:38). However, Michael Griffiths differs, calling on advocates of church growth to apply biblical yardsticks in determining the appropriateness of church growth forms (Hill 1984:131). He cautions that church growth should bring harmony among denominations. It should promote the fruit of the Spirit and engender respect from the newer to older churches and vice-versa.

According to Griffiths, while doctrinal compromise is out of the question, church growth should not provoke a competitive spirit and dissention. In this regard and contrary to the views expressed by Goldsmith and Wagner, Goldsmith writes:

‘Church growth would no longer be transfer growth from older congregations to a suddenly popular newer one, but a genuine evangelism of the totally unreached’ (Hill 1984:130).

The researcher agrees with this view when the church is understood as believers in Christ Jesus. He would not encourage transfer growth where members are snatched by enterprising, consumer-friendly churches from old-fashioned congregations whose faithful members are already planted on the trio of devotedness to God, care for one another and outreach to lost souls (Landry & Ordiales, undated: 2.12). However, these foundations are missing in many churches. Lamenting on the state of the church worldwide, Myers (1999:285, 286) writes:

“One of the ironies of modern mission is that in the very places where the growth of the church has been most dramatic, the practice of Christians has been problematic. In Africa, nations that are largely Christian suffer from corruption, ethnic violence, and poverty on a tragic scale. In America, Christian behavior is indistinguishable from that of non-Christians: what kind of Christians are we making?”

The issue of appropriate model for the numerical growth of urban churches in the face of failing traditional methods of evangelism in some cities of Africa is a concern. This is not to imply that church growth is only about numbers. There are valid arguments in the literature to the contrary (cf. Cho and Manzano 1984:1-9). That more people are present in a Sunday service than the previous one does not necessarily mean that everything is alright in the church (Werning 1977:53). The key goal of church growth is the Great Commission (Matt.28:16-20) with its imperative of making disciples (Werning 1977:59).

However, converts that are not made cannot be turned into disciples. Achieving numerical growth is *sine-qua-non* for raising disciples and producing leaders who in turn will reproduce themselves and bring in the kingdom of God. Missiologists agree that this is the goal of mission, and there is a symbiotic relationship between the church and the kingdom. The kingdom expands as the church expands. The church expands as the ‘planned parenthood’ of volunteer workers “give a regular portion of their time to planting new Christian cells”, which are miniature churches (Arn 1977:94). When churches are planted and growing, communities are created that manifest the trio of faith, hope and love. Such communities, where unity and kingdom qualities reign, are pointers to God (Hibbert 2009:325). This questions the rationale behind the quality-quantity controversy in church growth.

2.4.2 The Quality-Quantity controversy

Michael Griffiths (1984:125) argues that Church growth when properly defined involves both church planting and church perfecting (Hill 1984:125). The former is “initial and primary” and the latter “subsequent and secondary”. He goes on to argue that “quantity is no use without quality” and genuine church growth, to be so qualified, always needs to be qualitative as well as quantitative (Hill 1984:125). Buys (1989:263) agrees, illustrating that the Greek word translated in the New Testament for the proclamation of the glad tidings (evangel) “can be directed at unbelievers with a view to call them to conversion, or at believers to strengthen their faith”, making the word and aspect of both qualitative and quantitative growth of God’s household or church.

This is biblically significant. It is growth in quality and quantity that leads to having a church “without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but holy and without fault” (Eph.5:27). This explains why Paul challenged every church leader to watch how he builds on the foundation of the church that Jesus Christ has laid (1 Cor.3:10, 13).

As a church planter, Michael Griffiths argues for a symbiotic relationship of quantity and quality in church growth. He writes:

I would urge therefore that church growth must never be seen merely as a question of church mass, and of measurement in impersonal percentages, but to recognise that qualitative church growth is as important as quantitative-and that poor quality of growth will be self-defeating and must inevitably reduce the tempo of growth and ultimately its quantity also (Hill 1984:125).

Malphurs (2004) observes that the debate on quality versus quantity seems to have beclouded the importance of numerical growth in struggling congregations. These congregations claim that they maintain quality and that God is so pleased. Malphurs feels otherwise. He writes:

While it's true that some churches overemphasize the importance of numbers, others often use this as an excuse to remain passive and not reach people. Quality churches with rare exceptions will become quantity churches because quality churches are actively involved in fulfilling Christ's Great Commission, which involves reaching and discipling lost people. This results in numerical growth in the majority of situations" (2004:26).

Wagner, in an earlier claim on the same position, contends that churches that grow do so in quality and quantity (Wagner 1984:28). It is such congregations that glorify Jesus Christ and keeps on attracting new members. When believers obey Christ's commandment to deny the self and carry the cross (Matt.16:24), they are continually transformed into Christ's image, which is a dimension of qualitative growth and an unavoidable condition for quantitative growth (Buys 1989:263).

It is noteworthy that in presenting the growth analysis, the gospel writer, just like Paul, "makes no arbitrary distinction between quantity and quality in his harvest theology" (Conn 1976:19). Jesus deliberately encourages the growing together of wheat and tares in the vineyard of God until the time of the harvest (Matt.13:30, 40-41), thus removing the

carpet off the feet of every tendency to neglect numerical growth in order to seek a quality church.

2.4.3 Biblical and theological basis for church growth

The church is a living organism, and it is in the nature of all living things to grow. Only when things are basically wrong could a church not grow. Beyond nature, Christ assures the church that the powers of hell will not conquer it (Matt.16:18 ISV). Based on these premises, Joe Aldrich concludes that there is only one explanation for the church not growing, “some thoughts have not been brought into captivity to Christ and his plan for the growth of his church” (Malphurs 2004:9). These thoughts are usually in the domain of theological and cultural roadblocks that “create invisible barriers to evangelism and church growth” (Malphurs 2004:9).

A close look at Scripture, along with theological reflections on the growth of the church in the history of Christendom, reveals the basis for church growth. These include but are not limited to the following:

- The will of God

God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus chooses and ordains disciples for the purpose of fruit bearing (John 15:16). He let his disciples know that it is in bearing much fruits (of souls won) for the kingdom of God that the heavenly father is glorified (John 15:8). While fruitless branches are taken away, the fruitful ones are pruned to bear more (John 15:2).

The church growth movement affirms that church growth is the will of God (Wagner 1984:13). The biblical rallying point for this affirmation is in the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ to the church to go to the nations (*panta ta ethne*) and make disciples (Matt.28:19). According to McGavran (1980:7), the answer to the question ‘why church growth’ is “a theological stance” that arises from the conviction that God wants humanity saved from sin through Christ.

- The commitment of Christ and the Trinity to the harvest of souls

Christ saw the multitudes and had compassion on them (Matt.9:36). This led him to go after the lost sheep with the three-fold ministry of preaching, teaching and healing (Matt.9:35). The result was a great crowd following him. In the same way, Christians should seek for souls who are interested in eternal life. They should not spend all ages on unfertile grounds. The way the Godhead sought out Israel every time the nation strayed from the path of truth equally reveals the Trinity as a searching God (McGavran 1980:32).

- Faithfulness to biblical mandate

Jesus commanded all believers to go into the whole world in search of the lost to become saved in the Saviour. He told the church: “you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). Christians in the city cannot claim loyalty to the master without being faithful to this biblical mandate. The more people are brought into the experience of salvation in Jesus Christ, the more the church grows. Faithfulness to God then demands that Christians go in search of the lost to become saved in the Saviour.

- God’s rebuke of negligent shepherds and stewards

God was unsparing in his condemnation of shepherds who would not feed the flock so that they can grow. He took exception to letting the diseased remain unhealed, the lost unsought and the strayed unassembled (Ezek.34:1-26). The parable of the talents (Matt.25:14ff) recount again the pain of God and the punishment reserved for unused talents. On the contrary, hundredfold rewards are given to those causing hundredfold growth in church harvest and kingdom work (Luke 19:16-26).

- Vision of the Celestial City

There is a coming glorious city, the New Jerusalem, whose dwellers are “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev.7:9 KJV). The fulfilment of the vision of the Celestial city, as described by John, demands an aggressive city mission that will ensure church growth (in quantity and

quality) among the multicultural and multiracial people of the city. It is only by such pursuit that the present church can be assured of a celestial city of men and women of every language “standing in front of the throne and the lamb and (were) wearing white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (Rev.7:9, 10 ISV). Churches without growth vision cause congregations to stagnate and eventually perish (Prov.29:18).

The uniform evidence of scriptural revelation, historical reflection and empirical research is that every normal church congregation grows and multiplies as confirmation of the will of God in both Testaments. The unbiblical scenario of “sterile church bodies that fail to reproduce are the abnormal ones” (Patterson and Currah 2003:211).

2.4.4 Church Growth and Urban Mission

The first church started and grew phenomenally in the city of Jerusalem. From there, it spread throughout the Roman Empire by moving from one city to the other. Notable growth of the church was recorded in such urban settings as Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome. These cities, like the contemporary ones of the 21st century, were centres of cultural variety, constant change, idolatrous pleasures, and entertainment opportunities. They afford the city missionary opportunities for cross-cultural communication amidst a polyglot of ethnicities striving for a better standard of living (Kraus 1980:124-126).

The city affords economic convenience, helping the population to swell with its hub of industry and commerce. Unlike the rural habitat, modern technology and communication networks have turned urban settings around the globe into one global village. These opportunities have implications for the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the church.

By promoting the gospel of peace and unity among rival ethnic groups, as we have in cities like Nairobi (Kenya) and Jos (Nigeria), the church is able to foster spiritual brotherhoods with its attendant physical blessings and eternal life (Psalms 133:1-3). The social diversity “provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the real meaning of the gospel of reconciliation” (Kraus 1980:132).

Typical modern cities are incredible centres of opportunity for mass evangelism and personal witness for Christ. This is made possible by the masses of people that cluster its residential areas, shopping malls, recreation centres and educational institutions. The dividend is unimaginable as the pool of skilled and unskilled manpower fills the pew of the growing church, supplying both volunteer and full-time workers to the church as and when needed (Kraus 1980:134).

Theologically, the church cannot defend any tendency of indifference to the city. Such an attitude will crumble the growth of the urban church and destroy its role as witness of Christ. Furthermore, the church's abstinence from the spiritual life of the city will fragment its social fabric even further, and will cause an escalation of its injustice and moral corruption.

The need for urban church growth is a church that is seen to be inclusive. The city needs churches that identify with the community they serve, on spiritual and social spheres of influence. They are the congregations that will grow and hasten the coming in of the kingdom of God in the cities because they understand and execute the urban mission of God.

2.4.5 Church growth in the Old Testament

The emphasis of the Old Testament is not clearly on the church and issues of the kingdom of God in the manner expressed in the New Testament, but on the overruling authority of God on the universe he has created (Gibbs 1981:51). He also rules over the rulers and kings of the earth (Ps.95:3); and on matters of justice, judgment and fortunes of nations as King (Jer. 10:7; Ps. 47:2). To the extent to which these subjects form part of the mission of the church, the linkage between the two testaments become less obscure on the growth of the kingdom of God, which is the goal of mission.

Bright (1953) sees the linkage between the Old and New Testaments as one of continuity rather than isolation. He writes:

“The two Testaments are originally linked to each other. The relationship between them is neither one of upward development nor of contrast; it is one of beginning and completion, of hope and fulfilment. And the bond that binds them together is the dynamic concept of the rule of God.” (Gibbs 1981:51).

This rule of God is seen in his call and dealings with different personalities and nations in their settings and within the mission of God. J. H. Bavinck observes that a casual observation of the Old Testament tends to foreclose the idea of mission, mercy and the granting of blessings of the Gospel to the non-Christians; but a closer reading would reveal a more promising scenario (Gibbs 1981:24). Some circumstances with an undertone of church growth are witnessed in the calling of Adam, Abraham and the children of Israel. We will briefly examine them.

- Church growth in the calling of Adam

God gave a call and commission to Adam to extend the territory of the created earth through multiplication (Gen.1:28). The recurrences of ‘Eden’ in Scripture attest to the fact that God was looking beyond biological growth in the Garden unto a time when the whole earth would be covered with his glory (Isaiah 11:9; Ezek.28:13; 31:8-9). Even the very creation of Adam and Eve “in the image and likeness of God” is a prototype of the church to be revealed. The duo was meant to extend the received blessing of multiplication and fruitfulness from Eden to the entire creation of God (Gibbs 1981:28).

Conn (1976:2) calls the calling of Adam a “covenant mandate”, which was a foretaste of multicultural mandate to evangelize the world given by Jesus Christ, ‘the last Adam’, in the Great Commission (1 Cor.15:45; Matt. 28:18-20). Elucidating the call of Adam within the framework of church Growth, Conn goes on to say:

“It is an expression of God’s desire to see the earth crowded with prophets, priests and kings unto God, a desire that shall not be thwarted by the arithmetic of satan (Gen.6:1ff), but will be performed

in the covenant purposes of grace which God Himself will undertake for His Abraham (Gen.16:10, 17:2), reiterate to Jacob (Gen.35:11), fulfill in the slave race Israel (Exod.1:20) and ultimately in the suffering servant and his seed” (Jer.33:22).

But there is perhaps a more theological basis to the complex argument of Paul in 1 Corinth.15:45-49 than the allusion made by Conn, and this equally finds merit in the missiological endeavour of the church. Jesus is of equal universal bearing as Adam, our first ancestor. Gen.2:7 of “the first man” and 1 Cor.15 of “the second man” hold a Christological bearing that is equally eschatological in nature. The first is the contrast and it is set to lead to its presupposition, the counterpart (Beale & Carson, 2007:747). In other words, the eventual multiplication of disciples after Pentecost is the fulfilment of the mandate given to the first Adam being witnessed in the second Adam (Conn 1976:3). The culmination of all these will be at the end of eschaton when “a great multitude which no man could number” will be gathered at the kingdom of God (Rev.7:9).

- Church growth in the call of Abraham

God calls people to himself for the sake of nations. This is explained in the name change of Abram to Abraham, signifying the father or ancestor of many nations (Gen.17:5). Before his call, Abraham lived among idol worshippers in the land of Ur of Chaldees (Josh.24:2; Gen.31:19; 35:2). In obedience to God, he left Babylonia and by faith proceeded to a destination he did not know except by faith in God, who was leading the way (Gen.12:1; Heb.11:8). The trio of faith, hope and love eventually secured him a place in the kingdom of God (1 Cor.13:13); as would all who will come to God through Jesus Christ.

Abraham indeed is a “spiritual prototype” (Gibbs 1981:25). Commenting on the universal growth impact of Abraham’s faith, Jesus had this to say:

“I assure you that many will come from the east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt.8:11).

The choice and call of Abraham was a demonstration of divine grace, which served as foreshadow to the call of the church into the grace of the Gospel (Eph.2:7-9). God blessed Abraham and told him “in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen.12:1-3). By this pronouncement, God made it clear that the choice of Abraham is not out of partiality but as “a particularistic means toward a universalistic end, the coming universal growth of the people of God (Gal.3:8; Acts 3:25)” (Conn1976:7).

The promise made to Abraham is fulfilled in the birth of Israel as a nation and of the church of Jesus Christ. By his life of faith, humanity understands the way into the kingdom and into the church. “It also underlines the fact that life and growth can occur in seemingly impossible circumstances...” (Gibbs 1981:27). Indeed the call of Abraham heralded a new chapter that Yahweh would open in the history of humanity. Today, all who believe are the children of Abraham by faith (Gal.3:7).

- Church growth in the choice of Israel

Biblical record confirms that God used the history of Israel to garner a harvest unto him from the harvest fields of the world. Church growth is captured in the gathering of these nations around the city of Jerusalem, described as the city of the Great King (Conn 1976: 10). From the time it was captured by David from the Jebusites (2 Sam.5:6-10), it had become the centre of attention, worship and construction work, not only by the twelve tribes of Israel, but also of the king of Tyre sending a labour force (2 Sam.5:11).

Scripture points to individual cases that serve as images and preparations towards this great growth of the kingdom. There is the case of the ‘mixed multitudes’ that identified with Yahweh and departed from Egypt with Israel in the exodus (Exo.12:38). At the entry of the land of Canaan was the city of Jericho that was marked for destruction. In the midst of the annihilation, Rahab and her household was saved and brought into the fold of the covenant people of God (Josh.6:25). Ruth, the Moabite’s widow, forsook idolatry to

accept Jehovah as her God (Ruth 1:16). The New Testament mentioned her in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5).

Also in the New Testament, Jesus mentioned the case of Naaman, the Syrian leper and Gentile army commander, who was healed by Elisha and decided to forsake the worship of idols for Jehovah (Luke 4:27; 2 Kings 5:17-19). These are evidence of God gathering a people for the growth of his kingdom, through the history of Israel, from “the harvest fields of the world” (Conn 1976:10). Today the church is called the ‘Israel of God’ (Gal.6:16; Eph.2:12, 13).

- Church growth declaration by the Psalter and Prophets

The Psalms projected the image of Mount Zion that will serve as “the joy of the whole earth” (Ps.48:2; 68:29-32), the centre of peace, eternal life and of the brotherhood of all nations (Ps.133:1-3). Zion is the place of light and brightness to Gentiles and kings of the earth (Isaiah 60:3). In the same manner, the prophets painted the picture of an explosive growth that would gather the nations around the worship of Jehovah (Conn 1976:14). A nation unknown to Israel would be called by God along with Israel (Isaiah 55:5). They will all constitute the army of Yahweh. Through them the following prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled:

“For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations” (Isaiah 66:18, 19 ESV).

The emphasis here is centred on the gathering of nations through the revelation of God’s glory of his miraculous signs that will accompany such revelation. Though what the miraculous signs will be are not clearly stated, church growth in all ages have been

attested to with evidences of signs and wonders. Then is also the issue of “survivors”, a kind of ambassadors going out to draw others to the revealed glory in the tabernacle of Yahweh. Some of the far away places or “mission fields” suggested by scholars to embrace these Tarshish, Pul and Lud include Spain, nations of African peoples (who draw the bow), regions of the Black Sea, Asia Minor or Greece (Buttrick, 1956:771).

Zechariah was equally forthright. He looked ahead and saw a time of unprecedented growth when the enemies of God will become members of his kingdom. His prophecy says:

In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you' (Zech.8:23 ESV).

The core of the prophecy is that the temple will be restored; nations of the world will then come to seek Yahweh following the rise of a new shepherd from the Davidic monarch (Sweeney, 2005:206, 207).

2.4.6 Church growth in the New Testament

The New Testament gives a clear picture of a church growth model within the context of the first century urban setting. The churches of the time exemplified vibrant growth, which serves as models for every congregation (McGavran 1980:8). Many passages of Scripture attest to the growth nature embedded in the body of Christ, which is the church of the new dispensation. The ‘body’ grows; they grow in faith; they grow in the knowledge of Christ; they were added to daily; they multiply exceedingly (Eph.4:16; Col.2:19). This growth is witnessed in almost all the churches with much commendation from the apostles and regular encouragement to grow more. We will briefly examine a few such instances in the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles and in Paul’s ministry.

- Church growth in the Gospels

The writer of the Gospel of Luke records the prophecy given on the birth of Jesus, describing it as the visitation of the Lord God of Israel to redeem his people (Luke 1:68). He goes on to describe Christ's ministry as one of a harvester whose "winnowing fork is in his hand to clean up his threshing floor. He will gather the grain into his barn, but he will burn the chaff with inextinguishable fire" (Luke 3:17). The announcement is "the word of the gospels" emphasizing the truth "that in Jesus Christ the day of growth and harvest has begun" (Conn 1976:14).

Both the Gospels of John and Luke record the proverbial sayings of Jesus about the ripened harvest of the kingdom. They call attention to the coming of the kingdom coinciding with the coming of Jesus, the ushering in of the "eschatological harvest day of the Lord" (Conn 1976:15). So in John 4:36, Jesus declares: "Look at the fields; already they are white, ready for harvest". Talking to his disciples and asking for their prayer commitment on the coming of the kingdom, Jesus pleads: "Pray the Lord of harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

Matthew and Mark both recorded the parable of the mustard seed in their Gospels as a clear expression of how the church (portrayed as the kingdom of God) would grow from the smallest plant to a large tree with nests for different kinds of birds of the air (Matt.13:31, 32; Mk. 4:30-32). Similarly, in the parable of the wedding feast, Luke's Gospel emphasises how "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" would be dragged into God's house to fill up his wedding feast (Luke 14:21). Jesus is unequivocal that the phenomenal growth of the kingdom of God will witness multitudes from the East and West feasting together (Matt.8:11).

- Church growth in the Acts

Growth instances in the Acts of the Apostles indicate how the early church was daily 'added' to (Acts 2:42-47), 'spread' (Acts 6:7), 'advance' (Acts 12:24), and 'grew' (Acts 19:20). No other book recorded such phenomenal response to the preaching of the Gospel

in the early church. Such occurrences may have influenced the observation that the true element of the early church was the recurring of numerical growth (Jongeneel (2002:22).

It is difficult to find a more concise summary of the growth events in the Acts than the account given by missiologist Harvie Conn. He writes:

“There is theological focus behind Luke’s recording of “about three thousand souls” converted on Pentecost (Acts 2:4) and “believers...the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (5:14). “The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly, and a great company of the priests obedient to the faith” (6:7), “multitudes” giving heed with one accord in Samaria (8:6), “all that dwelt in Lydda and Sharon” turning to the Lord (9:35), “much people” added unto the Lord in Antioch (11:21, 24), the word of the Lord spreading abroad “throughout all the region” of Antioch of Pisidia (13:44, 49), “of the devout Greek a great multitude” in Thessalonica “and of the chief women not a few” (17:4) (Conn 1976:17, 18).

These are more than mere figures. They testify of the harvest of the Gospel across tongues, nations and kindred of the earth. Scholars differ on factors responsible for the zeal that led to this expansion. McGavran attributes it to the unshakable conviction of the early church in the primacy of Jesus Christ for the salvation of lost humanity (McGavran and Arn 1981:22). Jesus had taught that he was the only way for humanity to pass from death to life and that believing in him was essential to salvation (John 14:6; 6:28). They were equally strongly convinced of the second coming of the Lord. The conviction stimulated their faith to spread the Gospel.

Some others have pointed to the power of resurrection, the truth demonstrated by Jesus when he showed the disciples his nailed hands and side in his post-resurrection appearance (John 20:27). Other scholars insist that the church’s massive spread was a result of ‘the power of the Holy Spirit’ (McGavran and Arn 1981:105). The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples of the early church to bear witness for Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and

the utmost parts of the world (Acts 1:8). Jesus gave the mission mandate, while the Spirit gave the mission might.

A further factor, which might not have been given sufficient expression by scholars from the West, but “undoubtedly played a part in church growth was the testimony of miracles” (McGavran and Arn 1981:106). Almost every miracle in the early church had a crowd impact. The healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:11); the raising up of Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-42) and the healing of the father of Publius (Acts 28:8, 9) are a few examples.

The church of the New Testament had only one primal burden, and that was to make the faith of Christ known to all men in all nations and in all callings of life. The weight of the burden accounts for the passion with which they preached the Gospel and got the growth of the church actualized (McGavran and Arn 1981:112). It was why Paul made himself ‘all things to all men’ that he might by all means save some (1 Cor.9:22).

- Church growth in the Pauline ministry

The risen Lord appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus for the singular purpose of growing the church of Jesus Christ across racial divides and expanding the kingdom of God on earth (Acts 9:15; 26:16-18). Paul kept this vision all through his ministry (Acts 26:19).

Paul’s strategy to plant and grow the church in Asia Minor was basically through the church-in-the-home arrangement. He started churches in houses of those who responded to his message. Frequently in his letters, he wrote to greet those churches “in the house” (Rom.16:5; 1 Cor.16:9; Col.4:15; Philemon 1:2). This was in addition to his worshipping in the synagogues. Leaders like Timothy who eventually became pastors of some of his big city churches, may have been developed from such cell group churches (Acts 16:1-3).

It seems that Paul had advance information about the relatives of Christians he had previously known before he got to the towns where they could be found (Arn and McGravan 1973:32). An example of this is in his greeting list in the sixteenth chapter of Romans. With these ‘approachable people’ and an emphasis on the family unit for

salvation, he could easily establish house churches that became the foundation for the growth of many congregations in Europe and Asia Minor (Arn and McGravan 1973:33, 34).

2.4.7 Biblical principles of urban church growth

- To grow, it has to be the church

The New Testament describes the church with various metaphors. It is the body of Christ (Col. 2:19; Rom.12:4, 5), the bride of Christ (2 Cor.11:2; Eph.5:29; the temple and building of God (1 Cor.3:9, 16-17; Eph.2:19-22; the flock of God and of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet.5:2, 3), the salt and light of the world (Matt.5:13, 14; Rev. 1:12, 13). These images underlie the reasons for the growth of the church, being the agent and manifestation of the reign of God on earth.

Efforts to grow institutional structures in the name of church can always be expected to suffer setbacks. Institutions are owned by humans and have no divinely binding promises for growth. On the contrary, God ascribes the ownership of the church to Christ and gave his assurance for its growth and continuity (Eph.5:25; Col.1:18; Matt. 16:18).

In his timely warning on this, John Havlik writes: “The church is never a place, but always a people; never a fold but always a flock; never a sacred building but always a believing assembly” (Landry & Ordiales undated: 23)

- Church grows on ripened field

God intends that his servants should labour where the harvest is ripe and the field white (John 4:35). With God pointing to multitudes of ready souls to be won, the believer has no justification to go somewhere else. McGavran (1959:66) notes that “The same Holy Spirit who inspires men to claim the world for Christ, also inspires them to concentrate their efforts on those areas where men are gladly coming to the Saviour”.

- Emphasise house churches in city neighbourhoods

The church in the house was Paul's strategy of planting and growing congregations in the cities of Asian Minor (cf. McGavran 1970; Greenway 1976). It is an urban strategy that points out that the way to reach the urbanites will no longer be through programs but via biblical people incarnating Christ in the neighbourhoods through the house church scheme.

With the high rate of poverty in the low income settlements of the cities of Africa, neighbourhood churches rather than large city-centre congregations that are hard to reach could serve as a most-effective strategy of evangelization and church growth.

- Promote both theology of search and of harvest

Many times the argument on church growth is whether God is concerned with the "theology of search" (faithfulness in the proclamation of the word) or "theology of harvest" (the persuasion that lead to multiplication) (Conn 1976:1). Jesus emphasised both in his earthly ministry. He commanded the disciples to "go preach" (Matt.10:7; Mark 16:15; Luke 9:60). At the same time he laments the short supply of harvesters and asked for prayer to God for labourers to come around and reap the ripened harvest (Matt.9:37, 38).

The same trend is seen in the ministry of the early church and of Paul. Peter on Pentecost preached and pleaded with the hearers to be saved from their corrupt generation (Acts 2:40). The founding of the church of Thessalonians was as a result of the persuasion of Paul in the Synagogue for three Sabbaths (Acts 17:4).

- Let the natives lead

Urban church expansion should be the primary work of national churches (see Timothy M. Monsma. 1977. African Urban Missiology, PhD Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary). The best understanding of Africa, for example, will come from Africans. Contextualizing the Gospel to natives of various ethnic and socio-economic groups can

only be effectively done by ‘birds of the same feather flocking together’. This is one of the keys to the phenomenal growth of the mega-churches in the cities of Lagos (Nigeria), Accra (Ghana), and Johannesburg (South Africa).

- Undertake research in urban church growth

Churches that want to express growth in the urban setting ought to know how God works in the various cities of Africa, for example, in order to fully equip the church to respond adequately to challenges posed by urbanization (cf. Greenway 1976). The level of ignorance in mission work in the urban settings of many nations of Africa is a contributory factor to church stagnation and decline. The situation becomes more complex with the suspicion and fear that confronts honest efforts to help both stagnant and growing churches benefit from research results.

- Respect ethnic cultures in the city

The church culture of the church planter must be minimally conveyed in the target culture if the church is meant to grow. The biblical necessities for a church to exist are what should be taught, and these at various levels of spiritual growth. Payne (2003:227) recommends that the “cultural fingerprint of the church planter” ought to be gone by the second or third generations.

Chaney (1982:151, 152) argues that the author of human tribes is God, and he desires to see Christ’s beauty and character projected in cultures and peoples of the world. Charles Kraft agrees, contending that:

“The way of Jesus is however, to honor a people’s culture, not to wrest them from it. Just as He entered the cultural life of first-century Palestine in order to communicate with people, so we are to enter the cultural matrix of the people we seek to win. If we are to witness effectively to human beings, we have to take account of the culture in which these human beings live” (Kraft 1996:32).

2.5 BIBLICAL VIEW ON CHURCH STAGNATION AND REVITALIZATION

2.5.1 Church stagnation defined

According to Daman⁹, stagnant churches are congregations that are tired and fruitless in the ministry of the kingdom. They do not grow in number or endeavour to be seriously committed to the needs of the community where they are located.

He enumerates some characteristics of such congregations. These would include: an inward-focused ministry, lack of passion for evangelism, loss of Great Commission vision, a greater commitment to activities rather than spirituality, lack of access to ministry and leadership by new entrants to the church, and lack of obedience to the teachings of Scripture. Daman goes on to argue that the dilemma of declining churches is in tradition: a preference for the past rather than commitment to the reality of the present in the gospel work.

Daman's perception of stagnation however, is not limited to lack of numerical growth. He considers a church that is also lacking in "spiritual transformation" of life to be stagnant. Quoting from Ezek.2:3-8, he concludes that "the final test of a church is not size or numerical growth but the degree to which the congregation is being obedient to the whole teaching of scripture".

Melford H. Jones agrees, contending that some churches "cannot grow in numbers", but they could still stay dynamic biblically by adapting, within their environment, to "alternatives compatible with the New Testament mandate" (Wagner 1986:135). In their peculiar circumstance, the option left for such a congregation is to die and "arrange for its demise with dignity" (ibid.).

⁹ See Daman, Glenn C. *Shepherding the small church*. P.53-54. Internet source, accessed 11-10-2009

Jones appears to make a contribution to the revitalization debate by arguing that churches of various sizes could be “dynamic” (Wagner 1986:135). Churches indeed do come in sizes and influence the community in different proportions. However, he fails to provide a biblical alternative that would be “compatible with the New Testament mandate” to go into the world and make disciples of nations (Matt. 28:18-20). His argument equally fails to consider the truth that dynamic institutions, like living organisms, grow. It will be a contradiction for a church to be lively (dynamic) but to not grow. He contradicts his view on dynamism in stagnation when he argues for a dynamically growing-in-number congregation. He writes:

“This chapter arbitrarily categorizes those congregations as ‘dynamic’ that have had both a net membership gain in the past three years and have received new members equivalent to 10 percent of their membership in the past year’ (Wagner 1986:135).

George Barna (1993, 34), in reporting the result of his research on symptoms to watch in churches that are declining, concludes that “more often than not, the churches that declined found themselves with a pastor who failed to provide effective leadership”. It echoes the words of Jesus that “if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (Matthew 15:14).

Many scholars share this view on the growth of corporate organizations (Ford 1991, Kouzes & Posner 2007, Tichy and Devanna 1986, D’Souza 2008). What is yet to be seen, however, are scholarly research that addresses the role of leadership in revitalizing the stagnant church in the African urban setting, especially of the 21st century.

However, the problem of church stagnation seems to be principally theological. Some in Christendom are not persuaded that God is concerned that countable persons be won to Christ. Christians who hold to a ‘theology of search’ insist that the mission of the church is accomplished when the Gospel is proclaimed irrespective of audience response (McGavran 1980:30). McGavran cites the case of others who hold that “God is taking out of the Gentiles a limited number of people to be His church. Nothing then that the

Christian does can add to or subtract from His purposes” (1980:30). In that situation, mission becomes the preaching of the Gospel to all nations without the church knowing who or who will not be saved.

Measurable variables of growth are indispensable in the evangelistic work of a local church in order to avoid notions that risk enforcing church stagnation. Congregations that do not add net membership in a reasonable period of time is stagnant. If going by the measuring scale of Waymire and Wagner (1980:15), a “25% church growth per decade is marginal”, a local congregation that falls below the line in a ten-year appraisal could be considered numerically stagnant.

2.5.2 Causes of church stagnation

There are various factors that contribute to a church’s stagnation. Gwak and Hendriks (2001:55-67) mention the following among others as contributors to the decline of the Korean Protestant Church since the mid-1980s:

- **Faulty ecclesiology:** The KPC declined due to an ecclesiology that was more oriented towards effectiveness and success in church work rather than faithfulness in service and obedience to the demand of the kingdom. This tendency led to the church losing public credibility and its members becoming attracted to the more enterprising mega-churches.
- **Inability of the church to respond to rapid social change:** The post-modern Korea came with a new trend of social security, institutional reforms and desire for pleasure. These impacted the perception of the society on the institution of the church and contributed negatively to church attendance in conservative evangelical congregations. Unfortunately, the Korean Protestant Church found itself unable to adapt to the fast social change in the society, leading to a decline in its growth rate.
- **Failed leadership ability:** Quoting Lee (1998:11), Gwak and Hendriks cite the failed ability of the pastoral ministry to adjust to changes in the modern society as another reason for the decline of the KPC. This seems to be the dilemma that

equally faced the Seoul Union Church. Its West African pastor rejoiced in faithfully serving the “expatriate community”- in an age of globalization that has witnessed unprecedented rapid urbanization with multi-ethnic groups from diverse nations settling in the cities (Njoh 2003:167; Greenway and Mashau 2007:10,11).

Furthermore, Barna (cf. 1993), Stetzer (cf. 2005), and Greenway and Mashau (2007:34, 79,114,125,153) identify, among others, the following general causes of stagnation of churches:

- **Absence or non-integration of youth:** Declining and stagnant congregations are known for their failure to win and integrate the youth into the life of the church. The “old guard” is solely relied upon for ministry, and the nature of ministry itself has no credible vision for urban youths and children. The situation is more critical on a continent like Africa where 45 percent of its population is under the age of fifteen.
- **The ingrown family:** Many of the declining congregations are inward-looking rather than outward-seeking. Their ministry is centralized on meeting the needs of the faithful congregants to the neglect of the spiritual welfare of the perishing souls in their community. They suffer from the “Jonah syndrome”, the monopoly of internal affairs and local concerns.
- **Lack of commitment to mission, evangelism and community service:** Stagnant churches lack a sense of urgency towards accomplishing the Great Commission. Mission is seen as work to be done by ordained ministers or the specially sent ones. The church ends up being unknown in the very community where it is located. Bishop James Davis of the African Methodist Episcopal Churches in Alabama attributed the stagnation of his church to this predominant factor.
- **Resistance to change:** Declining churches do what they have always done and get what they have always gotten. They are generally uncomfortable with change. To depart from the comfort zone of the tested and known and to embrace the unknown and risky is a venture they have no passion for. Since such churches lack

leadership with vision for change and commitment to the path of progress, the ministry tapers off with time.

- **Inadequate leadership:** This is a situation in which a church declines due to weak leadership that could not give adequate direction, motivation and positive reaction to the efforts of the followers. In brief, the congregation lacks visionary leadership and the life of the ministry pays the price.

Though the list of causes of church decline is limitless with no single factor entirely responsible for stagnation, the one issue that no study has ever missed is “a pastor who no longer was able to lead the church” (Barna 1993:32).

2.5.3 Revitalization defined

Various missiologists and church historians define revitalization differently but with many similarities on internal and external dimensions of church growth. McGavran, the founding father of the Church Growth Movement (CGM), clearly associates church growth with church revitalization when he describes the major obstacles to church growth in his following words:

“However, engaged in many good activities, Christians often take the growth of the church for granted. They neither pray earnestly for it nor work systematically at it. They assume it will take place automatically as Christians study the Bible, do good to others, and worship God. As a result, in the midst of huge numbers of receptive men and women many churches stop growing and become static enclaves of comfortable middle-class Christians. These feed the hungry, visit the sick, clothe the naked, and build attractive houses of worship, train leaders, and influence society for good, but they do not grow. The dynamism of the early church does not dwell in them. Church growth has been assumed and is, alas, not occurring” (1970: xii-xiii).

The emphasis of McGavran is that many churches decline or plateau while still busy doing many good works that do not engender growth.

According to Mark Shaw (Kim 2009:138), revitalization (or renewal or comeback) in church congregations is “evangelical activism”, and this progresses within a church community that “turns its attention from internal growth to outward mission” (Kim 2009:138). Evidently, Shaw implies that in revitalization, there will first be the foundation of ‘internal growth’ that should consequently propel “outward mission”. Shawchuck and Perry (1982:9) agree with Shaw, assuming that each local congregation and denominations know what *missio ecclesia* is and thus define revitalization to be taking place when the people of God are brought “to the place where they can serve Christ fully”, doing “all that He asks of them”.

From the perceptive of Shaw, Shawchuck and Perry, a congregation that is evangelistically in-active, a doing-nothing assembly that revels in “low spiritual vitality” is the contrast of a revitalized church. Such congregations neither grow in grace nor are effective in mature kingdom service. It is on this ground that the Church Growth Movement lists key indices of revitalization to include an emphasis on house churches, development of lay leadership, focusing on responsive cultural people groups, communicating vibrant faith and providing a sound theological base (McGavran 1980:322).

However, defining revitalization sometimes suffer the same fate of the quality-quantity controversy as does the characterization of church growth. Declining and stagnant congregations often defend their smallness in size by claiming to be focused on quality. They claimed to be watchful against the trap of a congregation made up of a “mass of baptized unbelievers” (Wagner 1981:64). This makes church growth opponents sue for “high-quality churches” as evidence of a growing and revitalized congregation (Wagner 1981:64).

Contrasting both the overly subjective definition of Wagner and the difficult-to-measure spiritual elements embedded in the definitions advanced by Shawchuck and Perry, a “successful and effective” church that includes the three elements of financial solvency, missionary zeal and numerical growth was proposed by Chaney (1982:121) as a relevant

definition of revitalization. His three elements, as lacking in spiritual depth as they seem, together with the views expressed by Wagner, Shaw, Shawchuck and Perry, could be absorbed in Chester Droog's view of effecting change (or revitalization), which he sees as a process within the kingdom of God that brings to birth, "vibrant, alive, witnessing, throbbing congregations (which) give Christ the glory and honour due to him" (Wagner 1981:60). Chester Droog gave this view in light of the danger posed by church stagnation to the evangelistic mandate. He argues that "small, weak, struggling, stagnant churches do nothing to enhance the glory of Christ" (Wagner 1981:60).

In this search for the glory of Christ, revitalization is a comprehensive strategy that fulfils the Great Commission by striving for church growth, church multiplication, and church perfection in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Buys (1989: 265) rightly says that there can be no separation between the preservation (the qualitative dimension) and the extension (the quantitative dimension) of the church in the practical labour of building the body of Christ.

However, though revitalization has both statistical and spiritual dimensions, one can agree with the CGM on the inherent difficulty of measuring the spiritual dynamics of revitalization. One can therefore narrowly conclude a church to be revitalized if the congregation has experienced a comeback numerically from a significant period of stagnation due to membership plateau and/or decline and it is continuing in actions that keep aglow the fire of revitalization, such as teaching God's word, training God's workers and touching God's world in context¹⁰.

2.5.4 Urban mission and church revitalization

The Christian impact on the urban society in many countries has been insignificant due to stagnation. The kernel of truth, as explained by Goldsmith (1980:7, 8), is that "we cannot expect our voice to be listened to when we form only a small minority of the local population". He goes on to write: "A congregation of two hundred Christians in a town of

¹⁰ A five-year of stagnation (between 1988 and 1999) followed by a period of 2 to 5 years of numerical growth (between 2000 and 2007) is considered significant for the research.

10,000 people composes only 2 percent of the population and can only therefore be considered rather insignificant.”

This scenario is brought about by a number of challenges that face city church leaders and muzzle the energy of their congregations. Some of these challenges, as highlighted by Chaney (1982:120, 121), include the location of the church building in a community that it is not serving. This could be due to relocation of many members to a new community or they might never have lived there in the first instance. Where this is not the case, the church building might not even be suitable to “present-day congregation needs” and so forces the youth, in particular, to look out for churches with user-friendly buildings. Sometimes congregation and key leadership positions are in the hands of a single socio-cultural group. This causes the church not to be owned by all in the fold. Other times, the cause of stagnation may be traced to a case of majority of members, and particularly the pastor and those in leadership role, belonging to “a socio-economic group that is significantly different from the people living near the (church) building’.

Whatever the case, it is paramount that the church labours to succeed in “churching the cities”. Greenway (1971:236) traces the pathway to having urban revitalized congregations. He writes:

“If revitalized churches whose leaders have been trained in church growth-oriented schools can be turned loose in the burgeoning cities, then a multiplication of churches will occur such as the world has not seen since the first century”

The low income settlements characterized by a lack of basic social amenities will be habitation of “almost half of urban Africans—about 300 million people by 2020 unless current approaches to urban development change radically”¹¹. Urban church revitalization among the incarnating with-the-city churches is essential for catering for both the social and spiritual needs of these urban slum dwellers.

¹¹ World Bank Regional Reports - Africa Region, Spring 2001

There are conditions that favour and inhibit church growth and revitalization in the cities. It is the responsibility of Christians to discover this and seek to reverse the trend of church decline or stagnation. We cannot conclude that the church environment presents a hostile climate to church growth and revitalization when some denominations are evidently growing well in the midst of others that stagnate. The best should be “to contrast the methods which bring in (large) numbers (in some denominations) with those which have resulted in the very small growth of (other) churches” (McGavran 1980:319, 320).

2.5.5 Biblical and theological basis for revitalization

Revelations 2 and 3 relays the scriptural need for revitalization in the church of God. Jesus, through John, addressed the spiritual condition of each of the seven churches in Asia Minor. The Lord assessed each of the churches and its leadership; gave an appreciation of their good works, a condemnation of their evils and finally gave a counsel to do that which is good.

A summary of Christ’s counsel to these first century churches include, but are not limited to the following:

- A return from the path of spiritual lethargy, death, apostasy, mediocrity, decline and stagnation (Rev. 2:14-16, 20-24; 3:15-19).
- A charge to the angel of each church (that is the leadership) to cause revitalization to begin in the congregation through repentance from sin (Rev.2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19).
- Rekindling the first love for God by those who have lost it in the church (Rev.2:4, 5; 3:1-3)
- Zeal for evangelism and consistency in grace (rev. 3:8-11).
- Faithfulness unto death by those engaged in the face of fierce persecution (Rev. 2:10).

2.5.6 Revitalization in the Old Testament

The Old Testament teaching on creation sets the scene for mission. It shows the entire universe belonging to God by creation and sustenance (Gen.1; 2; Ps. 24; 33:13). God was constantly involved in the revitalization process of this mission, and he shows this in the growth-covenant relationship he had with his people.

God's covenant with Adam and Eve was one of growth and revitalization. They had to be fruitful and replenish the earth. Gen. 6:18 is the first mention of the term 'covenant' in the Bible. It addresses the relationship God shared with Noah's family to preserve them from the flood.

The whole issue of the ark cantered on God's intention to save a people that would be raised as instrument of survival of the planet earth. That the revitalization process continues up to this age is evidenced in the rainbow of grace and mercy, a token of God's love to all humanity and a foreshadow of Jesus Christ that will be lifted up on the cross for all to look and live (Gibbs 1981:28).

God's covenant with Israel in a redemptive relationship that gives privilege to outsiders to be incorporated as part of God's people is an image of the universal growth of the redeemed that the revitalization process seeks to achieve. However, Gibbs has cautioned against an excessive over reading of the New Testament mission of the church back into the Old Testament (1981:42). The warning is based on the fact that the Old Testament people were hardly aware of such a calling. Israel, in particular, was so inward-looking that outward mission to Gentiles was never on its agenda.

However, though Gibbs' caution had relevance, the supremacy of God many times overruled the reluctance of Israel in serving as God's missionaries. The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 King 10:1-9); the city-wide revival in Nineveh after the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:10); and the healing of Naaman the Syrian by Prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5:17, 18) serve as good examples of kingdom growth and revitalization under divine oversight in the Old Testament.

2.5.7 Revitalization in the New Testament

If Chaney (1982:126) is right in his claim that no strategy to revitalize a church would be comprehensive without a community church multiplying “its own witness and ministry among the new residents by planting new congregations”, then the church planting activities of the early church and of Paul the Apostle provide evidence of how revitalization of churches was the preoccupied mission of the New Testament congregations. This issue has already been addressed under the section of church planting and church growth and would not be repeated here.

It suffices to say that the Lord gave clear command to spread the faith. Congregations in the New Testament obeyed and the church grew. Specific cases that could lead to church stagnation, like administrative neglect and members’ murmuring in the Jerusalem church, carnality in Corinth and legalism among the Galatians, were quickly addressed by the apostles. This keeps most of the congregations constantly revitalized.

Paul the Apostle, in particular, kept the revitalization process on in the churches he planted around Asia Minor by multiplying cells of believing Christians in every city where he proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2.5.8 Biblical and theological principles on revitalization

Palmer (1976:161-169), in his research of eleven churches across United States and Canada, came up with six principles for revitalizing congregations. Each of these principles has relevance in all cultures and cities and could change congregational profile completely if appropriately applied. They are:

- Analyse and evaluate

There is the need to subject every department of church work to critical performance analysis in order to discover strengths and weaknesses. There are some growing city churches that subject themselves to rigorous SWOT analysis (analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to church grow). Others analyse periodically the

institutional structures that impact the numerical growth of the congregation within its political and socio-economic environments. This will lead to effecting change and improvement on areas of stagnation.

- Strong Biblical emphasis

This is beyond just preaching the doctrines of the Bible correctly, though critical. It includes making the truth simple and practical. It is paying special attention to planting God's word in the deep worldview level of hearers until it changes the lives of both the young and old in the congregation.

- Love and Care

Church effectiveness is usually provoked by obedience to the Great Commandment of loving one another. In congregations where the rule of love binds the hearts and lives of members, hurts heal faster and a strong 'family' tie is built.

- Dynamic leadership

Dynamic leadership is visionary leadership that carefully selects able assistance and motivates fulfilment of goals. This kind of leadership encourages every department to creatively think through its own program and challenges prompt execution. The result in such circumstances is usually tremendous growth.

- Adaptability

Adaptability helps to turn problems into opportunities. Congregations learn to adapt to the needs of the church and community. Nothing is completely counted to be a liability. In this way, outreach to 'distant' community members is possible and gifts of members are put to use. Many times, it is the degree of adaptability that determines the relevance of a church to its changing environment.

- Program

Revitalized churches use various strategies to attract interested people to the church. Some churches have had to distribute used clothes to the needy, provide transport to bring in interested people to church services freely, build schools and promote affordable health care programs as part of outreach plans to non-responsive communities, or simply to advance the kingdom of Christ.

Other principles that find relevance in both biblical and theological reflections on church revitalization include, but are not limited to the following:

- Desire change and communicate revitalization

The leadership of a stagnant church must desire revitalization before it can be brought to bear on the church. Such desire needs be communicated and owned by the entire congregation, with each member knowing what his or her responsibility is in the revitalization process.

Declining churches do what they have always done and get what they have always gotten. They are generally uncomfortable with change. To depart from the comfort zone of the tested and known and embrace the unknown and risky, is a venture they have no passion for. Yet without change, revitalization is an unrealizable dream.

- Teach and train on church revitalization

Churches that experience revitalization teach the congregation how to go about it. The word of God on the world to be evangelized has to be diligently taught. This helps the congregation to have a solid theological foundation for its belief. There is equally the need to train on specific outreach methods relevant to the context of the church community.

- Keep revitalization vision in focus

Revitalization demands leadership and congregational vision that is kept in focus. The church declines due to weak leadership that does not give adequate direction, motivation and positive reaction to the efforts of the followers. These are problems associated with vision. It could become dull, lost, forgotten or completely abandoned. The book of Habakkuk gives applicable counsel for revitalization of stagnant institutions. It says:

“And the LORD answered me: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end--it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay”. Hab. 2:2, 3

The force of written record curbs the fear or panic that normally accompanies delays. It also helps to notice unfolding events and to prevent distractions by such. When Yahweh was telling Habakkuk to write the vision he was putting the whole essence of his integrity into the promise made. It takes such tenacity of purpose to get a stagnant church out of the woods. The usual danger is to want give up too early due to resistance to change from congregational and leadership circles. Many other congregations that could fair wonderfully on growth fail the test of waiting in the period between stagnation and revitalization. Instead of “waiting in anticipation” by being alert, charged and on tiptoe for growth, they either relapsed into waiting in “rebellion” by abandoning the vision for acts of impatience because the vision tarries or lazily keep waiting in “resignation” by resigning to fate and “dull listlessness” (Buttrick, 1956:987, 988).

2.6 CONCLUSION

A sound biblical and theological reflection gives a solid base for the mission of the church in the city. The nature of the city and the high rate of urbanization, especially in Africa, since the beginning of the 21st century call for aggressive church planting, church growth

and revitalization work among the churches. It is only by so doing that the church can be relevant in the midst of the high density population of our cities.

A church of one thousand members cannot claim to be significant in a city of one million people. That is a less than 1% representation. If a church claims to value and pursue quality, it will expectedly have quantity. Quality without quantity is a rare exception rather than the expected. All living, dynamic organisms grow. And the church is the living body of Christ on earth.

Furthermore, urban mission work of church growth, church planting and revitalization hastens the return of Christ, the harvest of souls and the coming of the kingdom of God (Matt. 24:14). It holds the key to bringing in the nations to the final city of the Trinity, and of the realization of the vision of multitudes from all languages, tribes and nations assembling to worship the risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Rev.7:9, 10).

CHAPTER THREE

3 THE URBAN MISSION CONTEXT IN NAIROBI, KENYA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will reflect on the urban mission work of the six select turnaround churches within the context of Nairobi metropolis. It will examine the antecedences of each church and the extent to which their growth has been influenced or affected by the vision, mission, ministry structures, denominational characteristics and challenges posed by urban nuances to their missiological engagements.

However, since neither the urban face of Nairobi nor the denominational operations of the select churches operate in a vacuum, the chapter will firstly present an overview of the global historical and ecclesiological context of urban mission as a framework of analysis. Secondly, it will examine the specific socio-politico and economic context of the Kenyan nation, pointing out the developmental and ecclesiastical link between the nation and the city, as well as the impact that macro-cultural perspectives of the citizenry bear on the image of the body of Christ in Nairobi and on the lifestyle of the people that Henry Mutua choose to label, the “Nairobians” (Kim 2009: 45).

3.2 THE WIDER GLOBAL FRAMEWORK¹²

3.2.1 The historical context

Before the Dark Ages and the subsequent detour of the church to rural mission occasioned by the fall of Roman Empire, the church as modelled by the Jerusalem and Antioch

¹² This section benefits immensely from the view expressed by John Nicholls on the subject in his article: ‘Urban Mission’ published in *Reformed Theological Journal*, Nov. 2004, vol.20, p.47-57. The researcher does not find a more relevant, concise history of urban mission.

congregations were urban-based. Cities such as Rome, Thessalonica, Constantinople, and Alexandria had great Christian impact. The cities and its civilization provided an abode for believers while the word 'pagan' referred to 'one who lives in the countryside' (Nicholls 2004:51). Islamic upsurge of the Dark Ages created cities of influential political and educational powers, but these were marginally evangelized by the church.

A new era of urban mission awareness was only rekindled, in the West, after the Renaissance. Christian movements in the likes of German's Lutheran Reformation and England's Puritanism targeted the then small minority cities of the West. More specifically, "the work of Calvin in Geneva and Richard Baxter in Kidderminster provided forceful models of ministry to an entire urban community" (ibid. 51).

Rigorous urban mission work of the church came alive again in the 19th century with the phenomenal growth of cities starting from the British. Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) developed what could be called school of urban mission by propounding a theory of urban ministry that he tested in his Parish in 1819, a project that inspired many that followed in his footsteps in Britain. He drew attention to the poverty of expecting to win the word via the instrumentality of 'mere signal of invitation', building a facility and opening a new church. Rather, he calls on Christendom to invade "the territory of wickedness" and "knock at the doors of those who are most profoundly asleep." (ibid.52). Chalmers insisted on the need for urban mission to address both spiritual and physical poverty.

The success of Chalmers in his urban mission initiative in Glasgow provoked positive response. "By the 1850s there were more than six hundred and fifty City and Town Missions in Britain whose basic approach was the same systematic visitation with spiritual and practical concern" (p.52). It equally led to the rise of many urban theologians who probably "remain the most practical, effective and coherent group of urban theologians that the Reformed/Evangelical churches have yet produced" (p. 53).

The Evangelicals took over the terrain of urban ministry from the 19th and early 20th centuries, with great involvement of churches like the Salvation Army, preachers like C.H. Spurgeon and church organizations like the university students. This became more pronounced since the 1980s due to the rapid urbanization of the population of the Majority World of African, Asia and Latin America, with vast developments of low income

settlements. Missionaries saw and taught the need to redirect mission work from rural to urban dwellings to meet the need of the mass population drift from rural areas to the cities. Prominent among these were “two Americans: Harvie Conn, an Orthodox Presbyterian missionary in South Korea, and Roger Greenway, a Christian Reformed missionary in Sri Lanka” (p.53).

Equally significant in feeding the Evangelical’s interest in urban mission in the 1980s was the urban violence in Europe and America, which led to publication of books calling attention to urban crisis. There were also the rise of new charismatic churches and the growth of immigrant churches from Africa and Latin America in the poor inner cities of Britain and America. There was also a drift of business and property concerns from the city centre to working class districts, swelling the suburban population. “All of this has placed urban mission on the evangelical church’s agenda in a way that it has not been for over a century” (Nicholls 2004:54).

3.2.2 The ecclesiological paradigm

Christ’s description of the church as “A city that is set on a hill...” which cannot be hidden (Matt.5:14) raises questions of ecclesiology: the identity of the church and the practice of its mission in the city. The church is Christ’s incarnate in a lost urban, multi-cultural world where morality is overtaken by ceaseless ‘cross-fertilization of sin’ in every neighbourhood. The need is a local church that witnesses in word and deed and incarnates itself within walking distance of present and probable congregants. The traditional church model of ministry where a cathedral is established in the city-centre to serve the whole population is not context-relevant. Equally outdated is cultural and tribal isolationism that denies the demonstration of the universality of the church as Christ’s body with the transforming power of a gospel meant for all peoples in all circumstances (Nicholls, 2004:56).

Equally important is the cooperation of churches for a united front in winning the city. The city makes void the traditional notion of ‘holier than thou’ in mission work. No single church or denomination has the total know-how to match the enormous challenges posed by the city or have the personnel to evangelize and disciple its phenomenal growing

population. This explains the image of needed interdependence of God's people built into Paul's analogy of the functioning of the human body for the church. He writes: "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." (1 Cor.12:21). The implication for urban mission is for "the different denominations to recognize each other's responsibility for particular neighbourhoods of the city, rather than to continue viewing themselves as the only true church" (Nicholls, 2004:56). Not only must the souls be won, but with adequate time given to instruct them in biblical lifestyle, "teaching them to observe all that (Christ) has commanded..." (Matt. 28:20).

3.3 URBAN MISSION AND THE KENYAN CONTEXT

3.3.1 Provinces, Population and Peoples

Modern Kenya is a geopolitical structure of eight provinces, namely Coast, Eastern, Nairobi, Central, Rift Valley, Nyanza, Western, and North Eastern provinces. The northern part of the nation is bordered by Sudan and Ethiopia, the south by the Indian Ocean and Tanzania, the east by Somalia, and the west by Uganda. The country came under British rule towards the end of the 19th century, and became an independent republic in 1963.

Demographically, the present approximate population of 36 million has about forty distinct people groups, the principal ones being the Kikuyu (about 19%), Luhya (14%), Kalenjin (12%), Luo (11%), and Kamba (10%) (Gifford 2009:6). Subsumed under minority groups, yet influential geopolitically are the Kisii, Nandi, Pokot, Turkana, Meru, Rendile, Somali and Mijikenda. Almost all the presidents, vice-presidents, prime ministers and major cabinet members since independence, are known to belong to either the major or influential minority groups.

The Kenyan economy is predominantly agrarian, with the western part serving as the food basket of the nation. Post-independence economic growth helped to build the tourism and light industries, though grossly recessed by greed and corruption of the political elite and

institutional patronage (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:380). The post-independence economic boom was at the heels of the colonial construction of the railroad that linked the coastal region, through western Kenya, to Uganda.

Almost all the major cities are built around the railway network, including the capital city Nairobi and such strategic up-country towns like Nakuru, Eldoret, Kakamega and Kitale. The first contact with Christianity and the growth of the church in these regions have greatly benefitted from the construction of the railroad and the development of the allied industries.

However, it is not only the recessed economy of corruption and politics of patronage that the people of Kenya face on regular basis. The nation is vastly becoming a regional centre of crime in Africa. Writing on the wave of violent crimes in Kenya and its implication to the economy life of the nation, Pokhariyal and Muthuri (2003:56, 57) write:

Kenya's security situation has deteriorated in recent years particularly in the country's urban centres. There has been an upsurge of car jacking, bank robberies, child-killings and burglaries, among other offenses. Moreover, the situation is aggravated by the unchecked influx of small arms into the country and their subsequent misuse...Business firms have experienced break-ins resulting in the loss of equipment such as computers, which has caused fear and insecurity among businessmen in Nairobi.

In a nation so bedevilled by socio-economic dilemma, human suffering will be afflicted and social prosperity will be impeded as social and economic development cannot take place where security of life and cities cannot be guaranteed (Pokhariyal and Muthuri 2003:55).

3.3.2 Christian Contact and Church Growth

The Mombasa coast had the first taste of Christianity in Kenya, with the Portuguese traders that had settled along the East African coast “towards the end of the 16th century” and the eventual death of the Mombasa martyrs in 1631 (Baur 1994:88, 373). By 1598, the Augustinian Hermits that were sent there to nurture the faithful had won 600 converts and within three years recorded 1200 baptisms. However, it was not until 1863, with the arrival and commencement of mission work by the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) that “Catholicism of the modern era” came to the coast of East Africa (Gifford 2009:56). The Methodists and CMS joined in the 19th century renewal of the missionary enterprise, but with little success due to Islamic and native resistance.

Although the Catholics reached Lamu by 1899, they relocated to Mombasa and only achieved a significant move into the interior, particularly Nairobi (besides the brief sojourn in Taita) with the arrival of the railway there in 1899. The Catholic Church eventually pitched its tent with the Kikuyu, convinced that the tribe held the mace to Kenyan future Christianity (Gifford 2009:56). It has since become the leading and most dominant church in the nation in terms of generating local and foreign resources, construction of leading educational institutions, and training of personnel for both for profit and not for profit organizations.

Dr. Johann Ludwig Krapf and his later companion, John Rebmann, are credited with breaking the monopoly of the Portuguese and coastal Christianity by bringing the protestant touch to Kenyan Christianity in 1844. Both were missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and it was Johann Ludwig Krapf who translated the New Testament into Swahili (Baur 1994:224). However, as successful as they might have been on the translation project, their failure in the “evangelical preaching approach” to mission work led Sir Bartle Frere, the British Consul, to opt for the building of Christian villages that served as educational and artisanship workshop centres for evangelizing children and freed slaves as “beacons of light” (Baur 1994:230).

Lack of trade a route before the railway line reached Nairobi in 1899 and Kisumu in 1901 delayed the presence of missionaries and the church from reaching the interior of Kenya. Ever since, Kenya had witnessed an exceptional influx of mission activities unknown

(except in Zimbabwe) in African church history (Baur 1994:254). This was highly aided by the joint movement of the missionaries and the settlers to the different parts of the interior, though with emphasis in western and central Kenya. Kisumu and Nairobi served the two regions respectfully as coordinating centres. The population of the two regions account for 80% of all Kenya, with 90% of the population declaring themselves to be Christians by 1990 (Baur 1994:373).

The western Luhya and Luo peoples were the first to accept Christianity in large numbers. The central group of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru together with the Kamba had their march to Christianity delayed due to attachment to ancestral worship. However, the protestant missions working amongst these groups had as one of their converts a prominent Kikuyu, Johnstone Kamau, who later became Jomo Kenyatta the first president of the Republic of Kenya (Baur 1994:255).

Of the Protestant tradition, the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) led the way in terms of national spread of churches. The only other most numerous protestant body was the African Inland Mission (AIM), the mother body of the African Inland Church of ex-president Daniel Arap Moi (the successor of Jomo Kenyatta) (Baur 1994:256). The two, together with seven other protestant mission agencies (out of the total 12 original mission bodies) transformed Kenya into a predominantly Protestant country, beginning from the colonial era to date (Baur 1994:255, 373).

The percentage population of Christians rose from 50 to 75 in the first twenty-five years of independence. The protestant churches that went into temporary stagnation due to its non-violence stand during the anti-colonial revolt by the Mau Mau movement (the Catholic church got a 100% membership increase through the sympathy of the Consolata Fathers for the cause of the revolting natives), came back to the limelight and played a dominant role, judging by the vitality of its national organ, the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) (Baur 1994:380). Starting from the Anglican denomination, Kenya began to witness the indigenization of the church through the appointment of natives to bishopric positions. By 1992, the Anglican Church Province of Kenya (ACPK) alone counted 14 bishops, all Africans.

Perhaps there is no single dynamic that propelled the growth of the church in Kenya (besides the East African Revival Movement that reached the country in 1938, this is already alluded to in chapter one of this research) like rise of the African independent church movement that began in the 1960s. With the decline of the Anglicans in comparison to the Catholics due to many splits resulting from dissensions within the denomination, especially the 1957 split of the Church of Christ in Africa from the Anglican Church in Kenya, coupled with the fact of Kenyan church had been engulfed in political intrigues of the ruling elites, the ground was prepared for the birth of independent churches.

The new sects and independent churches won the favour of many of the adherents of the main protestant churches. Before long a prophetic-charismatic group like the Maria Legio Church in Western Kenya had “passed the 50,000 membership mark” in a space of three to four years (Baur 1994:491). Also the Nairobi NENO Evangelistic ministry, an example of urban AICs, sits 10 000 members in its weekly Sunday service¹³. African Gospel Church counts 160 000 national affiliates, while the affiliates of other African Independent and Pentecostal Churches have crossed the one million mark (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:380).

Contemporary Kenya has over 13 million evangelicals, constituting 36% of its total population. It is the highest in any African nation “and nearly equal to all Evangelicals in Europe” (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:381).

Gifford (2009:3, 4) equally reports the phenomenal growth of denominations that may not be easily grouped along with the evangelicals. The Jehovah’s Witnesses count about 35 000 members and over 500 assemblies in 2006. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) records an approximate 6 000 members and claims a 9% growth rate. The Seventh Day Adventists, with its prominent presence in western Kenya, though not limited to it, has a huge membership of over half a million adherents distributed around 3 533 congregations. The denomination floats the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), two hospitals and ten clinics that contribute to the overall

¹³ The researcher attended the church’s Sunday Worship service (dedicated to casting out of demons from the possessed) on January 24, 2010, and took the pain to count the seats before confirming the figure from the church secretary.

regional development of the area. In its own part, The New Apostolic Church from Switzerland came to Kenya in 1973 and by 2006 was counting 1.2 million members in 5 400 communities. Only 20% of its membership is found in Europe, which houses its headquarters (Gifford 2009:3, 4).

The Kenyan church has come of age. The mainline denominations of the protestant and catholic traditions had a history of serving the society by checkmating the activities of government and providing social services for the populace. The elastic Pentecostal and African Instituted Churches (AICs) litter the whole landscape, either challenging the spiritual forces that bind the citizenry to perversion or providing religious goods that aid psychological contentment in class suppression.

In essence, Kenyan Christianity is derivative. The end product is a mix of the inputs from the people's deep level worldview of politics, economics, social and ethnic realities. It is the Gospel offered in the wrappings of historical and contemporary realities. No church grows outside this underpinning.

3.3.3 Institutional Framework and Church Operation

Gifford (2009:2) rightly notes that Kenya's most significant radio, television and the print media daily report on four dominant institutions that describe the life of the nation. These are the domains of political, economic, socio-cultural and religious institutions. The fact that the commentators and reviewers are almost all adherents of the Christian faith suggests that these bear significantly on Christianity in the nation's public life. An overview of these factors is crucial to understanding the face of the church in Kenya and of its growth or non-growth in Nairobi.

3.3.3.1 Politico-ethnic realities and Christianity in Kenya

Kenya got independence from colonial rule in 1963, and Jomo Kenyatta, the nationalist leader from the Kikuyu tribe, assumed power as president of the Republic. His ascendancy to power created the Kikuyu hegemonic control of national political and economic sectors. When he died in 1978, his vice-president Daniel arap Moi succeeded him and moved

swiftly to dislodge supremacy of the Kikuyu, replacing it with his own Kalenjin tribesmen. The rainbow coalition brought Mwai Kibaki to power in 2003 with a promise to eliminate corruption and ensure a more diffused distribution of state resources and control by the coalition parties.

The political violence, human displacement, ethnic cleansing and economic sabotage that characterized the rigged 2007 election led to the present power sharing between the two main political parties-Party of National Unity (PNU) and Orange Democratic Party (ODM). Kibaki heads the former and he is the president of the Republic. Raila Odinga leads the latter and serves as the nation's Prime Minister in a United Nations' arbitrated coalition of convenience that strangely combines the features of parliamentary and presidential systems of government.

However, the goal of Kenya politics since the inception of colonial rule, is geared more towards enrichment of the political elite and educated government officials than an overall national economic development. Ethnic and local boundaries are fixed to serve as custodians of state resources and instruments of negotiating the sharing of the national cake. To increase and solidify the competitiveness of these local boundaries, ethnic groups were transformed into "political tribes" (Gifford 2009:7). Major political parties trail the path of tribes of the leaders and vote accordingly in elections. The Kikuyu voted massively in the 2007 elections for PNU of Kibaki, the Luo in partnership with their kinsmen in western Kenya pitched their tent with tribesman Raila. Kilonzo of ODM-Kenya had the easy vote of his Akamba people group and eventually became the vice-president of the coalition government.

Ecclesiastical allegiance follows similar political-tribal lines. Shaw (1996:191) alluded to "a committee agreement" that shared different parts of Kenya "among the Presbyterian, Methodists, and CMS". In the aftermath of the 2007 rigged election, Stephen Sesi claimed that "many church members were lynched in Rift Valley and Nairobi because they were associated with a particular ethnic group" (Kim 2009:26). He argues that "historically the church (in Kenya) has been divided along tribal lines with certain tribes being the dominant believers in various denominations" (Kim 2009: 27).

Examples included the dominance of the Methodist church among the Meru, Legio Maria among the Luo, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) among the Kikuyu, the Seventh Day Adventists among the Kisii tribe and the Africa Inland Church among the Akamba and Kalenjin tribes (Kim 2009:27). It is not novel in Kenya to close down strange tribal churches existing among natives of a different tribe or to advise members of a congregation “to join other churches that are considered “politically correct” in the region” (Kim 2009:27).

The high rate of turnover in church membership, which gives a false sense of church growth by the large numbers that attend publicly organised night prayers (Keisha) of major congregations, is founded on the political framework on which the church institution thrives. Every parliamentarian in the Kenya parliament of 224 members is supposed to be identified with a recognized political party. This has become an exception rather than the expected. There is such a rapid change of political alliance that the line between the ruling party and the opposition is so thin that it is hardly ever noticed in any parliamentary proceeding (Gifford 2009:20).

As parliamentarians rarely attend meetings, so pastors are hardly found preoccupied with church work. In chapter 5 of this research on factors of revitalization, the bane of Kenyan non-growing congregations, as observed by leaders of turnaround congregations, is a pastor who is hardly available. Gifford (2009:20) noted that the Kenyan parliament observed only 57 days of sitting in 2004, and mostly without a quorum. In 2005, the education budget was passed by only 14 out of 224 members. In the same year, the controversial media bill got “yes” vote to become law by a meagre 27 members present in session.

3.3.3.2 Economic institutions, Social infrastructure and Christianity in Kenya

Agriculture, tourism and light industries constitute the main sectors of the Kenyan economy, and the post-independence stability contributed significantly to growth until 1976 (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:380). This was the period of the nation’s economic development due to “impulses for such development” being internally stimulated rather than being externally generated (Atoyebi 1984:6). However, by 2002, the sectors were at

their lowest due to mismanagement and the ensuing post-independence rivalry among the 42 ethnic groups for the share of the national resources.

The colonial policy of pre-independent Kenya did little to foster ethnic cohesion, both on linguistic level and rural economic developments. There were no standard group languages. Road networks that hindered the initial transportation of the Gospel to the interior remain precarious. Social infrastructure was concentrated in the few cities that have grown out of the perilous rural livelihoods.

The regimes of Kenyatta and Moi did not fair better than the colonialists on ethnic politics and its concomitant effect on socio-economic goods. With the institutionalization of politics of ethnic patronage, state institutions and the national macro-economic landscape were recessed. Provision of social services is neglected by the government and national economic growth was perceived to rank secondary in governance priority.

From 2003, in a desperate effort to run a one-party state and stifled oppositions, the sugar and cotton economy of the Luo was sidelined. The Kikuyu were checkmated by hampering their thriving coffee, tea and dairy businesses. The railway company was run down to promote the road transport sector dominated by tribesmen of the ruling president. Consequently, the economy was weakened and Kenya became a dependent nation on foreign donors and remittances and “licenses to do business” (Gifford 2009:8). The ensuing economic depression amply demonstrates “the failure of foreign assistance to salvage a dependent economy” (Atoyebi 1984:7).

Gross Domestic Product surged when a coalition regime came to power in 2003. The economy witnessed a 5% growth in 2005, followed by a 6.1% rise in 2006. However, this was too little to alleviate the suffering of the people and reverse the culture of poverty and begging. With rising levels of corruption and a “venal elite” that “has little interest other than in retaining power and amassing wealth” (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:380), “Kenya in 2005 was ranked 144 of 158 nations on Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index. In 2005 the country ranked the twenty-second poorest country in the world, according to the UN Human Development Index, with per capita GNP of \$280” (Gifford 2009:18).

The weak economic institution and donor dependency robbed the church. Though numerically growing, every turnaround church involved in this research spoke of the financial challenges when initiating and executing projects. Church stagnation has been attributed to such economic-induced reasons as frequent pastoral travels to the West in search of funds, regular invitation of American lay ministers to preach and give and incessant fund-raising (Harambees) for needs that range from members' weddings to church equipments, from salaries of full-time pastors to construction of infrastructure.

It seems that some churches in Kenya are not growing because they envision 'it is more blessed to receive than to give' (a reverse of Jesus words, claimed by Paul in Acts 20:35). Perhaps this contributes to poor outreach in stagnant churches to groups that do not readily swell the tithes and offering, like the children ministry, youth outreach and Muslim evangelization.

3.3.3.3 Islam, Human Rights and the Kenyan Church

Islam is a minority faith in Kenya. Its adherents constitute about 8% of the population, approximately two million faithful (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:380). According to Donal O'Brien, this percentage would include probably "all the Swahili, all the Somali, almost all the Digo and the upper Pokomo" together with the Giriama, "some small coastal tribes and a very small Muslim minority in the larger up-country tribes" (Hansen and Twaddle 1995:216).

In comparison with other nations of the African continent, Kenyan Muslims could be said to have been for long a passive and marginalized religious group, though recent events point to a change from that direction. Followers seem to wish for a return of the days of Arab-Omani hegemony when Islam was a privileged religion of the ruling elite that controlled the political and economic power of the East African coastal region, long before the imposition of European colonial authority (Hansen and Twaddle 1995:20).

However, Islam suffers from lack of internal cohesion in Kenya. From the days of anti-colonial struggles, adherents are frequently polarized on religious, political and social issues of national interest. This has rendered the national umbrella, the Supreme Council

of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) a politically insignificant organ. The apparent failure is noted in the futile effort to get the Sharia Court enshrined in the constitution of the country, poor development of Islamic educational facilities, absence of a Muslim University (even in Muslim dominated Mombasa city), and a restricted access to state television and radio stations (Hansen and Twaddle 1995:21).

However, contemporary Muslims are becoming more active in the domain of “education, mosque-building and giving rewards for conversions of Christians” (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:382). There is increasing unchecked influx and misuse of small arms from neighbouring Islamic states, which seems to be changing the face of Islam in Kenya. In one such an example, Islamic fundamentalism registered its presence on Kenyan soil with the August 7, 1998 bombing of American embassy in Nairobi, killing 213 people, with many more been injured within the vicinity of the Embassy (Pokhariyal and Muthuri 2003:56). In January 2010, the researcher was an eye witness of a violent Islamic upsurge in Nairobi that followed a government decision to deport controversial Jamaican Muslim preacher Abdullah al-Faisal, who had earlier been deported from London and Nigeria on account of his “terrorist history”.

Such events make the faith of Islam suspect in the Kenyan ‘Christian’ nation. This may have contributed to the non-registration of the proposed Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) in 1992. The tendency for Muslims to congregate geographically by design rather than default in specific city areas seems to fuel the fear of possible security breach. In Nairobi for example, the Eastleigh Community is virtually Islamic with a dotted Christian presence, the Somali economic domination of the community gives the image of an autonomous city within the metropolis. Following the 2007 election malpractice, the researcher observed that the scale of destruction to life and property in Mombasa Muslim city could only be surpassed by that of Nairobi slums and of western Kenya, where the mayhem was initiated. It shows the extent to which the Islamic faith has its right of existence fully guaranteed in the polity.

Within the law, Muslims are as free as Christians. Kenya is a nation with full freedom of religion and religious leaders are highly patronized prior to elections by the political class. Most politicians endeavour to inject religious piety in public speeches addressing issues of morality and integrity. Both pastoral prayers and congregants’ support are openly

canvassed to ensure electoral victory. Both contesting presidents and MPs crisscross denominations of all traditions at least in pre-election period.

However, the church in Kenya does not seem to be super strong in the face of inter-faith competition with Islam, though Muslims are in the minority. The national body of Christ, for example, lacks a common stand on the inclusion of the Sharia in the constitution. The Muslim minority in the Coast Province had once won all the three parliamentary seats they contested for against the Christians because the churches were divided along tribal and denominational lines (Hansen and Twaddle 1995:212).

Most of the churches that participated in the current research do not have a stated vision or mission statement geared towards winning the Muslims to the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the Southern Baptist missionaries are making a difference in Mombasa city with its saturation church planting activities and thousands of baptisms among the coastal Swahili and Arab population (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:383).

3.4 THE NAIROBI CHURCH CLIMATE

3.4.1 Origin and growth of Nairobi city

Nairobi is an equatorial, artificial city. Geographically, it “lies at an altitude of 1670m” and “about 140 km south of the equator” (K’Akumu and Olima 2007:90). It was founded and grown by the creation of the Uganda Railway that the British built from the source of the Nile and which got to Nairobi in May 1899 on its way to present Kisumu town that was then part of Uganda (K’Akumu and Olima 2007:90, Gifford 2009:4). The city served as the headquarters of the railway line and took its “name from the nearby little river, where the Maasai watered their cattle and called it Nai-robi, cold water” (Baur 1994: 255).

Indians provided the human labour for the construction of the railway, which accounts for the presence of over 100,000 Indians of controlling economic resources in contemporary Nairobi city (Gifford 2009:7). However, it is not only the economic setting of Nairobi that the railway influenced. The socio-cultural mix of the city, its segregation housing pattern

and sharp class distinction are associated with the arrival of settlers, occasioned by the railway industry, who displaced the natives Maasai and Kikuyu and took over the 'fertile, temperate area' of the city, leading to more than half of the city dwellers living in slums and shanty towns.

Spatially, the perimeter of Nairobi has been constantly extended over the years in response to its population growth. By 1900, Nairobi grew from merely housing the railway buildings to providing residential quarters for non-Africans. A portion of land, 3.2 kilometres wide on both sides of the rail line was acquired to serve as a maintenance depot. This was the southern part of the Nairobi River up to the Ngong River. By 1927, the extension covered has 30 square miles, and by independence in 1963 to an approximate "266 square miles or 68,945 ha" (K'Akumu and Olima 2007:91).

Demographically, Nairobi was adjudged "the fourth largest city in Africa" going by its 2005 estimated 3.1 million population and a 4.8% growth rate (Hendriks 2009:5). The urbanization of the city has been more stable after independence than during the colonial period. According to K'Akumu and Olima (2007:91), 11 512 people lived in Nairobi in 1906. The figure rose to 49 600 in 1936. The next four years leading to 1944 witnessed a galloping 119.6% urbanization rate, which brought the total population to 108,900 inhabitants. By 1989 it had crossed the one million mark, recording 1.3 million people, from the 0.5 million dwellers of the previous two decades. As a megacity, the population doubled from 2.1 million inhabitants in 1999 to an approximate 4.5 to 5 million in 2009.

3.4.2 Social and economic situation of Nairobi

Nairobi is the economic lifeline of Kenya. It contributes as high as 51% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GNP), and provides employment opportunities with better standard of living to teeming nationals and foreigners that live in the city (Hendriks 2009:6). The concentration of national and domestic service providers in the city can be seen in the overwhelming presence of 4 000 to 5 000 Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Gifford 2009:5, 24) and scores of networks of trade, social service and humanitarian activities that run from more than twelve hours of each day in the Central Business District (CBD).

As hub of international networks, Nairobi connects both the East Africa and the entire continent's network of transport services, communication links and commercial activities. Within the Sub-Saharan African region, it ranks third in international connectivity service provision, following the heels of Johannesburg and Cape Town (Hendriks 2009:6). This has helped to build its tourism industry and make Nairobi city a home of regional and international headquarters of multinational corporations and organizations (Hendriks 2009:5). Along with New York, Paris and Geneva, Nairobi is "one of world's four United Nations cities, housing the headquarters of UNEP and Habitat" (Gifford 2009:24). Equally notable are "the thousands of UN employees, the diplomats, the NGO workers" whose offices dot the city landscape (ibid).

However, the rising wave of crime in the city of Nairobi has greatly impeded its economical life. Pokhariyal and Muthuri report an increasing use of guns, which underlies the rapid increase of violent crime and making Nairobi "one of the worst most crime-ridden capital cities" (2003:57). The rising crime rate is attributed to "worsening poverty and ethnic prejudice" (ibid.). The result is much decay of moral values, increasing number of street children and firms reacting "by changing their hours of operation, raising prices to cover losses, relocating outside the community, or simply closing" (Pokhariyal and Muthuri 2003:56).

3.4.3 Urban governance structure and low income settlements in Nairobi

The democratic governance of Nairobi is centred on the City Council of Nairobi (CCN). It is a representative structure consisting of 74 councillors (55 elected and 19 nominated). This 1992 composition was however increased prior to 2007 election to 100 councillors (75 elected and 25 nominated) (Hendriks 2009:5). The council elections coincide with national voting time on a 5-year term. The Mayor heads the council, assisted by Deputy Mayor. Both are appointed to serve for two years at a time by the electoral college of councillors.

Nairobi suffers constantly from a poor urban governance culture and an endemic system of corruption that survives on political patronage. Both the land and income distribution patterns of the city are skewed in favour of the elite that control the political and economic sectors of the metropolis. Hendriks (2009:5) notes that 55% of the urbanites live in informal settlements on a meagre 5.5% of total residential place. Economically, these urban poor share 1.6% of the city's total income as against 45% of the city wealth in the hands of the top 10% elite households.

Henry Mutua (Kim 2009:45, 49) agrees, defining Kenya's low income settlements as homes of "deplorable conditions" for the urban poor, a place of ethnic identity and loyalty for "70 percent of Nairobi's population". K'Akumu and Olima share Mutua's sentiment, stating that "more than half of the population of Nairobi is crowded into an inconsiderable portion of the city's total residential land area" (2007:93). They alluded to a survey by Ngau (1995) that identified 133 informal settlements in Nairobi, distributed amongst the seven administrative divisions into which the city is divided (2007:94). They described what they termed the state of "subsistence urbanism" that exists in those slums:

"Mathare Valley to the east of the city and Kibera to the west form the most famous, largest uncontrolled urban settlements in the city, reaching staggering densities of 1250 people per hectare in 1980. The populations of these (and other areas like Korogocho and Kawangware) grew by 220% during the 1969–1979 intercensal period. They are characterized by the uncontrolled, spontaneous mushrooming of squatter settlements (often bulldozed down by the NCC), created by low income migrants fleeing from the rapidly rising costs of living in the city but fleeing into cardboard city along valleys close to the CBD itself. Here there are rapid shifts and movements of the population, shortages of accommodation, high rents and overcrowding. Here is observed the starkest inter-relationship between income structures and housing and schooling opportunities and the inadequate distribution of

schooling and educational opportunities despite the high profile of social demand for education in the country as a whole” (2007:93).

The researcher witnessed the 2007 ‘rigged election’ and noted the concentration of violence, removal of railway lines, arson, looting and rape in Kibera and other Nairobi slums, as reflecting the economic hardship, political manipulation and psychological torture to which the poor in the city is subjected. In an urban study tour of Kibera, for example, in 2008, the researcher observed that residences were without piped water, electricity, residential roads or waste disposal systems. Moral virtues seem to be at the lowest ebb with evidences of thriving prostitution as the houses of many single ladies serve as bars and night clubs. There is free display of illicit drinks.

Gifford reports the peculiar health dilemma of Kiambu slum, an informal settlement in east Nairobi with a population of 200 000 people and two serving toilets that are only opened during official working hours of the day (2009:24). That the impact of the church in Nairobi has been less than significant in these low income settlements is evident from the presence of more churches in Kibera slum than total available sewage disposals (Onyango 1987:2, 16).

3.4.4 Christianity and the church in Nairobi

The geographical location of Nairobi at the borders of both the Kikuyu Highlands and Kambaland made it “an ideal missionary base long before it grew into the East African metropolis” (Baur 1994:255). As already detailed in chapter one of the research, almost all the missionary societies took advantage of the factors of geography and economy (the construction of the railway) to plant their presence and growth in the city by 1901, the *raison d’être* for the 30% Christian presence in Nairobi by 1963 (Niemeyer 1990:47, 48).

However, the growth has been selective over the years. Kenya's over 23 million Christians are mainly distributed amongst the Protestant, Independent and Roman Catholic traditions (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:381), the latter two being known for their dynamism, especially in Nairobi city (O'Brien 1995:201). This has given Nairobi the status of a 'Christian' city with 80% professing believers (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:381). The numerical weight is on the side of the protestants and indigenous churches, especially the evangelicals and Pentecostals, due to the lasting impact of the East African Revival of 1948-1960 (Gifford 2009:33, Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:381). According to Stephen Sesi (Kim 2009) and Shaw (1996), the missionary factor also laid the foundation for the "church tribes" that littered the contemporary Christian landscape of Kenya and Nairobi.

From colonial period, education had been at the forefront of the instruments of evangelization by the churches in Kenya in response to popular demand by Africans (O'Brien 1995:201). The consequence of this is that the descendants of the early educated converts constitute the contemporary political elites in the capital city of Nairobi. They control the state political machinery, manage the economic sectors and direct the affairs of the ruling party after every election. This gives Christians in Nairobi, as well as in other parts of Kenya, the upper hand over other religious adherents, in the management of the wealth of the city and the nation as well as in the political control of its affairs.

However, the bane of the church in Nairobi is its unchurched and unreached 'Christians'. Only 12% of its 80% professing Christians attended any church in 2001, leading to a call for old time revival (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:381). Henry Mutua, echoing the view of Johnstone and Mandryk, calls for urban "serious evangelism" work by the churches in order to remedy the missiological appalling situation in "the city of Nairobi where with a population of close to five million people, only less than 20 percent of the number go to any of the churches" by 2009 (Kim 2009:67). This is what this research hopes to achieve in its proposal of a model to revitalize the city's stagnant congregations. However, a proper understanding of the church's operation environment is a precondition to attempting such a field-based model.

3.4.5 Church environmental analysis

The operating environment in Nairobi city has its implications for the functioning of every church planted in the metropolis. Churches in Nairobi operate within the context of a dynamically changing urban environment. The missiological implication is for denominations that hope to be relevant to seek for new ways to meet the changing demands of the urban culture while remaining strongly focused on the tenets of the scriptures. This would ensure the growth of a balanced congregation that is spiritually and numerically increasing in its execution of the *missio Dei*. Five of the areas where contextual relevance in the city of Nairobi is critical are outlined below¹⁴.

3.4.5.1 Spiritual environment

Nairobi is a cosmopolitan society with an urban environment that does not respect social fabric, but rather promotes cultures that scorn godliness, despise moral restraints and demote long term relationships. Both the print and electronic media as well as internet services constitute inherent dangers to the sustenance of biblical values. In the low income settlements, morality is completely at zero level and human dignity is at its lowest with the practice of open prostitution, drug addiction and sale of illicit drinks.

Since the 2007 elections, the spiritual environment is characterized by church leaders of greatly diminished moral authority (Gifford 2009:242). The Pentecostals and indigenous movements grow phenomenally, but with preachers of minimal education who only put “emphasis on power, victory, success, achievement, prosperity” (ibid. 243). The health and wealth teachings allow cults to easily thrive, with unstable believers who run to and from different night prayers without spiritual nourishment and sacrificial living for gospel propagation. The cry everywhere seems to be for churches that would proclaim the total counsel of God from his word.

¹⁴ This section benefits immensely from the Strategic Plan, 2006-2008 of Nairobi Miracle Land Worship Church, a congregation founded in 2002 at the heart of the city on a vision of praying, praising, loving, uniting and making “a difference” in urban outreach.

3.4.5.2 Economic environment

The economy of Kenya has significantly surged from the debut of present leadership in the nation. The early days of the 2002 rainbow coalition were marked by economic growth, substantial foreign investment and a boost to the main tourism industry (Gifford 2009:251). However, most of these gains were reversed considerably in the aftermath of the 2007 elections and the tribal clashes that followed. One signal of this is in the value of the shilling to dollar.

From pre-independence era to the end of the rule of Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, the dollar exchanged at US1 to about nine Kenya Shillings (Ksh.). Under Moi in the 1980s, the dollar appreciated against the shilling from about Ksh.10 to Ksh.40. By the 1990s the shillings had depreciated considerably to about one dollar to Ksh.60. The rate of fluctuations only steadied in the early 2000 to around US1 to 70 shillings (Gifford 2009:5). However, the 2007 post-election era devalued the shillings to an all-time low of Ksh.75 (and sometimes 80, especially immediately after the election) to one dollar.

It appears that Kenya, since Moi, has resolved to currency devaluation to solve a balance of payment problem whenever foreign exchange crisis hits the economy as a result of “suspension of aid and insufficient export revenue” during elections (Gifford 2009:11). While this is an economic prodigy in a crisis situation, an economy like Kenya that exports virtually nothing under her total control risks ending up worsening her balance of payment position. This is due to the fact that “devaluation may not quickly remove the deficit because though trade may be quite highly responsive to relative price changes in the long-run, it is much less so in the short-run” (Atoyebi 1984:44).

What a developing country with poor bargaining power like Kenya gets out of such frequent devaluation then is high prices of commodity, poor foreign exchange earning, job cuts and high rate of unemployment, especially among the youth. All lead to more serious and more frequent crises affecting all sectors, the church not excluded. Gifford reports the example of Goldenberg scam that runs to about 160 billion shillings and would have wrecked the economy until the government devalued the currency by “25 per cent in February 1993 and by another 23.5 per cent in April-a devaluation of almost 50 per cent in

two months, leading to price rises of between 50 and 100 per cent; interest rates went from around 20 per cent to 120 per cent” (2009:11, 12).

As the political and administrative capital of Kenya, Nairobi seems to have felt the economic crunch more than other parts of the country, with a large number of unemployed and underemployed workers daily loitering and hopeless sitting at public squares and business buildings in the city centre during working hours. Economic life for the majority of these people remains constantly at subsistence level, provoking increased involvement in robbery and violent crimes at the Central Business District (CBD).

Apart from excessive tax that discourages private initiative, Nairobi city, like Rome metropolis under the Roman Empire, is characterized by the economic exploitation of the weak by the strong (cf. Linthicum 1991:283). This had led to over 50% of the city inhabitants clustering around 5.5% of the city land space in over 100 informal settlements (Kim 2009:47). Their need for economic support accounts for the search for community gatherings of ethnic orientation, which consequently defines the socio-cultural life of Nairobi urbanites (Kim 2009:65).

3.4.5.3 Socio-Cultural environment

Apart from the phenomenon of ‘church tribes’, the socio-cultural life of Nairobi vis-à-vis the operation of church cannot be fully comprehended without the enigma of the Kikuyu cultural movement called the Mungiki. What started in 1985 as a “commune” in the Karanda village of Laikipia West district later spread to the entire Kikuyu Central Province and established its stronghold in Nairobi metropolis, taking control of politico-economic jurisdiction of the city and its ‘helpless’ urbanites (Gifford 2009:24).

Mungiki activities in Nairobi vary with time and the districts of operation in the city. As will be shown later in this chapter, one of the factors that sold the Pentecostal Assembly of God to its Dandora Estate residents was the church’s ‘spiritual’ ability to circumvent the nefarious operation of Mungiki sect that included forceful payment for non-executed sewage disposal work and an on-the-spot levy as a security fee for late night pedestrians.

The group collects illegally imposed tax on commercial transport drivers, called the *matatus*, in almost every corner of the city. In the many slums and shanty towns around the metropolis, especially the major low income settlements of Kibera, Mathare and Korogocho, the Mungiki is in charge of collection of electricity and water rates, public toilet tolls and a daily tariff from operators of kiosks and brewers of the illicit alcohol, called *chang'aa* (Gifford 2009:24, 25).

The Mungiki in Nairobi, until recently, ran a parallel urban government in Nairobi due to the strong link of the sect with the political elite that uses it for electoral success purposes. The group leadership was reported to be patronized in the overall plan to win the 2002 election for the reigning president; it helped the same government to mobilize support for its official position in the run-up to the 2005 constitutional referendum (Gifford 2009:26).

Mungiki has a strong tribal agenda to foster the reign of Kikuyu culture and conviction in the nation. This perhaps dates back to the Mau Mau uprising and the subsequent election of the Kikuyu nationalist, President Jomo Kenyatta, in post-independent Kenya.

The tide appears to be turning for good. Mungiki sect national leader, Njenga, in a televised confession recently declared faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has drawn a lot of the followers to the church of a fellow Kikuyu, Bishop Margaret's Jesus is Alive Ministries. His choice of congregation reinforces the context within which the church operates in Nairobi, a strong allegiance to what Henry Mutua called "ethnically based association gatherings" (Kim 2009:67).

3.4.5.4 Political environment

Perhaps the most potent impact of the political system of Nairobi on the church is the government policy on land acquisition. Since the transition of government in 2002 and the attendant review of policy on ownership and legality of title deeds on landed property, land purchase and allocation had been particularly complex in the Nairobi metropolis. Quite a number of churches that participated in this research are literally squeezed into a land space that suffocates the present growth of the church and strictly constraints future expansion.

3.4.5.5 Technological environment

Contemporary information technology is redefining the traditional focus and boundaries of many churches in Nairobi city. To congregations averse to change, this is a major challenge, and it greatly contributes to their stagnation. Others, especially the revitalized ones, embrace the technological innovations as offering an increasing number of opportunities to expand kingdom services and increase effectiveness as consumer friendly churches.

Some relevant threats and opportunities that the Nairobi technological environment attracts include, but are not limited to, are the following:¹⁵

- The developments in computers and information super-highways, which have generated fast and vast volumes of transactions that are difficult to monitor and to guard the congregation against.
- The inherent threats to morality and distortion of biblical values particularly in the internet and the media are real.
- The need to take advantage of the digital convergence and information super-highways to not only minister to the increasing church membership in Diaspora, but also seize the opportunity to offer electronic services to members scattered all over the city.
- The need for networking and partnering with ministers with a similar doctrine through IT.
- Music and musical instruments are increasingly being used by the secular world to negate the things of God. Yet music is also a powerful tool for worship and evangelism. The calling is to develop a music ministry with a difference that glorifies God and to empower this music ministry with modern equipment.

¹⁵ See Nairobi Miracle Land Worship Church, Strategic Plan, 2006-2008. Published, January 2006

3.5 AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF SOME MISSION CHURCHES RELEVANT TO THE STUDY

3.5.1 African Inland Mission from Scotland

The African Inland Mission is the mission body that gave birth to the African Inland Church (cf. Richardson 1968). The Dandora Estate branch of the African Inland Church is one of the six revitalized churches selected for this research.

Peter Cameron Scott (1867-1896) of Scottish parents founded the African Inland Mission (AIM) that gave birth to the African Inland Church. He was born of godly parents who were instrumental to his deep piety and later became his partners in ministry in Kenya (Richardson 1968:20-32). He arrived in Mombasa on October, 1895 accompanied by three other men and four women, including his sister, Margaret. The second batch of missionaries, including his father, mother and the rest of his living siblings arrived later, bringing the whole Scott family together in Africa (Richardson 1968:32).

After trekking into the interior for a month, Scott, together with his first team of missionaries, established the first mission station of the A.I.M. in Kenya by 12th December of 1895 in the fertile and cultivated areas of Nzau. More mission stations were later opened in Kilungu, Sakai and Kagundo. Scott was moved by the passion ‘to preach the Gospel not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation’ (Rom.15:20). He sought the unreached tribes of the interior of East and Central Africa, a justification for the appellation of the Mission as ‘The African Inland Mission’ (Richardson 1968:29).

Scott died from poor health on December 4, 1896; just a year after the Mission was founded in Kenya. Kagundo remained the headquarters of the Mission until 1903 when a transfer to Kijabe (in Nairobi) took place due to the thriving railway industry in the city. Peter Scott’s parents removed his remains from Nzau to Nairobi (Richardson 1968: 36). Though the eventual transition from AIM to AIC took place later, the mission church centre remained strongly rooted “among the Kamba and even more among the Kalenjin in the Rift Valley” (Gifford 2009: 34, 35). It was a mission that succeeded on the platform of

a spiritual and visionary leader who has an ardent heart for mission, and who, together with the pioneers with him won the hearts of the natives by sheer sense of mission commitment and an exemplary moral reputation.

3.5.2 The Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies of God

Rev and Mrs. Robert Litchy came to Kenya in 1936 as assistants to the Kellers in the work of the Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAOC) in western Kenya. They later broke away and started the Kaimosi Farm mission that was later renamed PEFA, the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (Kavaya 2003:20), the parent body of All Nations Gospel Church at Kimbo, Githurai. Also, it was the extension of the PAOC from Maragoli that created the Nairobi branch from which Dandora Pentecostal Assemblies of God arose (Kavaya 2003:9-12). All Nations Gospel Church, Githurai and Dandora PAG form part of the revitalized churches for this research.

Kulbeck (1958:259) credits the founding of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) to Rev. and Mrs. Karl Wittick and Mr. Clarence Grothows, who arrived in Kenya in 1913 and purchased 100 acres of land eight miles from Kisumu where the Kenya mission first started before been and affiliated to the PAOC in 1924. Kasiera (1981:313) disagrees, tracing the commencement of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada in Kenya to Joseph Miller. Both are however unanimous that the founding base of the mission church is western Kenya, from where it eventually spread to Nairobi.

The concentration of evangelization on arrival in Kenya on the western Kenya axis by the Canadian Pentecostals yielded enormous fruits as the spate of the revival that broke out penetrated various tribes including the “Maragolis, the Luos, the Bunyores, the Tirikis and Nyang’oris” (Kulbeck 1958:291). Perhaps the much success was due to the nature of the mission adopted, which was akin to the “emotional African character” (Baur 1994:256). This made the congregations hardly distinguishable from the African Independent Churches (AICs) that started to influence the religious climate from 1914 onwards.

From western Kenya, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God church spread to Nairobi in 1952 with the planting of the Bahati congregation. According to Kulbeck (1958:301), “it was in

1952 at the height of the Mau-Mau reign of terror, that steps were taken to build the first Pentecostal church in Nairobi”. This was in reference to the leasing of land at Bahati to the PAOC representatives by the Nairobi City Council. From a total of 42 people, the Bahati church, according to Rev. Simon Alovi, the current National Council Chairman of PAG, Kenya, has produced the over 200 branches that are presently located throughout the Nairobi metropolis.

3.5.3 The International Pentecostal Holiness Church of America (IPHC)

According to the General Secretary of IPHC, Kenya, the bishop of Uthiru Pentecostal Church (UPC) served the denomination for about ten years before creating his own independent Pentecostal church. The sign of the goodwill that exists between the two denominations is shown in the Secretary acknowledging and recommending the young but turnaround UPC to the researcher for this study.

The International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) was one of the congregations that rose up in the United States of America out of “the great Azusa Street Pentecostal revival that swept the world at the turn of the 20th century”.¹⁶ The stated mission of the church is “to multiply believers and churches, discipling them in worship, fellowship, and evangelism as we obey the Great Commission in cooperation with the whole body of Christ” (ibid. 10).

IPHC had lofty mission goals, one of which is to have 5.5 million members on foreign mission fields by 2015. Others include planting new churches, moving “plateaued churches into the harvest fields” and ensuring yearly numerical growth. It was in pursuit of this vision that Rev. Philip List, a New Zealand American missionary started the IPHC in Nairobi along with his American wife in 1985. From these initial two members, the church grew to 100 members between 1985 and 1986. By the time the church moved to its present location at Riara Road, membership had dropped to 30 as a result of human and environmental factors confronting the young church.

¹⁶ See International Pentecostal Holiness Church, *MANUAL 2005-2009* by LifeSprings Resources, 2005.

By 1990 the church picked again counting 400 members and presently has branches all over Nairobi, Kenya and the whole of East Africa. Its weak point is in the smallness of attendance and seeming stagnation of many of the congregations. This has led to departure of some native leaders to form growing independent congregations like the Uthiru Pentecostal Church, which has become one of Nairobi's turnaround congregations.

3.6 DISTRIBUTION OF THE SIX CHURCHES IN NAIROBI CITY

Nairobi is one of Kenya's eight administrative provinces, though a single city. It is the smallest in size among the eight and a completely metropolitan setting, unlike others. The city is under the jurisdiction of the Nairobi City Council local authority. The city is divided into eight divisions that equally serve as political constituencies. A division in Nairobi is thus the same as a constituency and vice-versa. The eight divisions are further sub-divided into fifty locations, which bear the names of residential estates in those divisions. The eight divisions, arranged in alphabetical order, are: Central, Dagoretti, Embakasi, Kasarani, Kibera, Makadara, Pumwani, and Westlands.

All six revitalized churches selected for this research were chosen from intensive interview of professors and lecturers in the Missions and History departments of African International University in Nairobi, as well as from recommendations of denominational heads consulted by the researcher and his research assistants. Yet by default, the six churches chosen were found to be situated in three of the eight divisions that constitute Nairobi metropolis. These are Dagoretti, Embakasi and Kasarani Divisions¹⁷.

Again by default, findings show that each of these divisions host two each of the six select churches. Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta and Uthiru Pentecostal Church are both located in Riruta and Uthiru locations of Dagoretti Division. African Inland Church and Pentecostal Assemblies of God are both situated in Dandora Estate location of Embakasi Division. In Githurai Location of Kasarani Division are found the All Nations Gospel Church and Deliverance Church.

¹⁷ See Appendix for Divisions and Locations in Nairobi City.



Figure 1: Map showing Nairobi City Divisions¹⁸

¹⁸ See maps.google.co.uk, internet source, accessed April 5, 2010

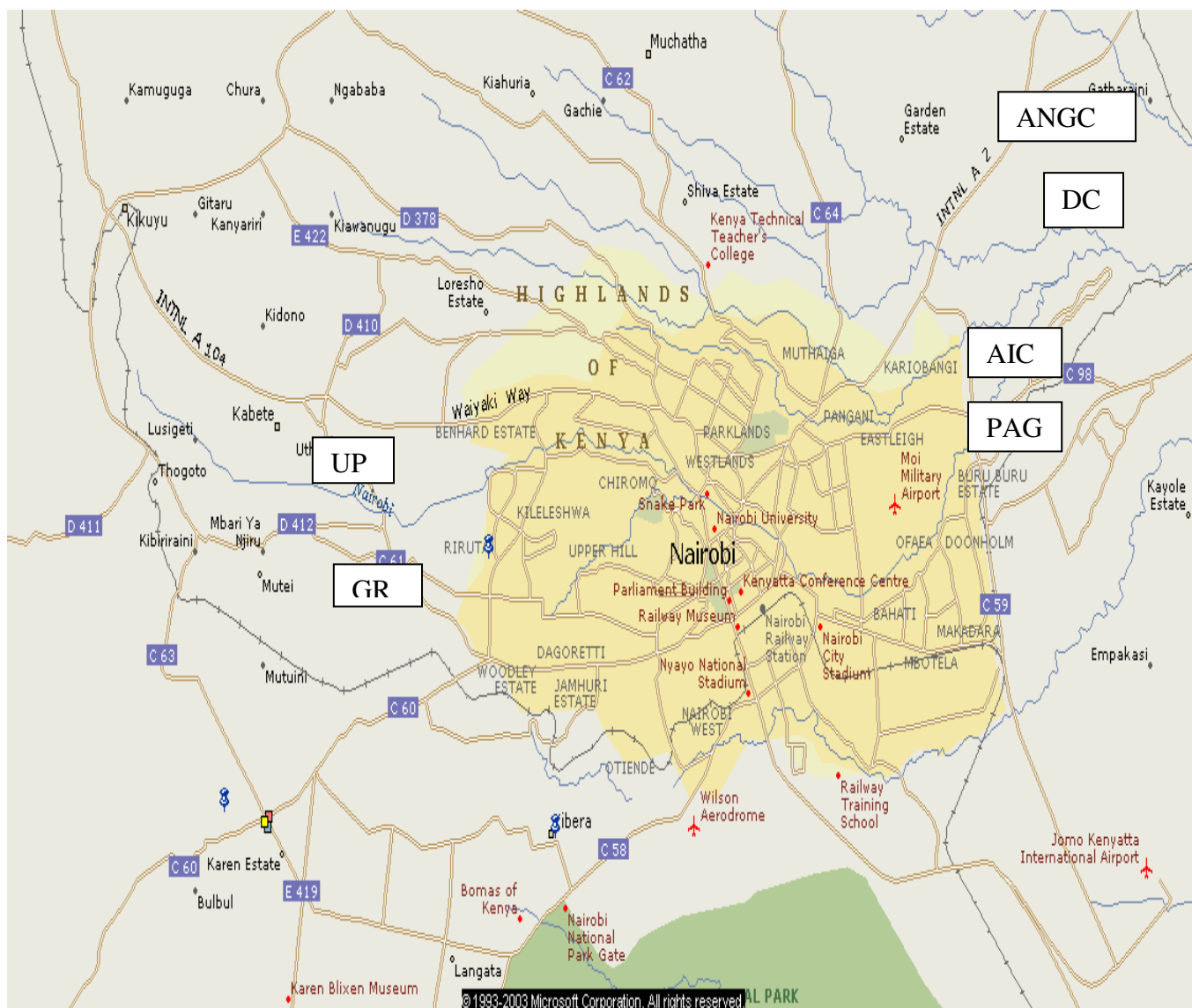


Figure 2 Map of Nairobi City, showing locations of the six churches¹⁹.

3.7 CHURCH GOVERNMENT MODELS OF THE SIX CHURCHES

Different denominations hold different views on church government models. Some believe that the apostolic church pattern is normative and binding while others see it as a descriptive pattern that needs to be adjusted to different cultures and settings. Some deny the existence of church organization in Scripture and calls on believers to walk on this issue as led by the Spirit and the dictates of pragmatism. However, the local church meets in a place at a time to worship. This necessitates a form of government to oversee, direct

¹⁹ See maps.google.co.uk, internet source, accessed April 5, 2010

and control its activities (Norbi 1955:25, 26). What the form would be will depend on the theological line the denomination wishes to pursue (Dulles 1978:9).

The Protestant perception of church models seems to guide the forms of church government that is operational in all the six select churches. This form of church government may be grouped into four: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Non-Governmental. In the Episcopal, government and final authority over church affairs reside in the hands of officers outside the local church. Usually these are regional bishops with an archbishop superintending over them. Within the Presbyterians, government is in the hands of elders who do not only rule over their local congregations, but in a whole region via the presbytery. The general assembly of these elders exercises authority over the whole denomination. The Congregational form of government vests the control and leadership of the church in the hands of each local assembly, which appoints its own pastor and board of deacons or elders as their representatives. In the non-government or independent churches, authority resides in the only one person who is the founder or vision bearer of the denomination. He is solely responsible to God and could hire and fire at will. Many times the church prospers or perishes depending on his spiritual, family or physical wellbeing (cf. Van Gelder 2000, Dulles 1978, Norbi 1955, Snyder 2004).

The six select churches operate distinct forms of government due to different perceptions on where authority should reside in the church and who should exercise such authority (Erickson 1983:1080). Those that evolved from mainline mission churches have kept to the received traditions, which are mainly Presbyterian with a mix of Congregational forms of government. They are the African Inland Church, the All Nations Gospel Church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. The remaining three are independent Pentecostals: the Gospel Revival Church, Uthiru Pentecostal Church (though with much influence of the IPHC), and the Deliverance Church. Their exaltation of the role of the Holy Spirit as the chief and only superintendent of the church make their recourse to the non-government or independent form of church government a *sine-qua-nom* for their 'zero-form' of government stand.

3.8 ORIGIN AND EXPANSION OF THE SIX CHURCHES

The history and urban mission work of the select six churches that are experiencing a turnaround in Nairobi city will be discussed here. This will answer the second research question of this study: What is the origin of the selected six (6) churches and their relationship to the urban mission work in Nairobi city? The historical account will show latent similarities and disparities in the urban mission work of the six churches and how this is influenced by their values, mission statements and governance structure.

It should be noted here that none of the churches in this study keep historical records or documented statistics of their operations. The researcher finds the study a new territory in Nairobi urban mission study. The accounts given on each church is thus largely pieced together from intensive interviews with the senior pastors, elders and church workers of each congregation. There were no other sources. However, the information is sufficiently critical and authentic to the research as those who gave them are all in the leadership and eldership that are eye witnesses of the stagnation and revitalization periods of the church.

The unique characteristics of each church necessitate their separate analysis. The common denominator is that they were once stagnant, faced city challenges and eventually experienced a turnaround in numerical growth. They are arranged alphabetically with no other purpose of order: African Inland Church, Dandora; All Saints Gospel Church, Kimbo-Githurai; Deliverance Church, Githurai; Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta; Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora; Uthiru Pentecostal Church, Uthiru.

3.8.1 African Inland Church, Dandora

3.8.1.1 Introduction

The account of AIC, Dandora is given by Pastor Sammy Muthuka, the senior pastor of the congregation and by six of the elders that serve in the Elders Board of the Local Church Committee (LCC) in different interview sessions with the researcher. The researcher authenticated some of the evidences in his preaching and observation visits at both the

English and Swahili services of the church on Sundays, January 10 and 17, 2010. This follows on several other visits made to the church and interaction with the church



members and leaders.

Figure 3 :Congregants at the Swahili second service on Sunday, 10 January, 2010

3.8.1.2 Church and Ministerial Profile

African Inland Church (AIC) is the offshoot of the African Inland Mission (AIM). The Dandora congregation is located in the serene Dandora estate suburb of the Embakasi Division of Nairobi City. The environment houses a low income group and enjoys minimal socio-economic development. The population density is average, but with a lot of cramping together in many of its low cost housing units. The adjacent Korogocho slum is

responsible for the overcrowding of the community. This is in addition to the Kayole and Mukuru Kwa Njenga low income settlements that share the same administrative division with the Estate.

Small congregations of worshippers exist in almost all the streets in the Estate. The sizes of the rooms-cum-halls indicate the smallness of the number of worshippers. They may also have stagnated for a long time, judging by the history of the two revitalized churches that are situated in the area, both selected for this research.

The Senior Pastor stands out as an educated gifted evangelist whose meticulous outreach plans reaps fruits from the Estate for Christ. He hails from the Kikuyu tribe, a major people group in the part of the estate where the church is located. With professional certificates in translation and interpretation in the French and English languages, coupled with fluency in Swahili and an upcoming Master's degree in Mission and Divinity, Pastor Sammy Muthuka is both a polyglot and a trained theologian well prepared for urban mission work in a multi-lingual urban setting like Nairobi.

According to Pastor Muthuka "The church grows through a variety of programs and constant outreaches to the community, a weekly Saturday counselling session for all interested members and full attention to training church workers on mission and Christian education". Against all odds, the chairman of the LCC claims that the Pastor "has succeeded to transform a methodical and traditional AIC denomination to a vibrant Pentecostal assembly that shouts and jumps in praise-worship sessions, speak in tongues, and gets anointed with oil as hands are laid on sick bodies".

The elders are unanimous that more members have been attracted to the once dead congregation by the new style of worship. The founder of the local branch confirmed in an interview with the researcher on Saturday, February 6 at the premises of the church that the church started with handfuls of people and that he actually bought the present large site of the church location with intention to run some projects for the church. He had since left the denomination to start his own independent ministry. He rejoices over present growth momentum and still visits the congregation to see the welfare of his "spiritual children".

There are claims of the new births at a rising rate. Evangelism and mission are fast becoming the members' lifestyle. Fervent individual and corporate prayers now prevail in church service and home settings. According to an elder who joined the church in 1989, "a new pastor who is not willing to accommodate the nonsense that was in the church before his arrival is on board". The implication of this, as noted by senior pastor, is that "the Great Commission is being diligently pursued and accomplished. There are an increasing number of available members for training and a rising bigger purse from faithful tithing and generous offerings". The researcher observed a general state of euphoria during his preaching and observation sessions in both the English and Swahili services of the church on Sundays, 10 and 17 January, 2010.

3.8.1.3 Church Historical Perspective

The following is a detailed account of the history of AIC, Dandora, as provided by the Senior Pastor, Sammy Muthuka. He seems to have the most authentic history of the local church branch. He rose from being a simple member in the congregation to an assistant pastor, and now serves as the Senior Pastor. His story was corroborated by the oldest member and elder in the church, who joined the congregation in 1987.

AIC, Dandora came to its present location in 1996 under Rev. Dickson Munyasia, who had just started ministry service together with his wife. Before then, the small congregation worshipped in a small hall in a place called Mulem. The need to change location to the present site was influenced by the exodus of people from Nairobi municipality to this suburb. A mass movement that influenced the then pastor Rev. Munyasia to undertake a great evangelistic outreach bore great fruits and led to the worshipping hall becoming too small to occupy the congregants.

He then began the search for a piece of land that could accommodate a bigger hall of worship. This bore fruit as his favourable interaction with the high ranking officials in the AIC denomination led to one of them using his influence in government circles to secure the present land for the church. It is such a good and large place that it could literally accommodate thousands of worshippers.

Back then there was no structure on the land and congregants had to make do with polythene wall papers as building walls. The eldership of the church challenged the wisdom of the decision pointing to the fact that newcomers were then streaming to the church. It was seen to be counter productive to the goal of mission. The view, however, has changed over time as everyone rejoices over the effort of Rev. Munyasia that has led to the congregation having a place they can now be proud of.

The chairman of Local Church Council added a dimension omitted by Pastor Muthuka in the historical overview of the AIC, Dandora.

Contrary to constitutional provision, the present pastor does not head the Local Church Council, but rather an elder. This is due to the peculiar case of the local branch. The church had a controversy with the immediate previous pastor. This led to a split of the congregation as he was planning to form a different denomination with some of the members of the church. The group was then excommunicated from the AIC by the denomination hierarchy. When that pastor thus left, the present one, who had been the Assistant Pastor, was promoted to the position of an Acting Pastor. However, because he is still in College for a Master's degree in Divinity, one of the elders (Wazee) has to head the Local Church Council pending his graduation from Bible College. That is how an elder became the present chairman of the LCC, the executive organ of the church.

3.8.1.4 Church Governance Structure

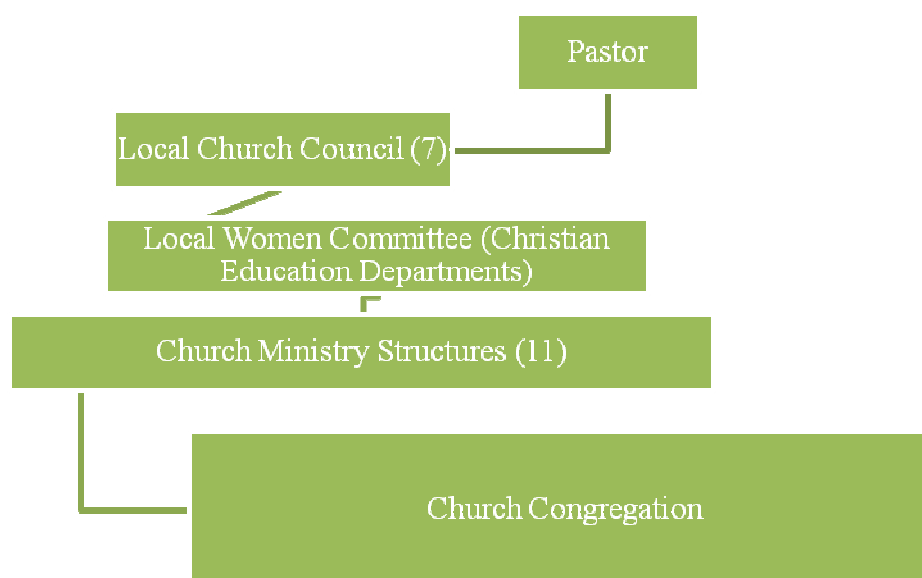


Figure 4: Organogram of African Inland Church, Dandora, Nairobi

As indicated above in the church's organogram, the Pastor heads the congregation assisted by the Local Church Council (LCC), of which the Pastor is the Chairman. The LCC, according to the constitution of the denomination, should be a minimum of seven members. The size of a congregation may, however, necessitate an increase in number. A council member becomes the Vice-Chairman to the Pastor while the portfolios of Secretary and Treasurer are assigned to others by election in council.

The Senior Pastor sheds light on the role of the LCC:

“The LCC, as the governing council of the local church, has as its main duty the administration of the church. When issues crop up in the congregation, for example, on area of discipline, the LCC comes together to examine the circumstances and determine whether and how the discipline should be administered. The body equally supervises the Christian Education Department (CED) groups to make sure that they are functional. Problems that arise in the groups are referred to the LCC for examination and solution. The implication is that the LCC works together with the pastor for the overall smooth running of the church.

Expatiating on the strategic and limited role of the LCC, its chairman says “The word Local means its operation is limited to the branch church where it is set up. It runs the affairs of the church from the financial part to administrative work of those being employed and the general care of the believers. The ten elected Wazees serve for 5 years in office before another election. After election, the Council sits to elect its Chairman, a Muzee, then Secretary and Treasurer”.

3.8.1.5 Ministries Operational Structure

While the LCC serves as the legislative arm of the church, the Local Women Committee performs most of the executive functions. It is the Christian Education Department of the church and educates all the ministry groups on matters pertaining to their area of jurisdiction. Its curriculum includes teaching church ministry organs on how to grow in faith.

The pastor explains what the other functioning ministry groups are and what relationships exist between the LCC and CED and between CED and cell groups that occupy the strategic executive position in the activities of other churches.

Presently the church has eleven ministry structure groups. These include Sunday school, Choir, Youth, The Battalion, Cadet, Christian Husbands Fellowship (CHF), Women Ministry, Praise & Worship, Intercessory group, Evangelism, Cell groups. All these ministry groups are coordinated by the CED. It is an educational arm that ensures the unavoidable link between church groups and the Bible.

The Christian Education Department (CED) manages the Christian education groups in the church via its Chairman who receives their regular reports. Such issues are reported to the LCC for necessary actions. The cell groups differ in function from the LCC in that the cell groups are prayer groups that hold in the Estate every Tuesday. LCC on the other hand is an umbrella group for further education of all groups in the church according to the structure of AIC.

Another evangelistic arm of the church is the CHF. The fellowship brings husbands together to solve issues peculiar to them. It functions as a Bible study group, with a manual containing different lessons from the Bible and a trained teacher of the Bible in the church directing the affairs of the group. This has led to the salvation of unchurched husbands and their commitment to taking up church responsibilities.

3.8.1.6 Vision, Mission and Congregational Distinctive

The following statements come from the lips of the Senior Pastor on the vision and mission statements of the church and what makes the church distinctive in Nairobi.

VISION: To have a Christ-centred church in Africa and beyond transforming society.

MISSION: A church that promotes godliness in African Christianity.

Though the researcher considers the vision statement to be ambitiously broad and the mission to be more suitable for a vision, the church does not consider the issue an item of major preoccupation for now. In actual fact the church does not officially document the statements; they were dictated from a desk notepad by the pastor.

On what constitutes the distinctiveness of the church, the church leaders allude to the new changes introduced into the church, which gave a different face to AIC. An elder was more forthcoming on this. He declares: “I come from Kijabe, the place of origin of the AIC in Kenya. So it is the church of my parents. So there are those like me who are here on loyalty to denominational affiliation. Another factor is that the new pastor here now introduced another way of worshipping unknown to AIC tradition, a Pentecostal tradition. In the AIC, we don’t clap hands and we highly esteem quiet worship. He introduced chorus singing, praying for people, anointing the sick and emphasizing the ministry of prayers. This begins to pull people in and has resulted in the growth we now experience”.

3.8.1.7 Church growth evolution: 1988-1999 and 2000—2009

A church elder claims that the church membership was less than 100 when he joined in 1989. Another elder that joined in 1992 counted a membership of about 100. Both put the attendance as at 2009 at around 600. The senior pastor concurs, indicating that attendance when he was associate pastor fluctuated between 100 and 150 throughout the 1990s, until it picked to about 500 from early 2000s.

Furthermore, findings from data analysis of the questionnaires administered on members and interviews conducted with leaders of the church (this is explained in details in chapters 4 and 5 of the research) put the church attendance between 1988 and 1999 at 100. The decade of 2000 to 2009 saw the church grown to 600 members, giving a 500% decadal growth. On the rating scale of Waymire and Wagner (1980:15), this is an “incredible” church growth performance.



Figure 5: Youth English Service of the AIC, Dandora on Sunday, 17 January, 2010

3.8.1.8 Urban church planting and social mission involvement

The Senior Pastor describes the church planting work of the church in the following words:

“One major commitment of AIC, Dandora is evangelism, and the congregation is very strong in carrying it out. The church recognizes this as its God-given responsibility and that of the pastor as an evangelist. This has led to the local branch breaking denominational barriers and carrying out evangelistic outreaches to both Nairobi environs and beyond. Altogether, the church has planted five local branches of the AIC denomination at Kayole North, Kariobangi South, Canaan, Dandora 4, and AIC Mungunya.”

3.8.1.9 Urban Mission Challenges in Nairobi

Unanimously, the pastor and elders see the biggest challenge facing the church in its urban mission work in Nairobi to be denominational in nature. A leader says:

“There are always discords among top leaders in the denomination and the fighting affects the AIC local church as most pastors that are transferred to the local branch belong to the high ranking quarrelsome group. It makes members feel insecure in their allegiance to the denomination”.

Others point to the fact that the vision for evangelism is not well set in the church. Members wrestle with the idea that their leaders are mainly in ministry to enrich themselves. This is besides the economic woes that the members themselves have to contend with as low income group earners.

In his own assessment, the Board Chairman sees the challenges confronting the church as three-fold. These he itemized as:

- Location of church building: The biggest challenge is in the far distance between the residential quarter and the church location. This is as a result of not getting a place in the residential area. It prevents holding of regular overnight meetings and activities that may extend late into the night.
- Constant transfer of pastors: The AIC denomination constantly transfers pastors. “Since I joined the local branch church (in 1987) we have had five pastors. Every time the church is growing, the pastor is moved-either by transfer or by dismissal”.
- Loss of membership. The church suffers from constant loss of membership to other denominations planted near the Estate. A member would wake up on a rainy Sunday morning and finding the neighbourhoods flooded, would opt for a nearby

congregation to worship in rather than coming this far outside the Estate where AIC, Dandora is located.

To surmount all these odds and grow a turnaround church in the midst of cramping stagnant congregations at every street of the Dandora Estate is the uniqueness of the AIC.

3.8.2 All Nations Gospel Church (PEFA), Kimbo-Githurai

3.8.2.1 Introduction

The following account of All Nations Gospel Church, Kimbo-Githurai is given by the Senior Pastor of the church and eighteen elders and leaders serving in different capacities in the church. The researcher was given a rare opportunity to authenticate some of the information when he preached at both the English and Swahili services of the church on Sunday, 24 January 2010 and revisited to observe the congregation on 31 January, 2010. The pastor described the preaching engagement a “pay-back” for the church’s participation in the research. This follows on several other visits made to the church during which church projects and growth plans were presented to the researcher for observation and professional counsel.



Figure 6: ‘Aerial view’ of Swahili second service on Sunday 24 January, 2010

3.8.2.2 Church and Ministerial Profile

All Nations Gospel Church (ANGC) Githurai belongs to the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (PEFA). As already alluded to in this chapter, it has its root in the Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies of God. The Kimbo branch (named after the community where it is located) is in the larger Githurai location of Kasarani Division of Nairobi metropolis. Though Kimbo appear to be a low populated suburb and at a great distance from the city centre, Githurai is highly urbanizing centre surrounded with low income settlements. This accounts for the high rate of crime that Kimbo is known for before the intervention of the ANGC.

Summarizing the church profile, the senior pastor says: “We have about 100 hundred churches in PEFA Nairobi. This branch was one of those on the tail end in term of numerical, economical and infrastructural development. Today it is one of the best five in every way among the 3,000 branches all over the country”.

The ANGC may be the single factor that puts Kimbo on the interesting map of the government. It is the biggest, most modern, most magnificent and most influencing church in the entire community. The Senior Pastor reports that almost all the security meetings by the Police and politicians that involve the community are held in the church compound. The Senior Pastor is regularly consulted on poverty alleviation projects that target the community. The community seeks his intervention on matters it considers of urgent security and state attention. It is a church that is vertically focused on God and horizontally glued to the people it serves. Emphasis is put on the duo of preaching the Word of God and provision of welfare needs of the poor. In ANGC, the perfect picture of *missio Dei* is completely exemplified. The pastor is the only foreign missionary among the six revitalized churches of this research.

The Senior Pastor, James Gudoi Wesonga, was trained under Bishop Simeon Obayo, the General Overseer of Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (PEFA). He holds a diploma in Bible theology and a degree in Biblical Education with a minor in Urban

Mission. He was transferred to the present church in September, 1994 after shepherding for 8 years in Mathare Slum and Nairobi South B congregations of PEFA.



Figure 7: Sunday Worship session at All Nations Gospel Church, 31 January, 2010

3.8.2.3 Church Historical Perspective

The head of Praise and Worship department of the church traced the beginning of the congregation to when the few members that started it met in a charcoal room within the Kimbo community. All the three are full time drivers of the church and were already members then, and they dated the take-off to 1980. Outreach emphasis then was on door-to-door evangelism to win and disciple souls.

The meeting continued for ten years before it was moved to the present venue of the church. The chairman of the board of trustees remembered joining the church in 1989 when the attendance was at about 35 people. By 1990 the elders that were eye witnesses

were unanimous that a building of 25 by 50 feet had been erected as worship centre for the 80 members that were later handed over to the newly transferred pastor to the congregation, James Wesonga, the missionary.

On reporting for duty, Wesonga says: “I met a building of 25 by 50 feet and had about 80 people with church income of 100 dollars per month. It was my hardest transfer as other churches I had earlier pastored had grown and had become more respectable than this one. My heart was really discouraged. I had no idea it was the plan of God for my life. With time however, I discovered it was the right place at the right time in the will of God”. After a stagnation period that lasted almost ten years, the church had been growing since.

3.8.2.4 Church Governance: an Overview

According to the pastor, the church administration of PEFA is built on eldership (see Fig.6 below). The church board is composed of the elders who along with the pastor form the legislative arm of the church. Constitutionally, the pastor is expected to carry out executive decisions after obtaining a “yes” vote from the elders.

The associate pastors and the administrator assist the pastor in coordinating the various church departments that serve as the executive organ of the church. However, presently the Senior Pastor performs both roles in addition to his pastoral functions as the offices were vacant at the time of carrying out the research.

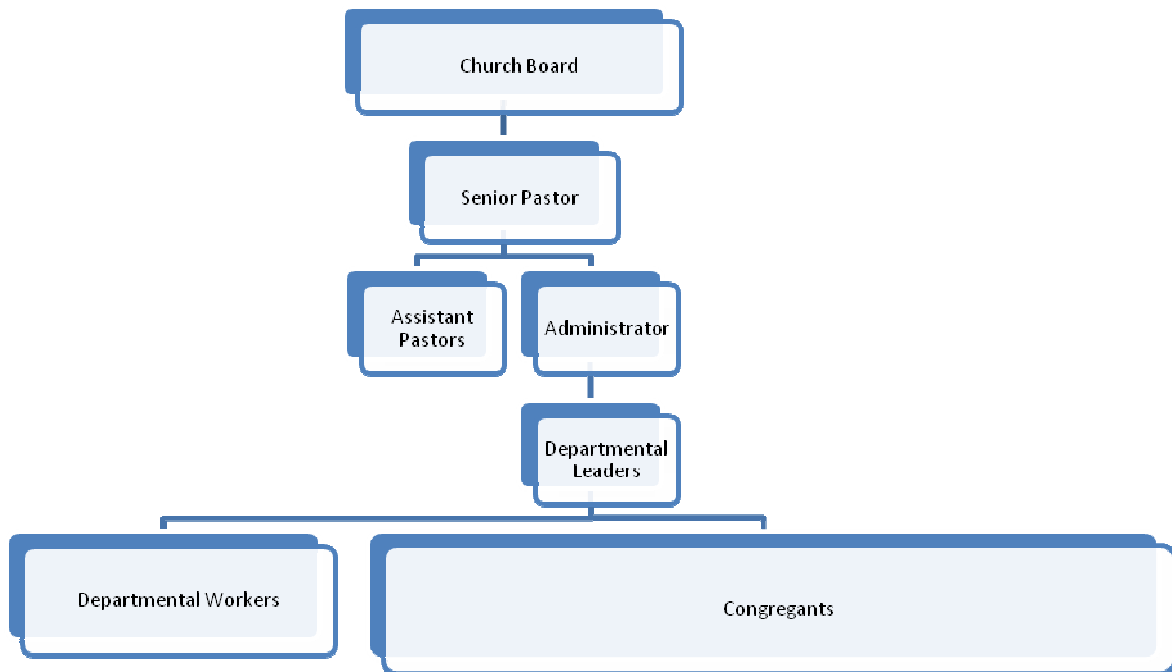


Figure 8: Organogram of All Nations Gospel Church, Kimbo-Githurai

3.8.2.5 Vision, Mission and Congregational distinctive

The following vision and mission statements are in the archives of the church and was read out to the researcher by an elder on the instruction of the pastor. The church purpose statement is printed on every Sunday bulletin containing the order of service for the day.

Vision: To know Christ and make Him known to others throughout the world.

Mission: To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world and to meet the needs of others spiritually, economically, etc. according to the scripture Matt. 28:18-20.

Church Purpose Statement: Our church is committed to prayer and to the task of boldly sharing the good news of Jesus Christ so that people might come to know him, grow to maturity and be equipped to serve Him.

A departmental head vividly captures the attraction of the church. The following are his words:

“The church is known for evangelism and prayers. The members are just rounding up (in the course of this interview) an ongoing 40-day prayer. Again, Tuesday is a general day of prayer. Prayer is organised throughout the seven days of the week and there are

departments who come to the church during the week to pray and observe special days of intercession.”

A female youth outreach coordinator sees the distinctiveness from another direction. She points to the area of structural development that attracts community members. She says: “People find it easy to come here because there is no church around here with such a state of development as ANGIC. There is the sense of feeling that there is something different with this congregation. The pastor tries to always bring up something new that continually gives an all-time development image that attracts new comers to the church”.

3.8.2.6 Ministry Structure and Key Pillars

Departments in the church include, but are not limited to, Home Cell, Sunday school, Men Ministry, Women Ministry, Youth Ministry, and Praise and Worship team. For internal edification of members, much attention is paid to the Praise and Worship team. While the English service is conducted in the form of western Pentecostal music, the second service in Swahili has a lot of cultural influence, including the adorning of African attire and lyrics that appeal to mother tongues, especially of the majority Kikuyu worshippers.

The Youth Ministry and Cell group networks seem to take priority in reaching out to non-believers and discipling the new converts. The importance attached to the children ministry is indicated by the conversion of the former hall of the church to well-equipped children Sunday school and recreation hall (see Fig.9 below).



Figure 9: Former church building, now converted to children Sunday school and recreation hall

3.8.2.7 Church growth evolution:1988-1999 and 2000—2009

The structural metamorphose from a 25 by 50 feet building in 1994, accommodating 80 people, to the construction of what has now become a children’s hall has eventually led to the construction of a magnificent single storey building (Fig. 10) that now sits over 3 000 congregants in two Sunday worship services (the pastor claims that though not always filled to capacity, the church sits about 1 800 congregants in each of the two services).

Findings from interviews conducted show that the average attendance of the church between the decades of 1988 to 1999 is 200. The Senior Pastor agrees, affirming that the church grew “from 80 (when he became the pastor of the church) to 200 people and got stocked there”. A dramatic turn of events changed the membership record in the decade of 2000 to 2009, bringing the church attendance to an approximate 3 000 members. This

gives a 1400% church growth per decade, a rating far beyond the “incredible” growth on the scale of church growth provided by Waymire and Wagner (1980:15).



Figure 10: Church hall-a magnificent single storey building

The place of circumstantial supernatural coincidence in this jump as told by Pastor James Wesonga deserves mention at this point. The account that follows comes from his lips:

“When membership grew from 80 to 200 people, the church got stocked there. People were praising God for the growth but my burden was that the community was growing more than the church and I was asking God for what to do. So one day, I was moving on the street of Nairobi and I saw some people singing. The Spirit told me to move near to them, which I did. Then I discovered they were from Uganda, a team who had come to visit a pastor who rejected them, saying he could not use them in the church because the elders had refused the team. The Lord told me to take them to my church. That time I had no elders to talk to and get permission from on what God was saying. So I brought them to the church. **THAT WEEK WAS THE CHANGE OF THE CHURCH. FROM 200 TO 400 MEMBERSHIP AND WE NEVER WENT BACKWARD AGAIN TO STAGNATION.**

The team sang and a brother ministered and the whole thing broke loose. The walls came down”.

“Pastors need to know that the number 200 in memberships is difficult to break through. Next difficult figure to get out from is 500. After that is a 1000. When anyone reaches a thousand he feels tempted to sit down. He feels he has arrived. To break through that number is hard. However, once it is done, he may never have to border again. Presently, I don’t border any longer on how the church will grow, all that is needed is to put some things in order and the church will grow”.

The researcher will analyse in chapter 5 of this study what those turnaround “things” represent in the six churches of this research that have moved from stagnation to revitalization.

3.8.2.8 Urban church planting work

Findings from interviews conducted give the following images of the church planting work of the church. It constitutes the summary of the claims from the Senior Pastor and the elders.

The All Nations Gospel Church of Kimbo-Githurai has planted five churches and sent out 3 missionaries. Plans are underway to plant more churches in the near future. Altogether there are 10 pastors on full-time service all over PEFA churches that are on the payroll of the church.

One is the senior pastor in Embu PEFA church, who lives about 500 kilometres away. The pastor is supported with monthly stipend from the church. There is a lady who had a heart for mission and had to be sent to Youth with a Mission for training because the PEFA denomination does not ordain women ministers. The lady now heads the Arusha branch of Youth with a Mission in Tanzania with the support of the church and others. The third person is a man doing pastoral work in Karatina, about 200 kilometres away.

The church has its peculiar “strategy for church planting”. Anyone with a declared desire to ministry is mandated to stay in the church for 1 year carrying out assigned responsibilities. At the expiration of such internship, the candidate is sent to a Bible College for the “best training”, which in the perspective of the church is a Diploma in Theology. After graduation, the successful candidate goes back to the church for another one to two years for further internship. This is followed by pastoral posting to “wherever God calls”. The mother church supports financially for an average of two to three years, within which period the new church is expected to have grown to a self-supporting congregation.

However, the ANGK, Kimbo is more preoccupied with church growth issues than church planting. The church is concerned that PEFA has over 3 000 churches in Kenya, but only a few have up to one hundred members. The church would thus usually ‘take over’ a stagnant church that needs its assistance, inject both human and financial resources until that congregation is self-supporting, and then pull out of the location and wait for the next ‘Macedonian Call’ (cf. Acts 16:9).

3.8.2.9 Urban Social Mission Involvement

All leaders interviewed speak proudly about the massive involvement of the ANGK in many cutting edge urban social works that permanently influence membership recruitment, community development and discipleship formation. The following account sums up their views, and the researcher was conducted round many of the projects for verification, by the Senior Pastor.

COMPUTER TRAINING CLASSES:

The church set up computer training class for grade 12 young adults who completed high school education and are waiting for results to go to College. This follows on the discovery made by the church that many in this group constitute a social menace to the community; some of them go as far as taking drugs. Their exposure to computer training helps to change their perspective on life and to seek a decent means of livelihood.

Examples of such cases are two young men who after the computer training joined the military and are now Sergeants. There is also the case of a young lady who worked as a sweeper with Kenyan breweries. She did the computer training and secured the job of a secretary to one of the managers in the same company.

DRESS MAKING FIRM:

Another micro-economic enterprise of the church is the dress making firm. This is set up for those who have never been to school. When they come to the Lord in repentance of their sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the church empowers them with a dress making skill. Some are employed in public and private companies while others have set up self-employed businesses. The dress makers sew school uniforms for kids at cheap prices to alleviate the suffering of parents who travel far into the Nairobi Business District Centre and buy expensively. They litter the streets in the community with their shops, changing permanently the economic climate of a people that was once subjected to abject poverty.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT BUSINESS:

The church operates two single-decker buses (see Fig.8 above). These are made available to the community for hire at minimal prices to facilitate out-of-community travelling and social engagements. This boosts the image of the church in its interaction with the community. It provides jobs for unskilled labour and positively impacts the non-Christians with the Gospel the church preaches. The buses also serve the mission purpose of the church.

BICYCLE MISSION PROJECT:

The All Nations Gospel Church goes out once a year, away from Nairobi, to areas where pastors, due to logistic problems do have a hard time reaching out to target audience with the Gospel. Bicycles are distributed to ease movement and increase flow of Gospel dissemination. The latest instance of this kind was in December, 2009 when a team went up to North-Eastern Kenya and distributed 50 bicycles to pastors working with the TEAR organization. It greatly reduced the trouble of the long distance they confront in going to their churches.

SUPPORT FOR ORPHANS PROGRAM:

The church raises support for orphans. There are 37 of them in the congregation (as at the time of this research). The total fees at elementary school are borne by the church; at high school a part payment is given. Since the church does not run an orphanage, church members are encouraged to serve as guardian parents for each orphan. Members who keep orphans of relatives are reimbursed for the school fees paid for these children in order to relieve their burden. This makes the care policy of the church for orphans to cut across the board with no discrimination on circumstances. One of these orphans from the Democratic Republic of Congo was one of the best students in the national Grade 8 school examination in 2009 and won government scholarship to study in one of the best colleges in Kenya.

REHABILITATING GANGSTERS:

Kimbo community and Githurai location of Kasarani Division have for long been identified with urban gangsterism. This makes politicians and police supportive of every effort of the church to rehabilitate gangsters who respond to the church's invitation for help. In one such effort, the Senior Pastor negotiated with the Councillor representing the community to employ the youths in doing some manual labour for which outsiders were previously employed.

At another time, the church bought 20 bicycles and started community transportation by bicycles business (boda-boda) for the young drunkards in the neighbourhoods. The business earned a minimal means of daily livelihood for each 'driver'. Presently, the bicycles are phased out and are replaced by motorbikes, with many young men employed in the business. The church still searches for people with ideas on how best it can impact the village the more and turn the community around. In the word of the Senior Pastor, the conviction of the church is that "if Jesus were to be here he will not only save the people, but also change their status around". This is the real burden the church has with the community.

CHURCH AS IMAGE MAKER:

On serving as the community image maker, the Senior Pastor says of his intention: “Right now I am dreaming of doing what our church has not done before. I am going to the media this year (2010) so that I can showcase a different image of the community. Our community is known to harbour the highest number of criminals in this division. My going to the media is to break this testimony and make people to know that this Githurai criminal village also has something good taking place, which are these numerous projects of the church and their positive yields.”

3.8.2.10 Urban Mission Challenges in Nairobi

A main challenge confronting the church within Nairobi is denominational and relational in nature. Sometimes, there is lack of needed understanding and appreciation of missionaries working among natives, especially in leadership positions. Often this leads to strife and sidelining of outsiders in top decision making positions in the church hierarchy. This might explain why the pastor seems to be only involved in the affairs of his local church, though shepherding one of the largest congregations of PEFA in Nairobi and the nation.

The other challenge is also religious in nature. As the largest congregation in the community, other denominations sometimes sideline the church in ecumenical meetings. However, the pastor claims that this does not seriously get at him as he is a busy man, concentrating more on what concerns his congregation than anything else.

3.8.3 Deliverance Church, Githurai

3.8.3.1 Introduction

The account of the origin and expansion of the Deliverance Church that is recorded below is given by the Senior Pastor, Gerald Kimathi, and sixteen elders and departmental leaders of the church. The wife of the Senior Pastor who doubles as the Associate Pastor, Lydia Kimathi, dwelt deeply on the role of women and the pastor’s wife in church growth. This

will be recounted in detail in chapter 6 of the research. The researcher was given permission to conduct interviews during two of the Board of Elders' meetings, which is held every Saturday morning from 6.30am to 9am with breakfast served. He was equally invited to observe and share his Christian testimony with the church on Sundays of 7th and 14th February, 2010. It gave him the opportunity not only to administer his questionnaires, but also to corroborate some of the information gathered through interview of pastors and elders of the church.



Figure 11: Entry view of Deliverance Church Githurai showing road side and courtyard sign posts and Sunday Worshippers outside the sanctuary on 7 February, 2010

3.8.3.2 Church and Ministerial Profile

The Deliverance Church Githurai is located in the high density zone of Githurai 45, in the Kasarani Division of Nairobi. It shares demographic, spatial and economic features of the rest of the low income settlements in the division, especially Korogocho. Highly constrained on land space, the Deliverance Church squeezes its growing membership into a plot of land it shares with a primary school that is owned by a neighbour who also could not have an allocated land area to accomplish his vision of serving the basic education needs of the community.

In one of the apocalyptic letters of Jesus through John to the seven churches in Asia Minor, the Church of Smyrna comes through as one suffering from physical afflictions and poverty, yet rich spiritually (Rev.2:8). The researcher feels that the Deliverance Church, Githurai exemplifies this imagery in its non-modern structural facilities and low economic status of worshippers; yet with worshippers who strongly thirst after God and godliness. Some of them who recently graduated from Encounter (a kind of discipleship training in a spiritual ‘monastery’) testified in the open church while the researcher was attending, of how they had met God uniquely, rededicated their lives to holy living and decided to make a difference in their generation.

The same godly posture is portrayed by the Pastor who serves full-time and is more adored by the congregants for his virtue of integrity than ministerial charisma. He says of himself: “People keep telling me that I am a man of integrity. I minister with my wife who is a teacher in high school. We visit people together and solve issues together. My church members appreciate my togetherness with my wife”.

The Senior Pastor holds two degrees, a bachelor’s degree in Sociology from the University of Nairobi and a Master’s degree in Theology with professional counselling course from Daystar University, also in Nairobi. Pastor Gerald Kimathi exudes a calm personality and places great emphasis on team spirit. With a board membership of seven, he strategically leads his congregation to growth via an emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life and ministerial service. The elders testify that since his appointment on May 4th, 2002 the once divided church has experienced biblical unity.

Similarly, the Associate Pastor, Lydia Kimathi, is a gifted evangelist who meticulously guides the discipleship ministry of the church. She is a trained teacher and employed to teach in one of the public high schools, and with a master's degree in Leadership she demonstrates such modelling skill that it earns her the accolade of 'a mother for all congregants'.

On the sign post of the church is a message of what everyone considering joining the congregation should expect. It reads: "We serve God by serving you", and the motto of the church boldly declares: "Every Christian a leader". Furthermore, pasted on the wall of the administrative office of the Deliverance Church is what could be considered the guiding principle of the ministry once a member becomes a church worker. It reads:

"I will be: **F-FAITHFUL** **A-AVAILABLE** **T-TEACHABLE**
In Christ Jesus"

3.8.3.3 Church Historical Perspective

An elder in the church dates the founding of Deliverance Church, Githurai to around 1984. The pastor disagrees, explaining that the congregation came to existence by default with some Wazee (elders) who migrated to the community from the mother church and decided to gather their families together for fellowship on their newly bought plot of land. He goes further to claim that the fellowship had no pastor until around 1989 when the mother church consented to the request to recognize the gathering as a church and send an official pastor. However, he does not hide his ignorance on the historical accuracy of his date: "I don't have proper history because the history of the church is a little unique".

The following account was given by leaders and the board of elders of the church on the crisis of leadership that for long enfeebled the congregation and makes the church "unique":

"There had been two pastors over the church before the arrival of the present one. In between the two pastors was a vacuum period when there was no pastor over the congregation and the elders provided shepherding ministry. These were not necessarily

elders in the sense of governance structure but Wazee (aged men). The pastor that took over the church leadership from the elders ended up leaving the church after a brawl with the hierarchy of the denomination.

The congregation was without a pastor for two years after his departure. It was a trying time for the congregation, a time of spiritual setback from weakened faith. The next pastor was appointed around 1996 and led the church for five years during which time the church became stabilized again and grew numerically to over a thousand members. He came to have personal problems with the denominational set up of Deliverance Church and eventually left the denomination in March 2002.

But the departing pastor was determined to go with the congregation. He bought a plot of land and build within few kilometres from the Deliverance Church building. Many families were divided; the husbands followed a different direction from the wives. Some members went back to former protestant churches while others went to the Roman Catholic Church. A group followed the pastor while some chose to remain. The matter was compounded because the root problem was a national crisis facing the entire Deliverance Church Kenya at that time. It was under this circumstance that Pastor Kimathi was appointed over the remaining few but discouraged and hurting members of Githurai location.”

3.8.3.4 Church Governance: an Overview

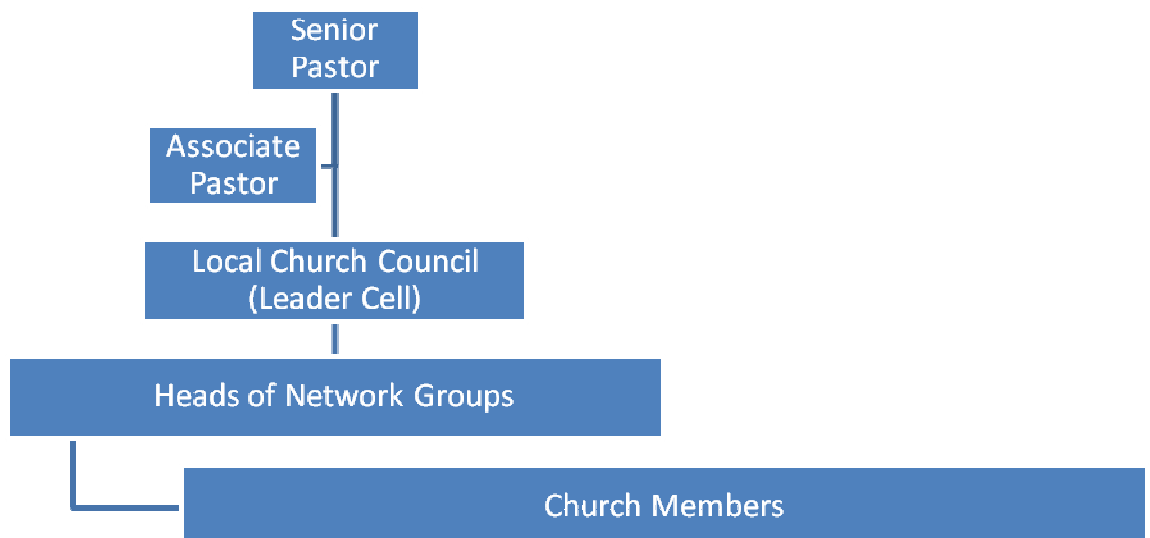


Figure 12: Organogram of Deliverance Church, Githurai

The Senior Pastor is assisted by the Associate Pastor. In the special circumstance of the Deliverance Church, Githurai, the wife of the senior pastor cumulatively serves as associate pastor. Both are members of the Local Church Council, which is the decision making and coordinating body of the church. She in particular watches over the core sectors of women and discipleship ministries of the church, as well as ministers as an evangelist-teacher in the church.

All members of the Local Church Council are in the Leader cell, the unit that serves as the executive organ of the church on all its program of activities. The Council exercises controlling authority over the Heads of Network Groups. These are the heads of the department where the church members fulfil their God given roles and responsibilities through the use of their gifts and talents. The five major ones are the Ladies Group led by a Chair Lady, the Men Fellowship headed by a Chairman, the Missions Coordinator, the Sunday School Superintendent and the Leadership Cell.

3.8.3.5 Vision, Mission, Core values and unique characteristics

The vision, mission and core values of the Deliverance Church are stated on the leaflet of their Sunday services to draw the attention of worshippers to it continually and make them imbibe it. With the picture of the crucified Jesus on the leaflets, the church concludes at the foot of the statements: “For this purpose connect with us.” The statements are quoted below.

Mission: To know Jesus Christ and make Him known (Philippians 3:10)

Vision: We see God building a strong community of believers in Jesus Christ that are sold out to impact the world with the Gospel in Obedience to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31).

Core Values: We are a church:

1. Committed to evangelism
2. Dedicated in and to worship God

3. United in Fellowship
4. Nourished in the Biblical truth
5. And Reproducing in discipleship

The pastor believes that the favour of God is the critical factor that makes the church unique in the city. “I believe we are a good church we do the best we can. I provide a person to person service as I am always here to give qualified service in counselling and leadership. Moreover, I believe I also preach well, otherwise the people will not be coming to hear”. A few elders air the same view.

Other elders see the church being distinct in other aspects. One says: “The leadership has been distinctive in maintaining a strict adherence to the doctrine with emphasis on spiritual growth of every member”. Another claims that “the church is known for true worship and the whole gospel”. While others describe the specialty of the church with such statements as “The church where everybody is somebody”; The church that is known for tolerating and accommodating all political and socio-cultural diversities”; A Bible reading and believing church with firm Christian teaching”.

Whatever the description chosen, one theme runs through: the Deliverance Church Githurai is committed to building lives on the totality of the word of God.

3.8.3.6 Ministry Structure and Key Pillars

The ministry structure of the Deliverance Church is built around the five key sectors that constitute what the church has termed Network Groups. As already identified above, these are the Ladies Ministries, Men’s Ministries, Youth Ministries (this is divided into three age groups), Sunday School Ministry, and Hospitality, Ushers, Praise and Worship Ministries combined.

The objectives of these ministry pillars as identified by one of the elders are threefold. One is to win souls for Christ. Two is to consolidate believers in the faith. Three is to make all

believers leaders, as the sign post of the church unambiguously announced: “every Christian a leader” (see Fig.11).

3.8.3.7 Church growth evolution: 1988-1999, and 2000-2009

The crisis in the church and eventually in the whole national set up of the denomination makes the calculation of accurate statistics within the twenty-two years of 1988 to 2009 difficult. However, there is unanimity in the views of the elders and the senior pastor that the church attendance had declined from over a thousand to about 350 by the time of the arrival of the present pastor in 2002. Even of this number, the Senior Pastor says: “They were not members. They merely responded to the national evangelistic team that was brought in for a crusade and to listen to the different Bishops that were assembled to salvage a wrecked spiritual situation. When the crusades were over and the Bishops gone, the assembled audience also was no more”. A rough estimate of 250 average attendants would then be assumed from the 1988-1999 congregants judging by the record of the Pastor that all the serving leaders refused to renew their allegiance and many remaining faithful “would not want to have much to do with the preaching of a new pastor that they consider too low in hierarchy to the preaching Bishops of the concluded conference”.



Figure 13: End of 1st Sunday Worship service on 14 February, 2010 at Deliverance Church, Githurai

However, the situation changed with time. By the time the stagnation crisis was over, the church was counting about 1 000 members towards the close of the decade of 2000-2009 from the estimated 250 that survived the crisis that rocked the national denomination and the local branch.

This gives a decadal growth of 300%, a score of “Outstanding” in the church growth rating scale of Waymire and Wagner (1980:15).

3.8.3.8 Urban church planting work

Findings show that the Deliverance Church, Githurai has planted five daughter congregations despite the crisis that plagued the church for the major part of its existence. These local branches include the Deliverance Church of Thindigwa, Kimbo, Ruiru, Wendaui, and Binwa. Two elders identify Sudan and Mombasa as few places outside Nairobi where the founding of the existing Deliverance Churches are linked to the Githurai congregations.

3.8.3.9 Urban Social Mission Involvement

The church engages in community health care provision where the services of doctors and nurses are hired to attend to the sick in the community. Patients are charged with 100 shillings (\$10) and the church subsidizes the cost to provide dental care and general out-patient treatments. The congregation equally gets involved in environmental cleanliness to make the ever-dirty community a hygienically safe place for the urbanites.

3.8.3.10 Urban Mission Challenges in Nairobi

One major challenge the church faces is the issue of tribe. The major tribes in the community are Kikuyu and Kamba, while the pastor is Meru. The community, like others in Kenya, always wants to know the tribe of the pastor to know the political implications should they identify with the church. The church tries to stay away from partisan politics but alerts the congregation to their fundamental rights and the consequences of their voting

decisions in elections. This demands a lot of wisdom as the congregation is a mix of elites and commoners with divergent social and political dynamics.

A second and what the pastor calls most painful challenge confronting him and the church is spatial limitation. There is no parking lot for congregants. The church building is literally squeezed among residential houses with no possibility of expansion, coupled with limited funds to reconstruct the existing structure. Even the road network leading to the church is a nightmare as it is utterly neglected by Nairobi Council and neighbours freely erect kiosks that hardly leave space for vehicles bringing congregants to church for worship.

On the effect of the physical structure on the growth of the church, the Senior Pastor laments: “Building limits our growth because if you went to our church you will not like it. If you came here on Sunday and went to our Sunday school class you will not like it. If you sat in our church on Sunday you will not like it. We win souls but been an urban centre, the souls we win go to other comfortable churches and later come back to us spiritually wounded. Nairobi city offers choices of worship places. We win souls and after they have come here they go to another place and see if they will be more comfortable there. They go away and then we loose touch because they have gone to some other more convenient worship halls”.

3.8.4 Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta

3.8.4.1 Introduction

The following account of Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta is given by the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastors and fourteen of the leaders that constitute the Church Board and departmental heads of the church. The researcher visited the church on a number of occasions during the research, especially the Sunday worship service of 21st February, 2010, to observe and verify the claims made and to interview the Senior Pastor who evidently ran a tight and busy schedule involving outside preaching engagements and interdenominational public conferences that brought together both national and foreign preachers and audiences.



Figure 14: Gospel Revival Centre Church, second Sunday Worship Service on 21 February, 2010

3.8.4.2 Church and Ministerial Profile

The Gospel Revival Centre Church is located in Riruta location of the Dagoretti Division of Nairobi City province. It shares a boundary with Kawangware location and exhibits the same features of a mix of low and middle income earners. Being a Kikuyu densely populated area, it is understandable that petty trading and the transport industry dominate the economic life of the residents (the Kikuyu of Kenya aggressively dominate the commercial business enterprise of the nation and makes a great success of it irrespective of circumstances).

The Senior Pastor, Kennedy Kamau, serves the church full-time since he rose from the rank of an assistant to that of substantive pastor about ten years ago. He hails from the Kikuyu people group and holds a master's degree in Theology. On the uniqueness of the church he says: "The church is well known as a place where the word is proclaimed with power and without compromise. It is known as a place of many fellowship meetings constantly organised to feed people spiritually. We have maintained this distinctive over time and have made us to be known for our stand".

This truth cannot be lost to any observer. The researcher met one meeting or another on every single visit he made to the church within the space of two months. The Pastor gave the following breakdown of the weekly meetings of the church:

- Daily Morning Devotion from 5.30am to 7am, Monday to Friday
- Lunch Hour Meeting from Monday to Friday at 1.00pm
- Monday Home Cell Groups Meeting
- Tuesday Prayer Meeting for the whole church
- Wednesday Bible Study is time for teaching
- Thursday is Family Day where we give people freedom to be with their family, though some sections like praise and worship and choir come for practice.
- Friday is All-Night Prayer for the entire church
- Saturday is a practice day for choir, praise and worship teams
- Sunday we have three services: early morning service between 6.00am-8.00am for the working class going to Sunday work, Main Service is 8am to 10.30am; Third Service is 10.30-1.00pm
- Sunday evenings are for departmental meetings. When there is none, we hold evening service for the entire congregation

As for the objectives intended by full-week activities of the church, the Senior Pastor says: "All these meetings target the feeding of the flock with the undiluted word of God".

3.8.4.3 Church Historical Perspective

The Gospel Revival Centre Nairobi that gave birth to the branch at Riruta was founded in the 1980s by late Bishop Evans Mrima. It started as a home cell fellowship at the Dandora Headquarters. The bishop claimed to be led by the Lord to shift base from Mombasa in the coast where he had been overseeing the Gospel Outreach Church to start the new ministry in Nairobi under the new registration “Gospel Revival Centre”.

The local branch, Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta began in 1992 as a small cell group of about ten members. A rented classroom served as meeting place for the cell before the members were moved to a hall in another school within the locality of the former meeting place. As the church grew rapidly, a plot of land was rented and a structure constructed for worship. Three leaders, including the present Senior Pastor, served in the pastoral office, and with more growth the church relocated to its presently owned structure in October, 2002.

The Senior Pastor sheds light on what could be called the hour of crisis in the history of the church and the subsequent growth explosion.

There were three shepherds jointly sharing the pastoral responsibilities when the ministry started. In the first shake-up that the ministry faced due to leadership strife, the first pastor resigned and two remained. Then one of the two was involved in a road accident when coming from a crusade and died. The third shepherd who had all along served as Assistant Pastor took over the full responsibility of caring for the flock. He says “I took over ten years ago and the church has grown rapidly. We grew year by year from 200 about ten years ago to about 3,000 now”.

3.8.4.4 Church Governance: an Overview

The national denomination of Gospel Revival Centre, Kenya is headed by a Bishop. All the Pastors in the existing 152 branches are answerable to the bishop. However, each local church to a large extent is autonomous to the extent to which it conducts its own affairs.

The Senior Pastor is the leader of the branch he oversees, he is assisted by the Assistant Pastors who serve as full-time ministers and stand in for the Senior Pastor in his absence (GRCC Riruta have two). The three Pastors form the preaching team of the church and together with other four elders constitutes the seven-member Church Board that oversees the activities of the church and gives direction to the congregation.

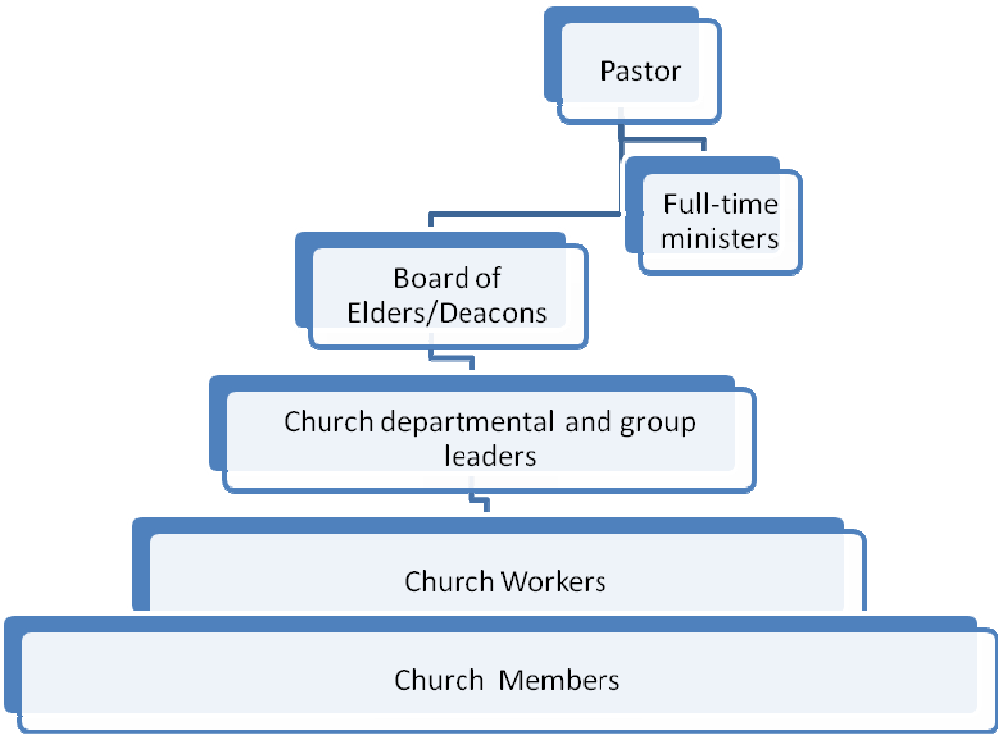


Figure 15: Organogram of Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta

The Board of Elders or Deacons oversee all the informal activities of the church like collection of offering and infrastructural facilities. They watch over the departmental performance of each ministry group and section in the church. They are appointed by the pastor depending on whom he judges qualified for the work and who would cooperate with him for the smooth running of the church. The Church Board members and Deacons have a special charge to lead by example in the word, prayer and purity. Next in the hierarchy are departmental heads of Home Cells, Praise and Worship, Ushering, Choir, together with group leaders over Men, Ladies, Youths and Sunday school among others. Church workers under each department and group cooperate with their leaders to lead the flock in the Church Board dictates.

3.8.4.5 Vision, Mission and Congregational Distinctive

The Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta does not have a formulated vision and mission statements. The pastors and elders try to construct one in response to the interview for the research. One of the pastors and a youth leader give what seems closest to the practice of the church and the expressed ideas of others in the leadership. It is stated as:

VISION: Building a society with the knowledge of Jesus Christ and winning souls.

MISSION: Raising leaders of great integrity that would shape and influence the society. However, in the view of the Senior Pastor the church has just one vision; he dictates this to the researcher as:

“REACHING ONE SO THAT EACH ONE MAY REACH ONE”.

He claims the vision is formed from 2 Tim.2:2: ‘Take the teachings that you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, and entrust them to reliable people, who will be able to teach others also’ (Good News Bible).

He sees the distinctiveness of the church in the “proclamation of the unpolluted word of God”. The elders agree, stating that preaching and practicing the whole Gospel truth is what gives the church the cutting edge it has over others.

3.8.4.6 Ministry Structure and Key Pillars

Altogether the church has a total of 12 departments that offer ministry opportunities to members. Key leaders are chosen to head each ministry, for example the Ladies ministry is headed by a Chair Lady, Men ministry by a Chairman, while the Youth has a Patron. Each ministry or group has goals and objectives that are formulated at the beginning of every year. They plan what they are to achieve in each year based on the general vision of the church that the Pastor gives as well as the specific vision generated by the group itself.

Two of the ministers give the following summarized outline of the objectives of the departments.

- Home Cell Department. To facilitate home fellowships in houses of members as centres for teaching, bonding and equipping the laity for ministry.
- Youth Department. To create a conducive environment for interaction among youths, and to raise them for the work of the ministry in their areas of talents and gifting.
- Ladies Department. To encourage fellowships among ladies that would enhance family and spiritual life and provide help to cope with life challenges.
- Men's Department. To empower men for ministry and to teach them how to lead and cater for the family.
- Mission Department. To equip disciples and send them out for the work of soul winning.
- Ushering Department. To assist in hospitality work during service and to collect offerings.
- Sunday School Department. To teach and empower young children in the house of God from the Baby Class to Teenage Class.
- Praise and Worship Department. To lead the church in worship and praise sessions.
- Choir. To minister to the church through music.
- Intercessory Ministry. To pray for the church as led by the Spirit.
- Church Development Committee. To focus on issues surrounding the church's building and development.
- Willing Workers Department. To keep the church building and environment regularly washed and cleaned for congregants' use.

The observed mass involvement of the members in ministry may not be unconnected with the varied opportunities to serve that the church provides, depending on individual talents and gifting in the body of Christ (cf. Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12).

3.8.4.7 Church growth evolution: 1988-1999 and 2000—2009

By the end of 1999, the Gospel Revival Centre had existed for eight years. Contrary to a much lower figure given by the Senior Pastor by the time of his appointment, an elder who joined the church in December 1996 quoted an attendance of 400 members at the end of

that year. Findings from an interview with the full-time ministers and leaders show the attendance at the end of 1999 was about 500 members, and around 3 000 by 2009. Since the researcher was not invited to preach or speak in the services of the church, unlike the rest five congregations in the research, he did an actual counting of the chairs provided for congregants at one of his visits, and estimated that with three services every Sunday, the figure of about 3 000 given for membership is reasonable, if allowance is made for an overflow of congregants into the church yard during worship times.



Figure 16: Gospel Revival Centre Church, Sunday Worship Service, English Session, 21/2/2010

A decadal growth from 500 to 3 000 between 2000 and 2009 is a 500% “incredible” church growth on the measuring scale of Waymire and Wagner (1980:15). The Pastor adds that the last decade witnessed such a “sharp growth” that membership strength jumped within three years by about 1 000 members. The factors responsible for this are discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

3.8.4.8 Urban church planting work

According to one of the elders, the vision of the church is to plant two churches annually. However, this has not been accomplished as other elder claims that no church has been planted in the last four years. Nevertheless, the church has planted two vibrant and growing churches in the course of its over 15 years of existence. Both congregations were started as home cells. The first, according to the Senior Pastor is located at Uthiru. It was planted in the early 1990s. He says of the congregation “I nurtured it and it has now become a big church with over 300 members”. The other is in Muthueni part of the city. The branch, according to the Senior Pastor “was equally a home cell at take-off. Now it is a full church with about 220 people”.

3.8.4.9 Urban Social Mission Involvement

The church has a primary school with about 100 pupils. It is located on the church premises. The researcher visited the school and found it minimally equipped to take care, perhaps, of the children from families in the low income group within the church. Other areas of urban mission involvement of the church that are identified by the Pastor includes running another school with about 70 pupils in one of the daughter churches; some community-based projects, called ‘Mercy Missions’ that target needy children; community cleaning activities through the urban mission team; and liaising with the entire community to create awareness on social issues.

Findings show the church is equally committed to hospital and prison ministries in the Nairobi metropolis. The leaders claim that church members “visit, assist, help and preach” at orphanages, old people’s homes, and provide succour for street children.

3.8.4.10 Urban Mission Challenges in Nairobi

The challenges facing the church as an urban institution in Nairobi are grouped into three categories. The first is political, especially the fall-out of the political crisis that engulfed the nation in the aftermath of the 2007 rigged election. The Pastor says of it: “Our church was affected because we have about 20 communities, out of a total of 42 in Kenya,

represented in the church. The national strife and disturbances penetrated the fibre of the church”. An elder claims that politics remain a “problematic issue” that the Gospel Revival Centre Church needs to deal with at all times. Others claim that national tribal differences exercise much influence on the church, polarizing its members and influencing the direction of its activities.

The second challenge the church faces regularly is economic. Most of the church members are drawn from the nearby Kawangware Slum. They are needy and financially unstable. The church goes beyond being concerned over their spiritual welfare to their physical support. The Senior Pastor describes their condition: “Some come complaining they have no food to eat. Others come in tattered cloth. The church has to raise cloth and food supply from the general membership to support these needy people from time to time”. The church elders say that this has put much financial constraint on the church.

On the religious plain, the church faces challenges from major mainstream denominations that do not so much welcome Pentecostal movements in the country and see them as threats. The issue of “false doctrine” being propagated in the society is equally identified as a challenge the church constantly needs to deal with. As an urban society, “Nairobians” are much influenced by secularism and nominalism.

Other challenges facing the church and Christianity in Nairobi are the constraint of space for the extension of the church worship hall; the recent prohibition of the use of electronic instruments that cause loud noise during overnight meetings; and the governmental demand on churches to pray at low pitch in night meetings.

3.8.5 Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora

3.8.5.1 Introduction

The historical account of the origin and expansion of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora (PAG) that is recorded below is provided extensively by the Senior Pastor, Rev. Simon Alovi; the Associate Pastor, Rev. Ephraim Mudave; together with eighteen other elders and group leaders of various ministries in the church. The researcher was a

guest preacher and participant observer on the growth of the church for two years.²⁰ He revisited and observed the church on Sundays of 28th February and 7th March, on the occasion of present research, in order to verify information given from interviews and questionnaires on the study.



Figure 17: Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Dandora, Swahili second Worship Service on 28/2/2010

3.8.5.2 Church and Ministerial Profile

Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora (PAG) is located in Phase 2 of Dandora Estate. The estate, together with Embakasi, Kariobangi South, Kayole, Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Njiru, Ruai, and Umoja form the administrative Embakasi Division of Nairobi

²⁰ See Atoyebi, Peter O. 2008. The impact of house fellowships in numerical church growth: A case study of New Dandora Pentecostal Church in Nairobi, Kenya. Unpublished M.Div. thesis. Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

City province. The estate is surrounded by three of Nairobi's major low income settlements and thus serves as "home to the lower and lower- middle classes of the society. The NDPC draws its members from these classes" (Atoyebi 2008:3).

Rev. Simon Alovi, a Luhya by tribe, has been the Senior Pastor of the church since February 2003. He is married with children, serves as full-time minister and pursues a masters' degree in Bible and Theology. Besides ministering at the local PAG church, he serves as the District Overseer over 52 churches and pastors in Nairobi and is the current National Council Chairman of Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Kenya.

The Associate Pastor, Rev. Ephraim Mudave, is of high pedigree. Though deeply involved in pastoral responsibilities and leadership training in the local church, his full-time work is serving as Chief Librarian of the African International University, Nairobi. He holds two Master Degrees, one in Librarianship from United Kingdom and the other in Missions Studies from NEGST/AIU. He says of his weekly church chores "I oversee the Youth Ministry department of the church, hold periodic three to four monthly meetings with the cell group leaders and coordinators. I am tasked with the follow up of the cell system so every Sunday I go through the register of every cell group to monitor what is happening at the cell group level".

PAG is known for its aggressive home cell groups by which it combs the Estate for Christ in the art of soul winning. This it does through praying for material needs of the urban poor in the Estate, preaching the word of God in clustered dwellings of high rise houses and attempting to disciple converts by the means of what Magnuson (1977:34) called: "carelessly preaching the religion of Jesus Christ to the outcasts of society".

Elder Kariuki, a board member in the church, describes the result of the "carelessly preaching" method of the church, especially towards the dreaded Mungiki Cultural Group:

"The church took the word of God to the residents, especially the gang members. Prayer meetings and Keisha (night vigils) were held for divine intervention and needed change in the affairs of the community. At the end of the day, the situation turned around and today in the

same estate, anyone can walk round freely day and night and hold mobiles and keep valuables in the house without gang members coming for such. All these are results of the urban mission work of the church, especially in its outreach to the youths that formed the nucleus of the Mungiki gang”.

On its standard of faith, the church, like its national body, claims to be fundamental in belief with the Bible as rule of faith. It maintains “a firm spiritual and doctrinal background” that has kept the church well grounded against every wind of doctrine and propels the members to move forward as ambassadors of Christ, waiting for his second coming (Kavaya 2003:24).

3.8.5.3 Church Historical Perspective

As already alluded to in this chapter, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) church in Kenya was established by Canadian missionaries. Originally, the missionaries had run the society as a complete mission organization with the headquarters in Kisumu in western Kenya. PAG was however given the legality to operate as a church in 1934 in a crucial meeting “held under the then Kisumu P.C. of the colonial government” (Kavaya 2003:10). The church was handed over to indigenous leadership in 1949, following the major changes instituted by the church under the then General Superintendent, Rev. R. Upton (Kavaya 2003:18).

The Nairobi district later opened with a church that sprout from a prayer meeting held at the compound of a white man called Lord Brown by some “young men from Maragoli” (Kavaya 2003:12). According to the Associate Pastor, Rev. Ephraim Mudave, “the New Dandora branch is an offshoot of the main branch in Kariobangi, about five kilometres away”. However, it operates as an independent congregation.

The Senior Pastor traced the beginning of the local branch to a meeting of three members of the denomination that took place under a tree around 1981, initiating the start of the congregation. From there, the City Council gave the church a big plot in Nairobi South

called Dandora Phase 2. However, due to lack of fund, the church could not meet up the payment and ended up with just an acre left unsold to other bidders by the Council.

From a small mud building, the church is presently housed in a big compound with permanent structures, including a work-in-progress school building. The Senior Pastor puts the present membership at over 700, “apart from daughter churches, which when added together would give about 2,000 members that the New Dandora local branch has influenced into the faith of Jesus Christ”.

3.8.5.4 Church Governance: an Overview

The Senior Pastor is at the helm of affairs of the church, assisted by the Associate Pastor. Both handle the preaching and teaching ministry of the church, and are the congregation’s vision carriers. The Associate Pastor delegates for the Senior Pastor on almost all things, especially as the Senior Pastor combines the local branch’s responsibilities with his roles as District Overseer and National Chairman of Kenya PAG.

A Church Board serves as the Governing Council of the congregation. It consists of 15 leaders, five of whom are elected by members, and remaining number being co-opted. The board has three-fold responsibilities: to come up with policies that govern the various activities of the church, to communicate the said policies to all organs concerned, and to supervise the church departments and zones for effective implementation of formulated policies.

For effective implementation of church policies, each department is headed by a Director who is assisted by the departmental board. The church is also divided into 4 Zones with four zone leaders at the helm of affairs. The effective functioning of the home cells is the responsibility of the Zone leaders. Though the departments and zones could formulate helpful policies at their levels, they must be approved by the Church Board before implementation. The cell system serves the evangelistic contact of the church with the neighbourhoods.

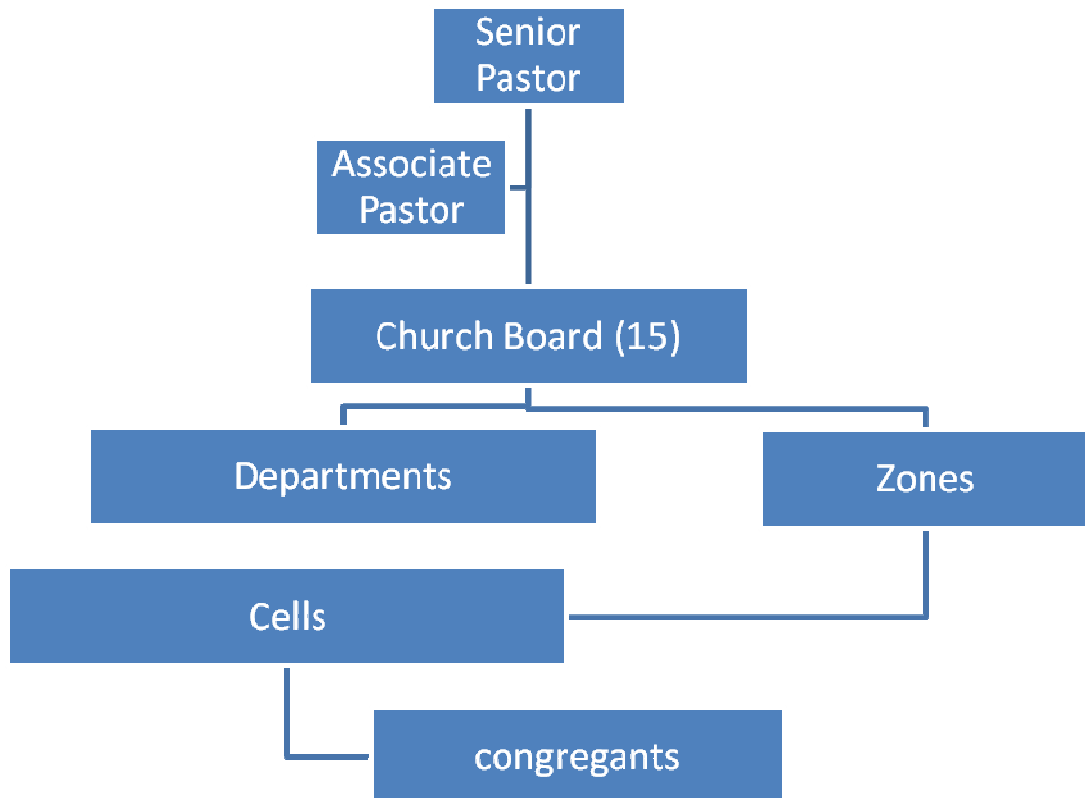


Figure 18: Organogram of Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora

3.8.5.5 Vision, Mission and Congregational characteristics

The church does not have an articulate vision and mission statement. However, both the pastors and leaders seem to be clear on where the congregation is going and how to get there. For the Senior Pastor the destination is: “To have in ten years a church of 10,000 sitting members and complete with all the mushroom churches in the city”.

The Associate Pastor endeavours to formulate what may eventually be voted as the goal of the church-in-mission. He puts it down for the researcher as stated below.

VISION: To be a church known for holistic approach to ministry.

MISSION: To bring everybody on board and provide teaching that enlightens the congregation regarding the will of God for both their spiritual and social life, and to impart skills through educating the children of the urban society.

Findings show that the church is perceived to be distinct by its detribalized outlook in the community. An elder, board member paints the picture vividly when he says:

”Ours is a detribalized church. We have up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tribes in Kenya in attendance. We are unique in the sense that every tribe is accommodated. No one can detect any major tribe in our congregation because we don’t use vernaculars. We preach in English and interpret into Kiswahili. People like coming as they see an all-inclusive church. This is significant in the contemporary Kenya where churches are identified with tribes and leaders love it so in order to keep their tribal flock. In our church, we have up to 6 tribes in the leadership structure”.

In the view of the Associate Pastor, what makes the church tick is “the teaching of the word of God. We take a lot of time to exalt the teaching of the word. This brings a lot of positive response from the congregation. It gives the niche we have above the churches around us”.

Others exalt the uniqueness of the church in the atmosphere of friendliness that characterizes its meetings. Concern for one another is demonstrated from the first Sunday service a newcomer attends. There is a congregational welcome by all worshippers, followed by an open self-introduction. From there the hospitality team, composed of three members, usher them into a ten-minute introductory meeting on who the leaders are and what the church offers. This helps them to know what to expect, even as it brings them out of the cocoon of a visitor.

The next step in integration process comes after three or four Sundays when a meeting is arranged for all new comers with the leadership of the church under the auspices of the Pastor. It is a café fellowship intended to build rapport between the new comers and the pastor they have been seeing on the pulpit for awhile. According to one of the church elders, “this is the friendliness that distinguishes our church from many other congregations where visitors could be welcome in an open Sunday service, clapped for and abandoned from the first contact”.

3.8.5.6 Ministry Structure and Key Pillars

The ministry structure of Dandora PAG is built on four main pillars, the Ladies ministry, the Youth ministry, the Cell group system and the Sunday school. Officers in the women ministry include the Women director, secretary, treasurer, and a women board of ten ladies. The Youth ministry has a youth director, youth executive secretary, treasurer, and a youth board of ten members in charge of formulating policies. Other departments operate in a similar manner.

3.8.5.7 Church growth evolution:1988-1999 and 2000-2009



Figure 19: Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora, Sunday Worship Service on 28/2/2010

In the research conducted regarding the numerical growth of the church in 2008 by the researcher (cf. Atoyebi 2008) and findings from present interviews conducted on the church leaders, there is unanimous agreement that the estimated membership of the church between 1988 and 1999 is 120. This rose to 500 in 2007 when cell groups were introduced and to about 700 in 2009.

A numerical rise from 120 to 700 within a decade gives 483% church growth per decade, a score that is adjudged “outstanding” on the rating scale provided by Waymire and Wagner (1980:5).

3.8.5.8 Urban church planting work

Four daughter churches have been planted by the PAG, New Dandora, all at an approximate two to three kilometres from the main church. One example is Dandora Phase 5 church, planted about twelve years ago by a part of the congregation that lives at a farther part of the Estate. Primal in the heart of the church is the concern to cater for the spiritual welfare of mothers who want to come to church but could not undertake the long distance involved from their residences. Ever since, the church seeks for ways of planting branch churches at walking distances to the homes of congregants.

3.8.5.9 Urban Social Mission Involvement

A notable achievement of the church is in curbing the menace of the terrorizing Mungiki gang that for long robbed the Estate of peace and valuables. The following account of the hazards to which the community was subjected came from the lips of an elder in the church who had been a member since 1981. He was an eye witness of the notorious activities of the group and the response of the church to checkmate them.

The terror group came up with a tax system of its own, not known to the state, and residents were forced to pay to the gang. It claimed it was giving security to residents and helping to collect garbage for disposal, but the claims were false. Residents lived in terror especially at night. A refusal to pay the demanded ransom exposed individuals to attack.

So many people were killed and their bodies mutilated. In those times, it was a common sight for residents to wake up in the mornings and find bodies thrown on the road.

As the church took the word of God to the residents, special attention was paid to the gang members. Prayer meetings and Keisha (night vigils) were held for divine intervention and needed change in the affairs of the community. At the end of the day, the situation turned around and today in the same estate, anyone can walk around freely day and night and hold mobiles and keep valuables in the house without gang members coming for them. All these are results of the urban mission work of the church, especially in its outreach to the youths that formed the nucleus of the Mungiki gang.

3.8.5.10 Urban Mission Challenges in Nairobi

A number of challenges confront the urban mission work of the Dandora Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church. The following are identified by the majority of leaders interviewed and are recorded as they expressed them.

FINANCE

Financial difficulties remain a major hindrance to doing God's work in the Estate where the church is located. It is normal to have planned open air meetings postponed or cancelled due to financial constraints on the budget of the church. Furthermore, the church is surrounded by three slums of pathetic human situation that calls for financial assistance to those being reached with the Gospel. The urban dwellers of informal settlements constitute the group the Bible says cannot be told to "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed" but doing nothing about their physical needs (James 2:16). When needed finance is not forthcoming, the outreach mission is affected and church growth slows down.

'CHURCH TRIBE'

Church tribe is another bane in doing gospel work in Dandora Estate. There are people that hold the notion that a church branch belongs to a particular tribe, especially that of the pastor and of the core leadership. Generally, denominations are patterned along tribes in

Nairobi and it takes a great deal of effort to persuade would-be converts that all creation belong to God and that divine invitation to salvation is a call to Jesus and not to the tribe of the soul winner or of the pastor on the pulpit.

TRANSPORTATION

Another problem is the difficulty of means of transport to reach out to members and visitors in need of counselling and visitation in their domicile. This is a fall-out of the financial handicap of members who having neither personal cars nor fare for transportation have to resort to walking round a vast Estate to do deeds of kindness. The exhaustion that follows from such trekking limits follow-up and conservation work.

DENOMINATIONAL CONSTRAINT

A denominational challenge confronting the church is in the fact that it is only fully independent on paper. References still need to be made to the mother church before the congregation could embark on projects or implement major decisions, its thirty years of existence notwithstanding.

SPLINTER GROUPS

Splinter groups do spring up from time to time from different churches scouting for members to form new congregations. This has retarded what could have been a phenomenal growth for the church over the years. The situation is aggravated as members hop from one church to another, a phenomenon that characterizes Christianity in Nairobi and poses major threat to the discipleship program of the church.

ECONOMIC STATUS

Perhaps there is no challenge as daring as what the church faces on the economic plane as a result of the poor economic status of its members and leaders. This is the result of the church not being located at an affluence centre of the city but close to Korogocho low income settlement, one of the major slums in Nairobi- Korogocho. The location naturally

dictates the income level of majority of the members and decides the extent to which the church could execute gospel projects.

3.8.6 Uthiru Pentecostal Church, Uthiru

3.8.6.1 Introduction



Figure 20: Uthiru Pentecostal Church, Sunday Worship Service in Swahili on 14/3/2010

The historical account and mission activities of Uthiru Pentecostal Church (UPC) recorded here is given by Bishop Julius Maina, the senior pastor and founder of the congregation, and by eleven of the leaders that serve with him as Associate Pastors and members of the Eldership Group in different interview sessions with the researcher. The researcher

authenticated some of the information during his several visits to the church. During one such visit on Sunday, 14 March 2010, he addressed the congregation during the worship service on the objectives of this research and interacted with leaders and members on the denomination's vision and mission for ministry in the city.

3.8.6.2 Church and Ministerial Profile

UPC is an African Instituted Church (AIC) founded sixteen years ago in the Kikuyu indigenous community area of Uthiru. Administratively, Uthiru location is in Dagoretti division, one of the eight that forms the Nairobi City province. The location shares boundaries with Riruta and Kawangware. The community is densely inhabited by low income groups from almost all tribes of Kenya and few foreigners, especially Sudanese. However, the Kikuyu seems to be the dominant tribe. Petty trading, hawking, transportation are the main economic activities of the residents. The religious atmosphere does not strongly differ from what operates in the entire city with many of the residents largely unchurched.

Married to one wife and armed with a Diploma in Theology, the Bishop/ Founder of UPC, a Kikuyu by tribe, acted contrary to norm when he planted a multiracial church, using only English and Kiswahili in worship services among his people group. His courage yielded many dividends as the many non-Kikuyu in the locality eventually were attracted to the services and made the congregation their home church. However, this was only after many years of membership stagnation due to a wait-and-see attitude of both the outsiders and the indigenous peoples.

Professional training from a three-year Bible School and a ten-year on-the-field experience in preaching with the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Kenya (IPHC) seems to have fully equipped Julius Maina to come through as a man with a strong passion for biblical preaching and teaching ministry. He proudly announces this to the researcher: "I do not compromise on the Bible on pulpit. It is my strong point". To him this is the key that pulled the church out of its years of stagnation on 50 members to having the 600 congregants that presently worship in three Sunday services every week.

The Associate Pastor, Elisha Mamati Patisi, is not less equipped for ministry. He is a trained clergy with a Bachelor in Bible Theology, and doubles as a trained professional counsellor, holding a Diploma in psychological counselling. His skill in planning the urban missions' involvement of the church comes from a further training that earns him a diploma in Community Development. He has his hands full in the work of the church, from serving in pastoral duties to directing the guidance and counselling department and overseeing the young adults in the church.

3.8.6.3 Church Historical Perspective

Bishop and founder of UPC, Julius Maina narrated the following historical account of the church.

The church began in 1993, two years into the Bible school training of the founder of the church. It came as a fulfilment of the vision he received from the Lord prompting him to begin the ministry though having a year to graduate from college. The opportunity to start the new church was offered by the weekends that were always free for students to ply the trade of choice.

For his free weekends, Maina chose to live among his Kikuyu kinsmen in the Uthiru suburb of Nairobi City. He rented a bachelor's room (he got married only a year after beginning the ministry) and started the church right there from scratch. "It was a ministry started as one man church". Eventually a young man joined him and before long a church of 5 members was formed. They gave themselves to evangelizing the community and recorded a membership of 200 in the first seven years of ministry. Starting a Pentecostal congregation was not easy then because most of the people in the community owed their allegiance to mainstream denominations like the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), and Roman Catholic. Getting members to attend an indigenous Pentecostal congregation was like passing a camel through the needle's eye.

Today, the church has about 600 worshippers on Sunday (the Associate Pastor puts attendance at between 800 and 1,000). Though highly constrained by finance for

infrastructural development, the congregants joyfully worship in an uncompleted building without closed walls or ceiling roof. Three worship services are held every Sunday at 6.30am, 8.00am and 10.30am. The Founder proudly announces to the researcher: “We have raised approximately 30 ministers who minister in different pastoral capacities, some remaining under me and others who have joined other ministries”.

3.8.6.4 Church Governance: an Overview

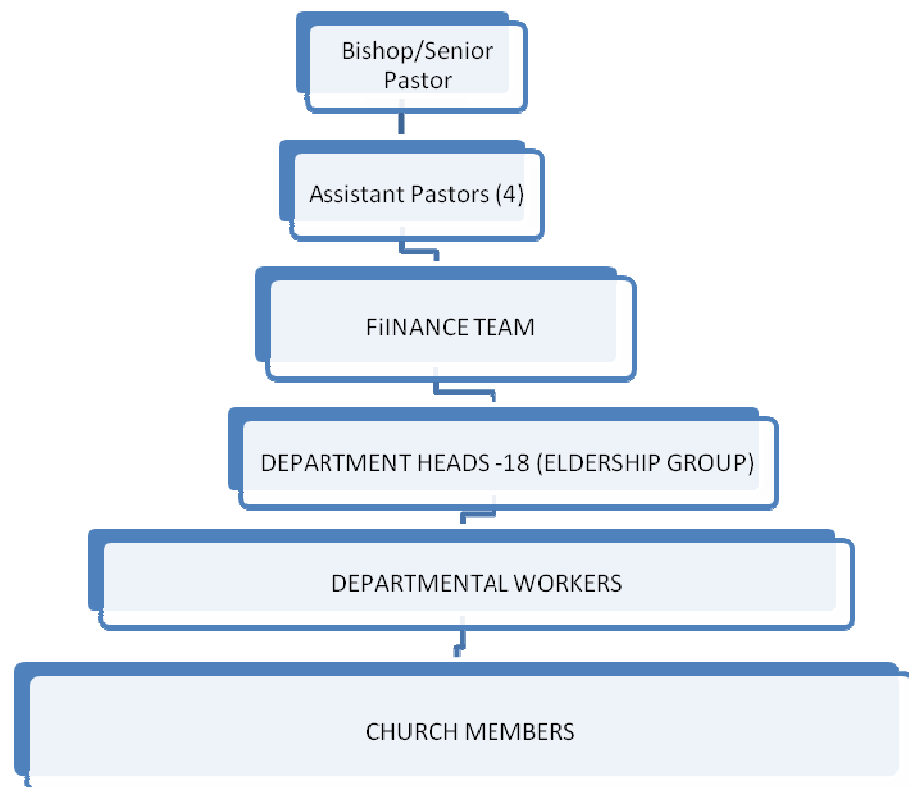


Figure 21: Organogram of Uthiru Pentecostal Church

Sitting on top of the pyramid of the organogram of UPC is the Bishop/Founder who serves as the Senior Pastor of the church (Fig.21). The four assistant pastors form the Pastoral Committee/Department and labour along with the Senior Pastor on the spiritual care of the flock, especially in pulpit and counselling ministries.

The financial team follows the pastoral department in hierarchical responsibility. The team plans the finance of the church and manages its physical development. Next are eighteen departmental leaders that form the eldership of the church. The policy of the church on

eldership, according to the Bishop, is that a person is a leader because he or she is leading, this by implication means “If your department collapses, you cease to be a leader or elder”. This keeps departmental leaders and workers on their toes in ensuring the success of the ministry committed to their departments.

3.8.6.5 Vision, Mission and Congregational Distinctive

The church states its vision and mission statements as follows:

VISION: A place where Jesus will be seen.

MISSION: Practical communication of God’s love to all mankind through delivery of God’s word and creation of opportunities for people to serve God with joy and gladness.

The pastors and leaders see the uniqueness of the church in the labour of its ministers to have a people who will know God from biblical perspectives, people who are well embedded with knowledge of God’s word. The Senior Pastor puts this in perspective: “I like to build a bible-oriented church”. An assistant pastor confirms, saying “here in UPC, we do not joke with the preaching of the word. Unlike some churches that emphasise healing, we insist that the only thing that will build the people that worship here is the word of God”.

3.8.6.6 Ministry Structure and Key Pillars

The church emphasises what it calls the “main streams ministries”, though without prejudice to the other areas of church service. These are four of the 18 departments that execute its internal edification and external evangelization goals. They are Men ministry, Women ministry, Youth ministry (including teens of 13 to 19 years of age) and the Sunday school.

Others include an evangelism department, discipleship team, intercessors, praise and worship team, and choir among others. Each of the departments is headed by a leader who

by virtue of his/her appointment is an elder and serves in the Eldership Group of the church for as long as his/her department is judged fruitfully abiding.

3.8.6.7 Church growth evolution:1988-1999 and 2000-2009



Figure 22: Late afternoon service at UPC on Sunday, 21/3/2010

The growth of UPC was evidently slow at the beginning of founding the church. Attendance for the first year was about five members. However, it rose rapidly to around 200 towards the end of the 1990s (one of the pastors actually joined the church at this time and gave the researcher the figure). By 2009, the church had already broken out of its long stagnation period on 200 to counting about 600 members.

A rise in membership from 200 to 600 within ten years gives a 200% church growth per decade. Waymire and Wagner (1980:15), in their scale for measuring church growth, rate this percentage an “excellent” score.

3.8.6.8 Urban church planting work

UPC has reproduced itself in many places since inception. More than seven churches have been planted in and outside Nairobi city. The first born church is Keno Pentecostal Church, a nearby congregation to the mother church with about 250 members. Others include but are not limited to the two branches in Thika, one each in Rongai, Muiki, Kangeri, Munragai, and in Nakuru.

The church maintains a mission department that targets non-Kenyans in its church planting work. A nearby Sudanese church that was recently planted is reportedly thriving. A second one is planted in Kawangware. There is also a Somali congregation planted in Eastleigh with about five regular members. The congregation is known to face challenging Islamic difficulties, which has left membership very unstable over the years.

The church planting process in the church starts when an individual makes the church know of his calling. Once the gifts of God in such individuals are identified by church elders, they are requested to name locations or communities of their calling or interest. Church members are encouraged and motivated to help in provision of needed equipment, payment of rent and other basic needs, then the individuals are released to the field to commence the new branch with further support until the church grows and become self-supporting.

3.8.6.9 Urban Social Mission Involvement

Presently the UPC runs a primary school under its Community Development Education Organization. The aim is to lay a foundation of quality education for children in the community.

Furthermore, in its effort to be urban relevant, the UPC runs an interdenominational theological training class for Gospel preachers in Nairobi city. It is geared towards capacity building in ministry in order to advance *missio Dei* in urban settings. There is also the young adults department that reaches out to the whole city on positive moral

change among youths through public seminars involving various speakers from different backgrounds and church affiliations.

On community work, the church encourages the formation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that raise awareness and provide assistance in the fields of education, agriculture and health. An example is the recently registered Sky Brighter International Relief Organization as an arm of the International Gospel Acts Ministry (IGAM), the umbrella ministry of UPC.

The church recognizes the limitations of the state in meeting the needs of the citizenry, especially in the domain of education, judging by the number of school age children that are out of the school system. The plan is to set up low cost colleges in the community that would absorb some of the graduates from the secondary school into a form of tertiary education.

In the domain of provision of health care services, Assistant Pastor Elisha Patisi speaks of the plan to operate clinics “because not everybody in the country can access the hospitals”. Regarding agriculture, he laments the high dependency of the country on the seasons of the year to produce food. He says, “With the awkward seasonal changes in rainfall, food production gets increasing low leading to hunger in the nation. Our goal is to teach farmers to see how to farm beyond the dependency on seasonal rainfall”.

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3.8.6.10 Urban Mission Challenges in Nairobi

The first challenge the church had to contend with is financial. It took time for the church to find acceptance from the community and support from fellow ministers. This was a great burden to a church that started from scratch, especially as the need arose to pay for rent of house and church premises. The matter was more complicated in the beginning with the unmarried status of the founder; many could not fathom putting their trust and finance in such an ‘irresponsible’ gospel minister. The constant financial problem slows down the running of the church organization. One of the leaders put it succinctly: “Limitation of finance may just not make some things to happen, no matter how much the church wishes”.

Again there was denominational bias on the side of the community natives. They had been Anglican for centuries and openly voiced their unwillingness to receive an indigenous Pentecostal church in the community. Acceptance came with time, but penetrating the community to make them own the church, as it is presently witnessed, could only be called an act of God.

The ‘stranger’ status of the founder, as a Kikuyu from a different community became very pronounced with negative consequences when the church started to organise its services in English and Swahili rather than in Kikuyu, as expected and practiced by the mainline denominations in the community. The natives interpreted the move as a betrayal of tribal allegiance and a simple way of telling tribesmen to keep off. Recalling the ordeal he passed through and how it turned to a blessing in disguise, the Bishop/Founder says:

“I started to organise our services in English and Kiswahili though I am a Kikuyu also by tribe. I refused to be identified as Kikuyu and that the church is not a Kikuyu church. This became difficult for my tribesmen to swallow but opened the door for me to reach out to other tribes. They felt they have a place they could call home. However they still looked at me suspiciously that maybe I will one day turn back to the kikuyu to make the congregation their church. It took time to prove them wrong and that this is an international church. Now the tide is turned. We have a multi-ethnic congregation that is opened to all tribes, with over 15 tribes now in the leadership and ministry. We worked out the delicate balance to make everybody feels belonging. We build a Kenyan church, and there are other nationalities like Burundians, Tanzanians, and Sudanese in attendance.”

One challenge that has remained with the church is the problem of unstable membership in a rolling city like Nairobi where people go in and out in a migratory process. The high turnover of people in the community means leadership has to change hands frequently. It is difficult to count on a good number of permanent people that the church will be sure of

for a sufficiently long time. This affects both discipleship and leadership development plans of the congregation.

Another recurring challenge is spatial. The church for all its years of existence has been worshipping on a piece of land on lease. A sales price of about nine (9) million Kenya shillings (approximately \$120,000) has been put on the property. With no particular donor to turn to but the members, the church risks losing its impoverished members who generally opt out of church whenever they perceive fund raising for projects to be too many and hugely tasking.

3.9 CONCLUSION

3.9.1 Outline of some common features in origin and expansion of the six churches

The six churches share some common features in their origin and expansion. Some of these are outlined below in order to fully appreciate the enormous challenges facing urban mission work in Nairobi and the commitment of these churches to overcome or work through them to become turnaround congregations. Some of the features will be explained in detail in chapter 6 because they significantly contribute to the revitalization of those churches and are most fit for discussion under the factors of revitalization.

- Origin of the six churches:

Three of the churches trace their origin to mission churches that brought Christianity to Kenya. African Inland Church (AIC) is the offshoot of African Inland Mission from ; Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora (PAG) is one of the branches of the Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies of God; All Nations Gospel Church, Githurai (ANGC) stems from PEFA that broke away from the Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies of God, and though Uthiru Pentecostal Church is in the group of African Instituted Churches (AICs), the Bishop/Founder was with the International Pentecostal Holiness Church of America (IPHC) for about ten years as minister before starting his indigenous ministry. However, it

is still as much of AICs as the Deliverance Church (DC) and Gospel Revival Centre Church (GRC).

- Nationality of Senior Pastors

All the churches, except one, are shepherded at the helm by Kenyans. Three of these Senior Pastors, the shepherd of AIC, UPC, and GRC come from the same Kikuyu group. The other two leaders are from Luhya and Meru tribes. Their tribal affiliation seems to offer advantages of getting a good number of tribesmen and women into the church. The churches are completely indigenized. Notwithstanding, the only church with a missionary as Senior Pastor, the All Nations Gospel Church, scored the highest percentage of 900% church growth per decade and as indigenized in membership and leadership hierarchy as others. The closest to it in term of growth is the 400% score by AIC and PAG, both in Dandora Estate.

- Profile of the Senior Pastors

Two factors need to be noted in the profile of the senior pastors of the six churches at this stage. One is their marital status. All are married with children and significantly involve their wives in the ministry as partner. The spousal involvement ranges from major pulpit and leadership responsibilities like the post of an Associate Pastor to watching over church singers or just being occupied with the ministry of visitation and counselling. Others seem to be in the hospitality ministry.

Another factor is the longevity of time of the senior pastors on the pulpit of the turnaround churches they lead. This ranges from 7 to 19 years continuously. It seems to have contributed to the stability of the church, the sustenance of vision, and the execution of middle and long term plans for growth and development of each congregation.

- Location of congregation in Nairobi City

Though the churches were randomly selected from lists recommended by the Missions and Church History Department of African International Universities and Church Leaders in

Nairobi, the six churches coincidentally were found in only three of Nairobi's 8 administrative divisions and in equal numbers of two per division. GRC, Riruta and UPC Uthiru are located in Dagoretti Division; PAG, Dandora and AIC, Dandora at Embakasi Division; and DC, Githurai together with ANGC, Githurai are situated in Kasarani Division.

- Denominational Tradition

All six churches are Protestants with 5 from the Pentecostal block and one (AIC, Dandora) from Mainline, but worshipping in 'the Pentecostal way'. The worship atmosphere is characterized by joyful expressions, personal liberty of expression in dance and praise accompanied by western modes of musical instruments.

- Members' economic status

All the churches are located among the low income groups of Nairobi City. Though each seems to have a minimal number of middle income group congregants, the largest adherents are drawn from nearby informal settlements, especially of Korogocho, Kayole, Mukuru Kwa Njenga and Kawangware. This poses great challenges regarding the finance of the church as it gets involved in the welfare of the poor members and struggles to raise fund for church projects.

- Spatial constraints

All the churches, except AIC, Dandora, complain of not having enough land space for expansion. This is both as a result of poor financial capability of the congregations as well as non-availability of land for purchase from Nairobi City Council for churches that could afford it.

- Poor formation of vision and mission statements

Most of the churches do not seem to pay attention to formulating vision and mission statements. The researcher actually nudged some into doing so in the course of the

research. If divided into three groups, DC and ANGC are the two congregations with documented vision and mission statements. While the DC publishes this weekly in the church bulleting, the ANGC keep its own in the church archive. The Pastors of UPC and PAG have a faint knowledge of theirs but do not have them documented for the awareness of members. The GRC and AIC do not seem to know or write their statements before meeting with the researcher.

- Commitment to church planting

The majority of the churches show commitment to church planting activities. With an average of two to five congregations within 15 to 20 years, it seems to the researcher to be a remarkable effort considering the huge urban challenges faced by each congregation, especially in the domain of finance for mission activities.

- Role of educational institution in urban mission

Education seems to top the priority of the six churches in term of urban social mission involvement. Five of the churches have primary schools either already running or the structures in preparation for take-off on the church premises. The only congregation that does not have a school in the church yard is the ANGC, and it provides bus services to take community children to schools apart from its own established computer class of tertiary education that operates in the church premises.

3.9.2 Overview of decadal growth ratings of the six churches²¹

Table 1: Percentage church growth per decade of 2000-2009 of the six churches

CHURCH	1988-1999	2000-2009	GROWTH %	RATING (by Waymire & Wagner)
1. AFRICAN INLAND CHURCH, DANDORA	100	600	500%	“INCREDIBLE”
2. ALL NATIONS GOSPEL CHURCH, GITHURAI	200	3,000	1400%	“INCREDIBLE”
3. DELIVERANCE CHURCH, GITHURAI.	250	1,000	300%	“OUTSTANDING”
4. GOSPEL REVIVAL CENTRE CHURCH, RIRUTA.	500	3,000	500%	“INCREDIBLE”
5. DANDORA PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF GOD	120	700	483%	“OUTSTANDING”
6. UTHIRU PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, UTHIRU	200	600	200%	“EXCELLENT”

As shown above in Table 1, three of the turnaround churches, ANGK (1400%), GRCC (500%) and AIC (500%) have an “incredible” church growth per decade, on the rating for church growth provided by Waymire and Wagner (1980:15). This is followed by the “outstanding” score performances of PAG (483%), and DC (300%). A score of “excellent” or 200% is attained by the UPC congregation within the period under review. Their experiences confirm that given the right spiritual and denominational atmospheres, any urban church can experience phenomenal growth with an excellent rating within a decade. It confirms Jesus’ comparison of the growth of God’s kingdom with that of the mustard seed. He says in the parable of the mustard seed:

²¹ See Waymire, Bob and Wagner, C. Peter. 1980. The Church growth survey handbook. Santa Clara CA: Global Church Growth Bulletin, p.15

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." Mt. 13:31, 32

However, the reality in many urban settings in Africa, Nairobi inclusive, is the increasing numbers of small stagnant churches. Some of these churches, as reported by Gifford (2004:38) from the Ghanaian context, are mainline. The majority all around Africa could be Pentecostals, especially in the informal or low income settlements of the city. Analyzing the specific case of Gatwikera, an urban 'village' in Kibera low income settlement of Nairobi, Smith writes:

"It is possible to pass five or six churches in a space of fifty metres, and in one school, four churches meet in separate classrooms with thin sheets of plywood forming the only barrier between each congregation. Of the sixty churches, three are mainline protestant, the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventists also have congregations in the community, and there is one Baptist Church. The remainder...could be broadly classified as either Pentecostal churches or AICs. However, the abundance of churches does not signify exaggerated levels of church attendance. Many of these churches have less than twenty members, with perhaps half having less than thirty. It is these churches...which form the majority Christian presence in places like Kibera" (Smith 2007:68).

Smith does not investigate the years of existence of these churches and the factors that keep them stagnant over the years. However, his research confirms that though the seed of growth is divinely planted by Christ in his body, the church, the reality of stagnation is the experience of many congregations in urban settings like Nairobi. The following chapter investigates the factors responsible for this stagnation over the years in six select churches in Nairobi metropolis.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 FACTORS OF CHURCH STAGNATION IN NAIROBI: CASE FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to come up with perceived growth factors in the six select turnaround churches of Nairobi and to propose a possible model that is feasible to revitalize a stagnant church in the city. In this chapter, the data findings and analysis of the factors of stagnation in the six churches are reported. The aim is to answer the third research question: What are the perceptions of the church leadership and members of the six (6) churches on church stagnation in Nairobi city?

To provide answers to this research question, 100 respondents were interviewed. They include all the senior pastors, associate pastors, members of the eldership boards, group/departmental leaders and selected long-term members that, in the opinion of the Senior Pastors witnessed the stagnation period of each of the six congregations. The results of the interview instruments procured the necessary data for this research question, and these are analysed and the findings presented in this chapter under the headings of each local congregation. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of the discussions on the findings from the six churches.

In order to sidestep the risk of participants being identified either by themselves or by others, a risk associated with qualitative research, the researcher opts for “the creation of composite characters, organizing representations by theme” or situation (Sinding et al. 2008:464, 465). Where narratives of individuals are preferred to plot, the use of a pseudonym takes care of the basic ethical concerns that arise when a researcher gets involved in “the art of storying other people’s experiences” (ibid. 470).

4.2 AFRICAN INLAND CHURCH, DANDORA

The following analyses from the responses given by the pastor, elders and long-term members of African Inland Church, Dandora show how the leaders and members of the AIC perceive the factors that caused the initial stagnation of the church in the city. First, we will identify the period of stagnation in the life of the congregation.

4.2.1 Period of church stagnation

Findings from interview item 11 (Appendix 2) were analysed and showed that the AIC, Dandora stagnated for a period of about ten years; precisely from 1987 to 1996. The membership during this period was around 100. Elder Batter described the ten-year period as years of friction and wrangles, saying “It is after these wrangles that the new pastor who has been in the church for ten years and had been serving as assistant pastor was elevated to the rank of a pastor in 1997”.

4.2.2 Grounds of church stagnation

Analyses of findings from interview item 12 (Appendix 2) showed that in the understanding of the leaders and members of AIC, Dandora, there are eight elements responsible for the stagnation of the church when it did. These are discussed below.

4.2.2.1 Failed leadership

Failed leadership both in pastoral lifestyle, labour and organizational management was reported by ten respondents to be the major factor in the stagnation of the AIC, Dandora. It confirms the claim by Adeyemo (2009:1) that “leadership is everything”. Moribund and morally bankrupt leadership could only lead an institution to backwardness and growthless. On the other end of the continuum “where there is dynamic, visionary, altruistic and integral leadership, you will find that the followers are forward-looking, engaging, committed and generally optimistic” (ibid.).

Research findings show specific areas of leadership problems that caused the church to stagnate. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Weak pastoral credibility

According to members of the eldership council in the church, stagnation of the church initially sets in when a pastor who had started well and preached adequately suddenly had some members challenging his moral standing and writing anonymous letters accusing him of various sins. Elder Ralph says: “He lost courage and could no longer boldly preach as before. He abandoned the congregation in annoyance to plant another branch church nearby without a replacement to carry on the ministry of shepherding the flock”. It is a problem of credibility in leadership, earning the confidence and trust of followers before they can willingly contribute their hearts, and minds to a shared cause. In all continents, institutions and organizations, it is what people “look for and admire in a leader” whose direction they would willingly follow, “leaders who are honest, forward-looking, competent, and inspiring” (Kouzes and Posner 2003: xiv).

- Wrangles among pastors

Before the time the new pastor sent from the denominational headquarters to take over the abandoned congregation could fully settle down to re-engineer the stagnant church, an order from above came, transferring him to another branch. Three of the leaders described how the pastor was so dissatisfied with the timing and place of new assignment that he refused to give up his pulpit though a new pastor was already in the congregation. The wrangles that ensued between the two pastors over one local branch left the congregation confused and further brought the growth of the church to a complete halt.

- Absentee Minister

Non-availability of the pastor when needed by congregants was another identified case of failed leadership in the congregation. In the opinion of one of leaders, Jimmy, “the pastor was much involved in the tensed denominational politics of the church and so literally left the church to run on its own while he concentrated his attention on where his interest

was”. The situation was more complicated for the flock as “each pastor had “no assistance and people were wondering on whom they could approach over their problems”. The congregation ended up being spiritually famished.

- Lack of team leadership.

For a church to function as a body and illustrated in I Cor.12, leadership in a group context to ensure harmony and effectiveness is primordial. Team leaders portray the humility of Jesus as they work with others, trust and encourage them to achieve ministry goals. AIC, Dandora for most of its years of existence lacked this. The pastor worked alone and was not reaching the people. In a response to the dilemma, congregants left in search of other churches where they could get listening ears and have their problems solved. Leadership at the top was not free with subordinates and this was openly demonstrated and known by church members who watched helplessly as leaders disagreed with one another on church policies and directions. It was difficult to give suggestions as opposing views do not see the light of day leading to a general disaffection which kept the church declining for many years.

4.2.2.2 Lack of commitment to evangelism

Leaders interviewed stated that the vision for evangelism was never well cast by the leadership nor clearly understood by the members. Not knowing their biblical responsibility in growing the church, petty internal issues took precedence over reaching out to the lost or seeking to ground the few new believers in the faith.

4.2.2.3 Denominational politics

All the leaders interviewed agree that politics played a great part in causing the stagnation of the AIC, Dandora branch. The regulatory and supervisory roles of the headquarters over local branches, and the desire of every local pastor to be in the good book of the central controlling authority make intense church politics a regular feature of the life of the AIC. It is not simply the ‘Macedonia Call’ (Acts 16) that determines pastoral posting, neither is the period of stay of a pastor determined by the needs of the branch he oversees but by

whom he knows and how he is perceived at the headquarter of the denomination. To survive, every pastor learns how to walk the rope of church politics.

4.2.2.4 Congregational prayerlessness

Though there was a Tuesday prayer fellowships established in the residential quarters, this was never taken seriously as members hardly attended. Also, there was no central prayer fellowship that could stimulate and train the members to pray either for the life of the congregation or the work of the ministry towards the unbelieving neighbourhoods.

4.2.2.5 Neglect of biblical teaching

Neglect of biblical teaching, according to the church's departmental leaders, led to the reported spiritual impoverishment of members and leaders in the years of church stagnation. The constant movement of ministers, the unending conflicts in the congregation involving serving pastors and the desire to play ball with the power brokers at the denomination's headquarters seem to leave the pastors no time to concentrate on the work of shepherding and teaching the flock.

4.2.2.6 Communication breakdown

One obstacle that slows down the pace of church progress causing stagnation was communication breakdown. Elders and pastors constantly disagreed on almost all matters, from administrative to dogmatic. Suggestions by members to the leaders on reviving the church also fell on deaf hear, causing more friction and fractionalizing fellowships between the clergy and the laity. This left the congregation in disconnection from the leaders, leading to a near collapse of the mission of the church and of God within the congregation.

4.2.2.7 Resistance to change

The unwillingness to reform church tradition became apparent the moment a new pastor heads the AIC. Almost all pastors meet this opposition the first year of pastoral appointment. This is due to the fact that some elders were transferees from older congregations of African Inland Church where the denomination tradition are well entrenched and highly respected. The present pastor, for example, was constantly referred to the constitution of the church whenever changes that introduced Pentecostal tendencies were observed by the elders. The pastor says he has to constantly challenge dissenters with the Pauline missionary approach in his effort to bring needed changes to doing church work.

4.2.2.8 Church conflicts

Church conflict was a constant incidence in the period of stagnation of AIC, Dandora. The Local Church Council Chairman noted how the arrival of the new pastor that took over from a suddenly transferred predecessor was “marked by rancour as the ne pastor could not see eye to eye with the serving elders”. All that the denominational headquarters could do was to transfer again the new pastor to another branch rather than to identify the cause of the wrangling and offer solution.

4.3 ALL NATIONS GOSPEL CHURCH, GITHURAI

The following analyses from the responses given by the pastor, elders and long-term members of All Nations Gospel Church, Githurai, show how the leaders and members of ANGIC perceive the factors that caused the stagnation of the church in the city when it did. First, we will identify the period of stagnation in the life of the congregation.

4.3.1 Period of church stagnation

Findings from interview item 11 (Appendix 2) were analysed and showed that the ANGIC, Githurai stagnated for a period of about thirteen years divided into two periods. The first

was within the first ten years of existence of the church, between 1980 and 1990 with about 35 members. The second period of stagnation was within the few years of the appointment of the present pastor, after the church had grown from its regular 80 congregants to 200. This was between 1996 and 1999.

4.3.2 Grounds of church stagnation

Analyses of findings from interview item 12 (Appendix 2) showed that in the understanding of the leaders and members of ANGIC, Githurai, about eight key elements are responsible for the stagnation of the church. These are discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Weak church government structure

Administratively, church leaders see the possibility of the organogram of the PEFA denomination opening the gateway for rancour. The present pastor met that and equally suffered from it. He says of the potential conflict posed by placing the Board of Elders above the Pastor in decision making: “Our church administration is built strongly on Eldership. I was constantly reminded on taking over the congregation that in decision making, the elders hold 80 percent right, and the pastor 20. This poses a great administrative and leadership challenge as the pastor cannot take a step until the elders give a “yes”. The question to ask is: what happens when he feels led by the Lord, like Moses in the wilderness, to tell the people to ‘go forward’? (Ex.14:15). Pastors who cannot wait when God had already spoken are perceived poorly as they are always found ahead of elders’ approval of their acts”.

4.3.2.2 Tribal schism

Three leaders trace the roots of church conflicts in ANGIC to a lack of unity due to ethnic differences and the Kenyan ‘church tribe’ syndrome. Margret, a departmental leader, described the take-off of the church as an assembly of the Kikuyus. She says: “the church was made of Kikuyus and everything bares only Kikuyu undertone-the songs, the drumming, and every traditional input in the church life. The rest of the congregants outside that tribe simply had no belonging”. This scenario of ‘insiders’ versus ‘outsiders’

in the same congregation limited evangelism and growth, causing the first period of the church stagnation between 1980 and 1990. The coming on board of a missionary and the resultant multi-cultural diffusion offended the dominant Kikuyus, leading to cold feet in church affairs and contributing to the second phase of stagnation between 1996 and 1999.

4.3.2.3 Resistance to change

Resistance to change is another dimension to the stagnation problem in ANGC. This has to do with what the youth leaders and workers call the preference of the old generation for the old guard. Mary said “the youths were not attracted to the church by any deliberate and specific program.” In a new community that was densely populated with youths, the next generation of leaders were systemically sidelined through a leadership strategy that concentrates on traditional hierarchy at the expense of “changed-centred leadership” that generates new ideas and new ways for doing things, initiates and pushes for growth and contributes to the larger society to secure its own survival and well being (Isaksen and Tidd 2006:28-31, 132-133).

The bottleneck that departmental leaders who are non-members of the elders’ board see in running the church is the unwillingness of the denomination to change the church structure to meet the trend of effective modern management principles. Saliku puts the crisis succinctly when he observes “Every pastor has to wait until God speaks to the elders. In a way, this provides a good check-and-balance rhythm in running church administration, but on the other side it overlooks the fact that pastors are full-time preachers who stay in the office daily from morning till evening listening to the cries of the wounded people of God”. For such pastors to refuse to do anything to assuage those sufferings until the elders return from their secular engagements that equally occupy them from morning to evening, is like drilling a hole in a compact mass of an oil drum.

4.3.2.4 Failed leadership

More than half of respondents pointed to leadership problems as the cause of stagnation of the ANGC. Elder Sada says that the church has grown used to seeing pastors who come and spend most of their time causing wounds to the life of the congregation only to leave

before they are healed. The presence of such nagging leaders, he claims, leads to lack of congregational commitment to the work of the Lord as the leaders do not find forum to motivate and mobilize the church workers. “Pastors simply cannot drive the people into achieving things due to constant problems between the pastor and the congregation. The congregation does not accept the pastors and the pastors are bored by the congregation.”

A departmental leader, John Mwangi, feels the core of the problem is a “lack of mature leadership to carry on the work of the church with the pastor. It caused the pastor to be the only central figure in the work of the church.” Another elder lays the blame for the stagnation on the absentee pastors who leave for Bible schools without an acceptable shepherd to tend the flock.

Perhaps no other leadership crisis in ANGIC is as retarding to the growth of the church as lack of congregants’ trust in their shepherds. Without being explicit, Boniface laid the cause at the feet of improper management of the resources of the church. That such perception leads to stagnation is understood if leadership is understood from the behavioural point of view. Empirical findings show that a large number of employees worry about the ethics of senior managers in the work place, and “the perceived ethical character of managers has a strong influence on the degree to which employees commit to the company, follow work rules, and adhere to ethical guidelines.” (Tyler 2005:113).

4.3.2.5 Low population density in community

Though no exact population census was quoted, some elders feel that the stagnation of the church was also due to the low population of the Kimbo community in the 1980s when the church started. This, they claim, has changed with the increasing flow of the nearby low income settlements dwellers into the community.

4.3.2.6 Weak outreach and discipleship programs

Four of the leaders and long-term members identify the period of ANGIC stagnation with the church’s poorly organised outreach and discipleship programs. Elder Ochieng expressed disgust at the obvious absence of cell groups, which he thought could have

helped to monitor the spiritual growth of the members in the absence of available, strong pastoral leadership at the centre. Mbetsa, who leads one of the outreach departments, do not see how the church could have grown then as there was no financial made available to carry out evangelistic outreaches. He says “evangelism in the church became weak just as giving; the members were few and so weary of constant demand for money that it was almost impossible to talk of fund raising in the departments.” The consequence was that outreaches beyond the confines of the church building were never a priority.

4.3.2.7 Prayerlessness and limiting physical structures

Two other factors of relative significance mentioned by two of the elders as contributors to stagnation of the church are the congregation’s state of prayerlessness at that time and the poor state of the physical structures for worship that left much to be desired.

4.4 DELIVERANCE CHURCH, GITHURAI

The following analyses from the responses given by the pastor, elders and long-term members of Deliverance Church, Githurai, show how the leaders and members of DC perceive the factors that caused the stagnation of the church in the city. First, we will identify the period of stagnation in the life of the congregation.

4.4.1 Period of stagnation

Findings from interview item 11 (Appendix 2) were analysed and showed that the DC, Githurai had gone through periods of stagnation twice in its history. The first era was between 1994 and 1996 when the congregation was without a shepherd, having been abandoned by the first appointed pastor. The second period came between 2002 and 2006 after the church split, following the departure of the second appointed shepherd. Thus the church has had a historical period of stagnation spanning about six years. Average membership within the second period was put by the senior pastor at about 250.

4.4.2 Grounds of stagnation

Analyses of findings from interview item 12 (Appendix 2) showed that in the understanding of the leaders and members of DC, Githurai, there are eight elements responsible for the stagnation of the church. These are discussed below.

4.4.2.1 Failed leadership

Respondents summarized failed leadership during the two periods of stagnation of the church with the following characteristics, some more peculiar to one period than the other:

- Leadership wrangles

Deliverance church is an indigenous church with the apostolic authority based in Kenya. Each church is to a great extent independent to exercise this apostolic authority on behalf of the overall leadership of the denomination, as long as the local pastor remains under the umbrella of the denomination. The implication is that in its autonomous status, the local branch leadership yields influences that could hardly be challenged administratively or constitutionally within the confine of the church. Leaders end up taking offences out on each other, and the resultant bickering drags the spirit and growth of the church down for as long as the squabbles last. It confirms the word of Jesus that “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall” (Luke 11:14).

- Absconding leaders

The height of leadership crisis was reached in the year 2002 when the then pastor of the congregation decided to move out of the main denomination after growing it phenomenally for about six years. A board member that was an eye witness had this to say: “When the pastor left the church declined drastically with so many members leaving the church, some to follow the pastor to start his new congregation and others in search of other folds to nourish their spiritual life and heal their hurts”. Having twice faced the trauma of absconding shepherds, the congregation, according to under-shepherd Rutto, holds to a battered faith in leadership and could not give the new pastor the undivided

loyalty and total acceptance needed to kick-start the kingdom work. To make matters worse, one of the absconded leaders operates his new church at a walking distance from the DC, causing some of the members to suffer from divided loyalty, which further lengthen the years of stagnation of the congregation.

4.4.2.2 Ineffective Communication

Leadership of DC during the first years of stagnation (1994-1996) could not effectively communicate with the congregation, and vice-versa. There was no clear communication of where the leaders wanted to take the church. As such the membership was disconnected from the leadership and vice-versa, resulting in members' non-participation in the vision of the church which, of course, they never understood. Goals equally were as ambiguous as the objectives they set out to achieve, leading to non-achievement of congruency in communication: the goal of all effective forms of communication, be it intrapersonal, interpersonal or mass (van der Merwe 1993:27-30). None of the respondents pin-pointed the obstacle to this essential means of translating the Christian faith among leaders and members DC, but Mashau (2007:327, 328) rightly points out to a possible omission in ministering to Muslims, which equally has relevance in church congregations, the need for humility in verbal and non-verbal ways of Christian communication in mission.

4.4.2.3 Weak church government structure

Respondents are unanimous that the Deliverance church governance structure gives room for a stagnation crisis. The authority of the church, as earlier noted, is the pastor, not the bishop of the denomination. The pastor plants the church and is responsible for everything done in it. According to the senior pastor, "Everything rises and falls on the pastor. He is paid by the congregation and he decides everything". Moreover, the denomination does not transfer pastors. Once a minister has planted a congregation, he is there permanently, unless he wants to go for more church planting or desires helping a 'dead' congregation revive, or simply responding to the need of a congregation that has no shepherd. The problem in the arrangement vis-à-vis church stagnation of Deliverance Churches, as exemplified by the Githurai branch, and alerted by elder Mutura is, "a pastor comes up in leadership who has no focus on biblical demand, no good intention to establish the

kingdom of Jesus Christ but sustains an unchecked ulterior motive that is fuelled by self-love”.

4.4.2.4 Theological disagreement

Findings show that a basic doctrinal dispute (not elaborated upon by respondents) that emanates from the top hierarchy of the Deliverance Church in the nation and had a ripple effect on all local branches led to the bulk of leadership disagreements and membership split that brought the healthy DC, Githurai from its one thousand strong members to a stagnant 250 congregation for the four years of 2002 to 2006. It points to the scriptural alert that it takes the agreement of two to walk together (Amos 3:3) and that if we accept as truth that “mission is rooted in the *missio Dei* with the coming of God’s kingdom as aim”, it necessary follows that stakeholders in ministry need sustain a joint understanding of how “God reveals himself (and his will) in the Bible” (van der Merwe 1987: ii). The DC story proves again that disputes do occur in ministry among leaders, the case of Paul and Barnabas is a point of reference (Acts 15:36-41). However, unlike that biblical account, it is doubtful if there was no fatal consequence to the proclamation of the Gospel as both parties seemed to have maintained a “win/lose mindset” and gave no room to either prayers, peace or arbitrators (Branch 2007:315, 316).

4.4.2.5 Weak evangelistic and discipleship programs

The outreach method was said to be too weak to have community impact. Kamau holds that “there were no practical methods of outreach, only theoretical prescriptions, which are made worse by holding crusades with no follow-up or disciple plans for souls won”.

4.4.2.6 Resistance to change

There was the problem of not quitting the comfort zone to break new grounds for mission, especially among the elderly folks. They were reported to so enjoy the worship and fellowship of the small congregation with such a ‘family’ flavour that they became uninterested in going for new outreaches or supporting initiatives to so do. The satisfaction

with the status quo in all facets of the church kept the congregation stagnant in its first era of 1994 to 1996, when there was no officially designated Pastor.

4.4.2.7 Limiting physical structures

Kamau is of the opinion that if it wasn't for limitation of space the many activities the church planned to draw souls to the kingdom would not have miserably failed. He however put the blame on the church's inability to make the best use of what was available by limiting the number of programs to what could be conveniently accommodated on the limited space available.

4.4.2.8 Migratory community

The Kimbo community in Githurai where the church is located is said to be migratory. The inhabitants constantly hop to Nairobi city centre in search of jobs and better standard of living. The exodus has its effect on church attendance, especially among the unemployed and the underemployed workers in the low income groups. Unfortunately, this was the main target group of the church in terms of anticipated members, the few that constitute the working class in the community being too reserved to attract to an inward-looking, exclusive congregation that ANGIC was then.

4.5 GOSPEL REVIVAL CENTRE CHURCH, RIRUTA

The following analyses from the responses given by the pastor, elders and long-term members of Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta, show how the leaders and members of GRCC perceive the factors that caused the stagnation of the church in the city. First, we will identify the period of stagnation in the life of the congregation.

4.5.1 Period of stagnation

Findings from interview item 11 (Appendix 2) were analysed and showed that the GRCC, Riruta stagnated for a period of about eight years, precisely from 1992 to 1999 and briefly from 2004 to 2005. Membership within the longer period of stagnation was around 500 congregants and at about 1 000 in the second phase of stagnation.

4.5.2 Grounds of stagnation

Analyses of findings from interview item 12 (Appendix 2) showed that in the understanding of the leaders and members of GRCC, Riruta, there are about five major elements responsible for the stagnation of the church when it did. These are discussed below.

4.5.2.1 Failed leadership

About 90 percent of respondents attribute the stagnation of the church to a leadership that is not responsive to the life of the congregation, weak leadership that could not give adequate direction, motivation and positive reaction to the efforts of the followers. These are leaders who are no longer capable to give the church leadership (Barna 1993:32) yet remain in the priesthood office are identified by the respondents to show the following traits in the GRCC during its years of stagnation.

- Leadership rivalry

Findings show that strife and competition debase the leadership hierarchy of the church. Absence of unity and open disagreements characterize a leadership relationship and functions, giving the impression to members of an ongoing unhealthy rivalry in the top hierarchy of the congregation. Evidently, when one leader builds, another seeks to overthrow, a complete opposite image of team spirit given by Paul to the Corinthian church of how God makes the church grows as he (Paul) plants and Apollos waters (1 Corin.3:6).

- Lack of transparency and accountability

Elder Waweru, echoing the voice of the majority of members in the eldership board, says: “Leadership is the major impediment of growth of the church when it stagnated. There was evident lack of accountability and transparency over the church’s resources.” Another elder identify those resources to be the tithe and offering and says they were dismally managed.

- Poor managerial ability

Church administration is noted to be weak and insensitive. This creates a wide gap between the pastor and his immediate leadership team on one hand, and between the under-shepherds (represented by group and departmental leaders) and congregants on the other hand.

4.5.2.2 Tribal-political schism

Twenty ethnic groups out of the country’s 42 are represented in the church. Rather than being a factor of strength, each shows a tendency of ethnocentrism causing constant tribal polarization that threatens the unity and stability of the church. Magdalene, a woman leader, points to character failures such as hypocrisy, lack of forgiveness, unfaithfulness to vows, hatred and bitterness as part of what the fanning of the ember of tribe introduced to the congregation. Even the aftermath of the 2007 election crisis that pitched the major Kikuyu tribes of the President against indigenes of Western Kenya axis of the Prime Minister did not leave the church members without conflicts between camps of interest, because these major national tribes equally have significant followings in the congregation.

The dilemma of GRCC lies in what and how the Christian relationship with politics should be. While they rightly do not share the worldview that dichotomize spiritual Christianity from secular politics, they fall into the trap of an ideology of being a Christian and yet maintaining a position “alongside political life”, being a Christian politician without permitting Christian faith to influence political perception and activities in order to prevent

confusing entities that are meant to be separate and kept apart (Van der Walt 2001:28). The evangelical truth presented by Christ is that Christians should be salt in the earth (Matt.5:13), influencing the world as agents in it but of it (John17:15, 16).

The “Reformation paradigm” that strikes the needed balance between “spiritual discernment” and political competence is lacking in the GRCC (cf. Van der Walt 2001: 28). While the believer in Christ could and should be involved in politics and the affairs of state as Christ’s witness to renew and transform the political process, the bane of the congregation is in missing the goal of congregational involvement in election times as a united body of Christ who , although they may and should differ in political affiliation in exercise of individual fundamental human rights, could not afford to part ways over politicians by neglecting “obedience to God’s norms of justice” (Van der Walt 2001:28).

4.5.2.3 Suspect spiritual atmosphere

Ninety-five percent of respondents identify the stagnation of the GRCC to a strange spiritual phenomenon, a kind of witchcraft act that kept the church for a long time asking unanswerable questions. A calculated silence surrounds this suspect spiritual atmosphere, but two ministers and five elders volunteer a terse explanation. The former church pastor died on the way home from an open air campaign in a motor accident. While the congregation was trying to reconcile itself with the tragic situation of the loss of this pastor, described to be “very much loved by the congregation”, the wife of the Associate Pastor suddenly passed on. As far as the congregation was concerned, the timing and personalities involved in the sad occurrences indicated a bad omen in the house of God. It was interpreted to have spiritual connotation of affliction from the spirit world on the living. The two incidences led to much finger pointing. After all, in the traditional African worldview, as Mashau (2007:639) rightly points out “there is always somebody” connected to the occult world to afflict such magnitude of death. “When things go wrong, such as sickness ... misfortune, accidents... people attribute that to the evil use of... (magical) power” (Mashau 2007:646).

4.5.2.4 Weak church government structure

The entire governance structure of the Gospel Revival Centre nation-wide was shown to tend to divide loyalty by sustaining a “three parallel leadership arrangement” in running church affairs. Autonomous local branches are planted across the nation and cities with the shepherds being accountable to no one.

4.5.2.5 Absence of biblical teaching

The congregation lacks what an elder describes as “inspirational word of God” in its period of stagnation. This causes spiritual healing of wounded hearts to take long. Congregants were worldly, living carnally in suspicions, division and in complete loss of the church vision and mission for existence. The church takes on the image of division as symbolized by the church of Corinth (1 Cor.3:1-4) and of spiritual deadness that the church of Sardis indicate (Rev.3:1). One major possible cause of this spiritual lacklustre as identified by some respondents is lack of theological exposure of those who minister on the pulpit.

4.5.2.6 Other sundry factors

Lack of commitment to evangelism and community service in the environment of the church was another factor that was attributed to the occurrence of stagnation. Prayerlessness of congregants, poor communication of leadership intentions for the church and a make-belief spirit of religion that pervades all the facets of worship were other factors that respondents identified.

4.6 PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, NEW DANDORA

The following analyses from the responses given by the pastor, elders and long-term members of Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora, show how the leaders and members of PAG perceive the factors that caused the stagnation of the church in the city when it did. First, we will identify the period of stagnation in the life of the congregation.

4.6.1 Period of stagnation

Findings from interview item 11 (Appendix 2) were analysed and showed that the PAG, New Dandora stagnated for a period of about ten years, precisely, from 1988 to 1998. Membership within this period was around 100 and sometimes 120.

4.6.2 Grounds of stagnation

Analyses of findings from interview item 12 (Appendix 2) showed that in the understanding of the leaders and members of PAG, New Dandora, there are five elements responsible for the stagnation of the church. These are discussed below.

4.6.2.1 Failed leadership

Failed leadership is a situation in which a pastor could no longer lead his congregation to growth, either as a result of credibility in moral life or constraints in ministry. The pastors and leaders of the PAG emphasised this singular factor to be the key element around which all others revolve in the stagnation of the congregation. Weak leadership syndromes in the stagnation history of the church were manifested in some, but are not limited to the following identified areas:

- Absence of leadership focus

Pastors and subordinate leaders that served the church during the stagnation era are said to have lacked ministry focus. They did not know the direction the church was to take as they were neither informed before coming to ministry nor got the services of informers after they were in it. At the end of the day, they evolved what under-shepherd Kalonzo called “a philosophy of everybody for himself and God for us all”. The church was left to run on its own wheels at its own speed towards its own ends.

- Limited church growth skill

Pastoral leadership lacked knowledge of how to bring the church to growth. This was the predicament of all the pastors that were posted to the church then. They preached, but lacked the understanding of strategy for growth, having had no exposure in the field of mission or ecclesiology.

- Absentee leadership

Small churches in most cases face financial crises from limited funds. As there were no funds in the church to sustain the pastors who had been posted to the branch church, they would frequently leave the congregation to seek secular means of livelihood to sustain themselves at the expense of the church. They were away, but still kept the spiritual authority over the congregation. This caused the church to stagnate for a long time. They were not concentrating on the church affairs.

- Low pastoral morale

Low Pastoral morale was another factor. The pastors did not see the need to work hard in a branch, knowing that the transfer was always by the corner. He would resume duty and immediately sit down lazily waiting for the next transfer within two years, so he sees no reason for hard work. They came up with a pastoral lifestyle around the slogan “Preach And Go” (PAG), a defamation of the acronym of the church Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG). The pastors declared openly that they were in the local church just to Preach and Go. There was no keenness for the work of God they were sent to do in the churches.

- Commercial inclination

Furthermore, pastors were more interested in the limited financial gains they could make out of the congregation than the souls that seek for pastoral care and for needed spiritual welfare. The Eldership Board was no better. Its interest was thwarted and some members

left the congregation. The matter was made worse with the difficulty of convincing the church headquarters to transfer the pastors.

4.6.2.2 Lack of commitment to evangelism and discipleship

Though the church had potential for growth during its ten years of stagnation, the near absence of almost all institutional means of spiritual growth outside the weekly Sunday services was a great hindrance. Having no mid-week services, small group meetings or out-door services, members had to resort to self-help for needs that occur outside Sundays. The life of the church was at a complete standstill until the pastor and the faithful arrive for the ritual weekly sacraments.

4.6.2.3 Communication crisis

The outcome of poor spiritual consolidation and non-availability of pastors when needed for spiritual attention was a culture of bickering among members. Rumour mongering took over, destroying open and honest communication. According to elder Arowo, “this ate deep into the fibre of the church, preventing it from growing”.

4.6.2.4 Weak church government structure

A governance structure that is inherently weak in provoking growth is shown in the high rate of pastoral turnover. When a local church is not growing, the supervising District Overseer would opt for a transfer of the pastor instead of finding out the reasons for stagnation or decline. In more cases than usual, the new pastor is worse in church growth work than his predecessor and the circle continues, leading to the ‘chameleon’ kind of growth the church witnessed for 24 years.

4.6.2.5 Absence of training programs

Lack of knowledge of God and his ways for ministry characterized the congregation. From church leadership to membership, there was very little training as far as ministry was concerned. Very few pastors had any training, and no single leader had either ministry or

leadership training. This affects the church as they hardly knew what to do with the issue of growth. They would come on Sunday, hear a little from the word of God and be dismissed until another Sunday. Members' growth was minimal, so the church itself could not grow.

4.7 UTHIRU PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, UTHIRU

The following analyses from the responses given by the pastor, elders and long-term members of Uthiru Pentecostal Church, Uthiru, show how the leaders and members of UPC perceive the factors that caused the stagnation of the church in the city. First, we will situate the period of stagnation in the life of the congregation.

4.7.1 Period of stagnation

Findings from interview item 11 (Appendix 2) were analysed and showed that the UPC, Uthiru stagnated for a period of about five years, precisely from about 1997 to 2002. Membership within the period averaged 200.

4.7.2 Grounds of stagnation

Analyses of findings from interview item 12 (Appendix 2) showed that in the understanding of the leaders and members of UPCC, Uthiru, there are five elements responsible for the stagnation of the church when it did. These are discussed below.

4.7.2.1 Weak leadership

Findings show that weak leadership as the cause of the stagnation of UPC had three elements. These are explained below:

- Sole Proprietorship leadership

The early stage of the church's existence was marked by the pastor/founder exercising the authority of a sole proprietor who hardly needs any helping hands for success. He sees himself, in his own language, as "the sole owner and carrier of the vision", the man to do everything necessary to keep the ministry afloat. As expected, he became exhausted, burned out, and the stagnation of the church sets in.

- Low growth ambition

By the time the membership of the church rose from five in 1994 to 200 towards 1997, the existing leadership corps did not see further reason for extra church growth labour, not when the next biggest Pentecostal church in the community had only about 40 members. In time, both leaders and members became accustomed to the attained level of growth and could not positively respond to growth mobilization to break the stagnation that has set in.

- Loss of leadership focus

The leadership hierarchy lost focus of the mission of God and its demand on gospel ministers as messengers sent to the mission fields to "go and tell" the word of God (Van der Merwe 1987: i). Emphasis shifted to maintaining the status quo, described by Njeri as loving "to sit in the office, be in the front row in church, attend committee meetings that provide avenues to drink tea and enjoy fellowships though they know these are not the functions for which they were elected". The Senior Pastor, not having alternatives to consider many times ended up scraping off an entire leadership team in order to bring in a new one that he expects to see functioning.

4.7.2.2 Desire for small congregation

Findings show that there are those in the UPC who do not consider a big church to be in their best interest. They expressed a desire to have a small church where everybody is a friend of everybody else. They feel threatened that if the church becomes so big that they would lose the warmth associated with smallness. To ensure that the wish is not thwarted, they refuse to join every search for numerical growth that the church embarks

on. According to one of the church leaders, this group finds allies in Pentecostals that feel that God does not care about numbers as long as a small quality church is preserved. The group holds the view that what matters is to be faithful to a small congregation that the church leadership and membership can take to heaven and considers the growth and quantity talk to be carnal and distractive.

The omission of the UPC is in the lack of understanding that God is “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). They miss out the import of Christ’s parable of the Great Supper on evangelism and church growth when he narrated how the lord of the feast (presumably referring to himself) ordered the servants to “Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them (the invitees) to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). It is a parable signifying the need for believers in Christ to go into the world in search of the lost sheep, who once brought in would increase the number in the fold of the church of the Good Shepherd.

4.7.2.3 Migratory and resistance community

The community members hold to mainstream denominations of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) and the Roman Catholics. Those who venture to join indigenous churches go through a rough time as they face persecutions from family members who see them as heretics. Moreover, Uthiru Pentecostal Church was started at a time when the Pentecostal family in the nation was facing difficult times in term of scandals, splits and infightings that drove the community to shy away from the Gospel of the Pentecostals.

There is also the problem of migration within the community. As an urban centre, Uthiru inhabitants, in the usual manner of ‘Nairobians’ residential communities within the city migrate in search of job security and better standard of living. The church, as a segment of the society, bears the implication of the migratory tendencies of the city people. Elder Wanjiku explained how “Every year the church receives almost a hundred members and loses the same to migratory tendencies”. Elder Joseph says of same: “People get new jobs somewhere and they have to relocate, others are transferred, others come into the neighbourhood for brief means of livelihood”. The result is a constant outflow that needs to be balanced with regular membership inflow. There is always that circle. According to

the Bishop, “every church that desires to sustain a regular membership growth in Nairobi has to keep on evangelizing and coming up with relevant strategies that appeal to the context of a changing community”.

The migratory nature of the community equally affects capacity building in the church. Absence of permanent people to equip the congregation and the sudden movements of those equipped before they could transfer their skill to others caused stagnation to set in. The church keeps starting from zero in training, leading to new converts in the headship of departmental works, another cause for non-growth and eventual stagnation.

4.7.2.4 Limitation of finance

The church in its teething years faced harsh financial difficulties. This is understood by the nature of its one-man founding and funding. The church had no financial stability to pay ministers who opt to work full-time, and at the same have to pay for rent or engage in financially involving church growth activities.

4.7.2.5 Lack of evangelism that is reaching out to the world

Evangelistic outreaches were highly limited at the time of stagnation of the UPC. This is attributed to hostility in the neighbourhoods, financial predicament to purchase public address system in a church that sees open air campaigns as sine-qua-nom to church growth.

4.8 SUMMARIZED GRID OF FACTORS OF STAGNATION

Table 2: Grid of Factors of church stagnation in Nairobi

	AIC	ANGC	DC	GRCC	PAG	UPC
1. Failed/weak Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Resistance to Change	✓	✓	✓			
3. Denominational meddling/ Weak church government		✓	✓	✓	✓	

4. Neglect of biblical teaching	✓			✓		
5. Political-Tribal schism & conflicts	✓	✓		✓	✓	
6. False ecclesiology/theological deviation			✓	✓		
7. Community challenges	✓	✓	✓			✓
8. Prayerlessness in the congregation	✓	✓	✓	✓		
9. Ineffective communication	✓		✓	✓	✓	
10. Desire for small church						✓
11. Financial & Structural limitations		✓	✓			✓
12. Low commitment to evangelism, Discipleship & Training	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.8.1 Findings and interpretation

As noted above in Table 3, twelve elements were identified by respondents in the six churches as factors responsible for church stagnation in Nairobi metropolis. These factors could be divided into two categories: those that are internally induced and factors that are externally provoked, not completely within the control of the church leadership and membership. The categorizations, as discussed below, reveal the nature of church stagnation in Nairobi city.

4.8.2 Internally-generated factors of church stagnation

Altogether, ten elements are categorized by respondents into the group of internally induced factors. These are failed/weak leadership, resistance to change, neglect of biblical teaching, schism and conflicts from political and tribal affiliations, false or foul spiritual atmosphere arising from false ecclesiology and theological deviation, prayerlessness in the congregation and ineffective communication. Others include a desire for a small church, financial and structural limitations and low commitment to evangelism, discipleship and training.

Four of the factors, namely failed leadership, neglect of biblical teaching, ineffective communication and problems with evangelism and training seem to be overly associated with church leadership. Prayerlessness and false ecclesiology were identified with both

leadership and membership units of each church, while the rest four of the internally induced factors were said to be caused mainly by the spiritual and financial state of the members irrespective of leadership resources.

- **Implication for stagnation**

The fact that only two elements out of twelve are seemingly out of the church's control implies that church stagnation in Nairobi city are not only internally stimulated, but also that recourse to the malady must be found principally among leaders and members of each congregation. It shows that churches do not grow because the conditions for growth are absent within each local stagnant congregations. It confirms the claim that internal church matters distract from external mission works; a case of Jonah syndrome, identified by Greenway and Mashau (2007:34), where God's people could not see the unsaved world as God does or understand *missio Dei* beyond their local concerns.

- **Smallness syndrome**

Though it is only in one church (UPC) that respondents identified "desire for small church" as a factor responsible for stagnation, the preponderance of internal controllable factors as obstacles to growth does not make others different in conviction, after all we are constantly reminded that action speaks louder than words. Congregants, as urban believers, do not seem to have the notion of the city as a place to "settle and multiply" through spreading the Gospel and accomplishing the divine "saving purpose" of "the God of Abraham" (Nicholls 2004:49).

- **Prayerlessness in the congregation**

The poverty of kingdom perspective in missionary endeavour (cf. van der Walt 2008) equally deems the light and fervency for prayer, making prayerlessness in the congregation a cause for stagnation in four of the churches. Respondents say that members do not attend prayer meetings when it is arranged. In other instances, there are no weekly meetings outside Sunday Worship where the art of communal intercession could be practiced. There is no sense of being missionaries in the city and standing in the gap for its

salvation, yet the city stands to perish without it, as implied in Jehovah's lamentation over Israel in Ezekiel, chapter 22, verse 30:

And I sought for a man among them that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none (ASV).

Only a prayerful congregation can build up the broken spiritual wall of a city and stand in intercessory gap for it. This is a call for missionary duty of prayer to establish the lordship of Jesus in the city and in the congregation. When such priestly prayers become the life of a congregation, the city is spared, its good is promoted, its sins forgiven and the fullness of shalom is revealed to all its citizens (Greenway and Mashau 2007:47). This is why Jeremiah calls on Israel under the Babylonian captivity to pray for the shalom of the city of their abode. He says:

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace (Jer. 29:7).

- **Resistance to change and false ecclesiology**

Resistance to change and false ecclesiology are causes of stagnation identified in literature (Barna 1993:31-38, Gwak and Hendriks 2001: 55-67, Stetzer 2005:1-8, Greenway and Mashau 2007:125,153, Gwak and Hendriks 2001:55-67). "Tradition-driven" churches prefer to stay in the comfort zone of tested waters though it keeps them in their "small Christian islands" (Greenway and Mashau 2007:153). However, findings show that resistance to change affects only half of the churches studied. One of the three congregations affected is the only mainline non-Pentecostal denomination among the six. Such church traditions perceive change as a threat and would rather yield the ground to charismatic groups to have their youths than evolve growth, attracting changes in worship and dogma (cf. Greenway and Mashau 2007).

All the three churches that suffer from resistance to change are either shepherded by pastors considered by the elders to be younger either in age or in ministry or regarded as an outsider that supposed to be seen, not heard. African culture of respect to age or the spirit of ethnic communalism seem to have played a positive role in securing harmony when changes are introduced in the other three congregations.

- **Neglect of biblical teaching and false ecclesiology**

One of two churches that neglect biblical teaching equally suffer from false ecclesiology, showing a possible direct correlation between biblical teaching and church maturity, as implied by Paul in Ephesians 4:11-14:

And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error (ASV).

Paul encouraged Timothy to preach the word of with “great patience and careful instruction” at both convenient and inconvenient time (2 Tim. 4:2). Only by so doing can a church be built on sound doctrine and evade the perversion of theological error that sway away from the truth. It explains why the second church without biblical teaching is home to unending conflicts of such gravity that it pitches two pastors and their supporters against each other in and over same congregation of one hundred memberships.

- **Misplaced spiritual authority and unresolved theological differences**

Responses from the second congregation with false theology did not indicate that biblical teaching was compromised, but it evidently was. The entire denomination nation-wide was reported to be split top down on grounds of sudden doctrinal change that could not be scripturally proved, except by unaccepted convenience of apostolic authority of top church hierarchy. The real error however is in overlooking the fact that spiritual authority is a function of biblical insight and associated obedience to its commands. As van der Walt rightly claims, “a person only has authority if he/she has insight into the norms valid for the particular societal structure and also actually leads the societal structure to its goal according to the norm(s)” (van der Walt 2006:143).

Furthermore, the practice of demanding congregational obedience to perceived errors in theology by reading Romans 13 verses 1-3 into human authority is to make human authority divine and infallible, which it is not. Furthermore, ecclesiastical authority needs be exercised with humility in recognition that “a leader is not more eminent than those he leads”. Delegated pastoral authority should neither be doctrinal nor individualistic, but empowering in the context of communal or societal relationship and responsibility (van der Walt 2006:144, 145).

4.8.3 Externally-induced factors of church stagnation

Weak governance structure was reported to be externally imposed on the local churches by the supervisory denominational headquarters over which local congregations have little influence. The same explanation is given for community challenges that range from non-responsiveness to gospel outreaches to socio-cultural inhibitions and economic limitations perpetuated by poverty in a society grossly marked by class discrimination and domination of the elites over the have-nots. Both factors are relational problems that confront stagnant churches in Nairobi, first in terms of relating with the overall denomination structure and second in terms of contact with the community of church. A detailed explanation of both is necessary for presently stagnant churches.

- **Weak church governance structure**

Meddling by the national denomination office over the running of the local branch constitute a hindrance to the health of four of the six churches studied. As local branches could not adjust governance structure to prevailing needs and as future course of action could not be entirely planned or predicted by local pastors, the sense of urgency in ministry is lost, activities become reactive responses to maintain status quo rather than proactive strategies to change current realities (Barna 1993:38).

However, the extent to which church structure constitutes an obstacle to growth may be more specific than general to churches. Even in ANGC where this is more pronounced among the six churches, there does not seem to be agreement on this between the elders and the pastors interviewed. Furthermore, different scholars see the issue from different perspectives. There is the view that authority and evangelism are not mutually exclusive in church, but rather proper church structure with lines of authority that must be respected is *sine-qua-nom* to preventing chaos in the house of God (Buys 1981:49). That is the traditional posture of many mainline denominations.

The researcher agrees, holding the view that ‘managing’ pastors by elders is an African worldview with merits. The words of the elders are words of wisdom. And God who is not the author of confusion sets order in the church through the governmental offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (1 Cor.14:33; Eph.4:11, 12; Titus 1:5).

Adeyemo (2009:3) equally draws attention to the important fact that “African realities changed long ago” while African policy and decision makers keep dancing to the old tune that slows down institutional growth and development. In the wisdom of the Yorubas of Nigeria, they say: “when the drum beats change, the footwork of the dancers must of necessity change. Otherwise, the dancing will be uncoordinated and the dancers look absurd” (ibid.). It was this absurdity that kept the ANGC stagnant as a congregation for almost thirteen years. Its self-contradiction, unlike mainline AIC, is in the elders toeing the traditional line as enforced by church constitution while the pastors seek to lead away from the status quo.

In the AIC, there is no divergent views on institutional arrangement between the leaders and the led during stagnation. There seems to be an understanding of the church administrators of the initial intention of the Mission to develop a church model that will ensure a biblical mode of worship and ministry within a historical context of the life and functioning of the church then, and that changing contexts require unique applications (while keeping biblical principles constant) to avoid the danger of “absolutism” as witnessed in the medieval period of Roman Catholicism (Vorster 2003:6). Other churches seem to simply ignore the factor of historical context in their hermeneutics of church polity, and thus transfer an archaic model of ministry that turns to be non-conducive to contemporary expectations in the congregations (ibid.).

- **The community of church**

The effect of the community on church stagnation is indicated in responses from four churches. The challenges differ according to communities. In Dandora where the AIC is located, it is the much distance from the residential area to the location of the church building that constitutes a hindrance to intended worshippers on Sundays. Community members prefer churches at quick walking distance and feel no obligation to any denomination that could not meet that need. The concomitant effect is congregants with no specific denominational allegiance, as worship become more a matter of convenience than commitment.

In some other communities like Kimbo-Githurai, where the ANGC is located, Githurai 45 of the DC, and Uthiru, the location of the UPC, demographic changes contribute to the stagnation of the churches. Migration is a feature of urban settings like Nairobi as individuals, families and businesses relocate periodically in response of the changing nature of employment, social infrastructure due to rising standards of living, rising wave of crime and threats arising from tribal and political affiliations. In Nairobi, some communities are conventionally allocated to certain ethnic groups, though ‘strangers’ may be comfortably welcome at peace times. The same goes for ‘Nairobians’ of different social class. Stagnation easily sets in when ethnic or political colorations forces relocation of disadvantaged residents who may form a large part of a congregation’s membership, or when Nairobi City Council decides to demolish residential buildings in unofficially allocated plots.

However, the problem of demographic changes could be less life threatening if the stagnant congregations were more discerning of the changes in the community of the church. The ingrown family syndrome seems to override both the cognizance and preparedness for the fact that “few communities remain static over the course of time” (Barna 1993:33). This lethargy in the stagnant church’s relationship with the community also explains the hostility that it incurs in some communities like Uthiru. The church struggles with ‘the precarious balance’ between ‘segregation as opposed to integration’ in its understanding of biblical injunction of being in the world but not of the world (van der Walt 2008:323). So, in essence and in defence of its evangelical faith, the stagnant churches actually prevent themselves from being swallowed up by the world by withdrawing from its mission field of the world. It inadvertently sustains its vertical relationship between God and man and jeopardizes the horizontal dimension between man and the community (ibid. 319-322).

4.9 GRID OF MOST COMMON FACTORS OF STAGNATION

As indicated below in Table 4, three elements, according to respondents, constitute the most common and critical factors of church stagnation in Nairobi metropolis. One is low commitment to evangelism; two is absence of discipleship and training; and the third is failed and weak leadership.

Table 3: Common Factors of Church Stagnation

Factors of Stagnation	AIC	ANGC	DC	GRCC	PAG	UPC
1. Low commitment to evangelism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Absence of discipleship & training	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Failed/weak leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.9.1 Interpretations and findings

- **Low commitment to evangelism**

No respondent from any of the six churches reported the existence of any sustained evangelistic plans being carried out during the period of each church's stagnation. In one of the churches, the congregation was reported to be "left to run on its own" with rendezvous fixed for every Sunday. Even on Sundays, respondents claim that the pastors in one of the congregations operate on the caricature of the church's acronym of P.A.G to practice the policy of 'Preach And Go', a situation where the church hall serves as sole contact point between the pastor and congregants. Another congregation did not have an officially designated pastor for two years and the elders cared less on outreaches to win the neighbourhoods lest the family posture of the small church be disrupted. The fact that other evangelicals have fewer numbers in attendance on Sunday makes evangelism a non-issue in the stagnant church that hit the 200 attendee mark while the others were still counting 40.

It is not new that some of the congregations favour the small size church and are comfortable with stagnation, which they term 'quality membership'. They easily revert to old-time "world-flight trend" of individualistic pietism that exalts transcendental divine kingdom with total alienation from the corrupt world (Van der Walt 2001:18). Possessed with a "world-transformative religion" (ibid.), stagnant churches easily trade their saltiness to sustain personal and congregational holiness in defiance to Christ's exaltation (Matt.5:13). Added to this is the fact that urban stagnant churches generally lack the sense of urgency associated with the knowledge that beyond the glamour of wealth and sophistication, and the constant rural-urban exodus for better standard of living in the Majority World, the city remains fundamentally godless, needing the Gospel (Nicholls 2004:50).

- **Absence of discipleship and training**

According to the respondents interviewed, the six churches made no provision for discipleship formation of the few converts that were won and remained as members during their period of stagnation. There was no established program of biblical teaching,

Christian life training and modelling in the context of the community of believers. In essence there was the absence of the needed steps that would allow young converts to be strengthened in the faith and service skills as well as to provide room for evaluation to test their seriousness in readiness to serve the Lord.

This had bearing on the leadership problem faced by each of the six churches as young converts to the faith miss the initial “baby steps” of discipleship, which should take them towards the eventual bigger steps of leadership.

Seven basic “intermediate steps” of discipleship and training, identified by Smither (2007:309) and missing in all the six stagnant churches include:

- Praying with converts on felt needs
- Modelling ministry by going out together to share the Gospel
- Allocation of basic house fellowship tasks that promote owning the system
- Creating opportunity to use gifts, like sharing a testimony in a meeting
- Supporting or encouraging a convert’s initiatives on winning souls
- Debriefing. This is sharing dialogue for the purpose of being better equipped
- Inspiring vision on future areas of kingdom possibilities

These steps are not new. Jesus gave a perfect example of discipleship formation as he mentored his disciples through personal example of life and labour. He was so close to them that the backdoor of backsliding was literally closed until the very end of his ministry. He went to God proud that none of them was lost “except the one doomed to destruction so that the scripture would be fulfilled’ (John 17:12). This is what the stagnant churches lacked and which lead to effect numerical growth and spiritual leadership.

- **Failed and weak leadership among pastoral leaders and eldership board**

Findings show that almost all the leaders from the six churches recognize the factor of failed and weak leadership as a key cause of church stagnation. No single congregation

was exempt of two or more of the seven identified areas of leadership problems, which are: loss of credibility, rivalry and wrangles, absenteeism and absconding, pastor-centred ministry with lack of team spirit, ineffective communication, poor ministry and mission focus, and frequent leadership changes (see Table 5 below).

Table 4: LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS IN STAGNANT CHURCHES

	AIC	ANGC	DC	GRCC	PAG	UPC
Loss of Credibility	•	•		•	•	
Rivalry & wrangles	•	•	•	•		
Absenteeism & Absconding	•	•	•		•	
Pastor-centred ministry/Lack of team spirit	•	•				•
Ineffective Communication	•	•	•	•		•
Poor Ministry & Mission focus				•	•	•
Frequent Leadership changes	•		•		•	•

- Loss of credibility

As indicated in Table 5 above, four of the churches (AIC, ANGC, GRCC, AND PAG) allude to loss of credibility in leadership as a factor in stagnation. This, mainly, is in the area of managing the resources of the church, especially the tithes and offerings. The leadership of one of the churches was said to be surrounded with puppet elders in the finance committee who remain in the post for so many years doing the bidding of the pastor who would not yield to membership demand for financial accountability. In another church, the low income of the church is diverted to meeting personal pastoral needs of unpaid clergy, quoting Paul's words in 1 Cor.9:13 that say:

Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

The problem of poverty reverberates in all the congregations as a challenge to pastoral morality and credibility. None of the pulpit is able to sustain the ‘marriage’ of poverty and purity in pastoral call. However, the African worldview of the communalistic understanding of the poverty problem prevents public exposure that could attract shame to the pastors concerned. Also, the fact that many of the churches were hardly above ethnic assemblies at the time of stagnation provides additional succour in a culture where “it is all-important to be honoured and accepted by one’s own people”; after all, no individual exists on its own (Buys 2008: 149, 151).

It is however noteworthy that no single respondent identified sexual infidelity as a cause of stagnancy and decline in the church. It showed the personal spiritual depth and integrity of the elders and especially of the senior pastors in the areas of relational morality as a great factor in keeping the church floating, even where credibility regarding finance was absent. On the other hand, it also shows that integrity or character, as good as it is, cannot stand on its own to mediate revitalization of a stagnant or declining congregation. We may then assume that the findings of Kouzes and Posner (2007:46) that “strong beliefs about matters of principle” is the most admired principle in exemplary leaders do not necessarily lead to revitalizing a stagnant church in the African urban setting. In Africa, the spirit of ubuntu (communalism) and respect for age constantly overshadow the criteria of weak moral points in judging ruling elders. Among the Yoruba of South West Nigeria, the younger ones are taught never to say that the mouth of an elder smells, even when the odour is perceived, implying that a younger person does not find fault with an elder. Arguably, no other contemporary African writer paints the picture of authority, culture and institutional stagnation in African worldview as does the great philosopher from Nairobi in Kenya, Nyasani. He says:

Respect, reverence and obedience seem to operate in a vertical direction and always takes account of who is above and who in the

subordinated order of beings... the members below... are not supposed to question that authority, neither are they supposed to hold dissenting views on what is handed down... These rules are often so byzantine that they hardly permit flexibility of even exercise of personal judgment... They are responsible for forging a one-track mind and uncritical judgment... In a word, they undermine the power of independent thinking and surreptitiously deprive the African mind of initiative endeavours. Thus what we experience ... is the apparent *stagnation* or stalemate in social as well as economic evolution (Nyasani 1997:126, 130).

Van der Walt agrees, affirming that such hierarchical vision and relationships of authority borrowed from traditional African worldview into the operation of modern institutions would only lead to “traditionalism, conformism and a lack of independent thought and initiative” (van der Walt 2008b:175). This is the situation in which the stagnant church finds itself in Nairobi, as well as in other African cities where similar circumstances prevail.

This explains why models of leadership developed along Western culture may not always be relevant to institutions in Africa. All relevant models have to be culturally relevant. This is not to build a case against living the total exemplary moral life, but it is a factor to remember in evolving leadership model for revitalization of a stagnant church in the urban setting of Africa. Modelling the way is biblically commanded and necessary, but it is not sufficient for church revitalization. Attempts to incorporate “Western management style in a non-western setting” would lead to frustration and disappointment as Africans hold strictly to the African indigenous management style that exalts honour and respect based solely on age, and traditional communalism in a multicultural urban setting (Chinchen 2001: 164).

- Pastoral truancy

A major cause of stagnation reported by respondents in four churches is pastoral truancy. In each case the shepherd abandons the sheep without a representative. Three major

reasons are attributed to this development, one is unresolved ministerial rivalry and wrangles, and another is poor congregational giving, while the third has to do with the way the pastors perceive their full-time employment.

In three of the four congregations where there were rivalries and wrangles among pastors and members, there was also absconding and absenteeism and vice-versa. In one congregation, the rivalries do not lead to leaving but members attribute it to the “sudden deaths” experienced in two pastoral families simultaneously. Though one church does not suffer from unresolved conflicts at leadership level, it has the highest rate of pastoral absenteeism due to unmet financial needs of the pastors by the congregation.

Perhaps one single factor promoting the escalation of wrangles and rivalries in stagnant churches is the lack of biblical teaching on seeking and granting forgiveness among believers. There can be no “social civility” and maintaining of long-lasting human relationships, even in church except members accept the reality of injuries and learn to seek forgiveness and being given (Chantry 2005:60). The framework for this is given in scriptures that guarantee the forgiveness of all fallen creatures who call on God with a broken and contrite heart (1 John 1:9; Eph. 4:32; Ps. 57:17). The fact that “we all offend in many things...(especially)...in word...(James 3:2) makes atonement through repentance, restitution and reconciliation a God-given condition for individual acceptance before him, even when the offender has “nothing with which to repay damages caused (Chantry 2005:62-66; Matt. 6:14, 15).

Poor congregational giving is another factor identified by respondents as causing the constant discouragements and disappearances of pastors from the pulpit. We have alluded to this earlier on in this chapter as a consequence of the poverty of the congregants. The majority of the churches seek their members from the low-income class of the society. The church income is expectedly low and projects can hardly be financed, and that include regular pastoral remunerations. This makes the pastors more of travellers in search of home and foreign funding than of preachers on pulpit serving the bread of life to hungry souls. The researcher participated in many Harambee (fund raising ceremonies) that target projects ranging from roof zincs to buying chairs for congregants.

However, there is also a significant number of the middle class in each of the churches, making the earning ability not as much the problem as the giving culture. Church members, especially in the churches located in low income settlements of Nairobi tend to look unto the church for some forms of assistance in times of financial crisis (Smith 2007:79). Where the majority form this attitude (as it is often the case), it becomes difficult to tie down the pastors to their pulpits or confirm Smith's claim of a model of ministry among "informal Pentecostal churches" in Kenya that is free from outside crumbs falling from the altar of "imperialistic offerings" (Smith 2007:79, 80).

The researcher sides with the observations of Jack Alexander and Adeyemo that the national psyche of most African nations and communities, Nairobi church not excluded, is an economic dependency syndrome that promotes receiving aid more than giving assistance (Adeyemo 2009:40). Jesus tried to counter this development in church by associating giving to blessing (Luke 6:38). God taught the same principle to Israel in the Old Testament by placing a curse on withholding back resources from the house of Yahweh and promising an overflowing prosperity to givers (Malachi 3:8-10). Further research may have to exegete these verses vis-à-vis the curse implication in relation to church stagnation. The one thing this research confirms is that the pastors of stagnant churches in Nairobi are always on the run, not in search of souls that are perishing on the streets, but of money to make ends meet.

- Pastor-centred ministry/Lack of team spirit

Findings show that three churches had the leadership problem of a pastor-centred ministry and lack of team spirit in leadership work. A leader in one of the churches describes what may not be a peculiar experience to his church: "The pastor had no assistance. Though I was an associate pastor, I was not made to be recognized by the congregation as one. The goal of the senior pastor is to be unrivalled at the centre of action, consequently he leads alone."

Findings showed that in the other churches where there are constitutionally established boards of eldership, team spirit was weak and sometimes non-existent. There was a clear absence of a team leader to guarantee harmony and promote effectiveness of team groups. It was like the case of times when there were no kings in Israel and everyone was busy

doing what was considered right in his/her own sight (Judg.17:6; 21:25). Yet without leadership in context, the church cannot truly function as the true body of Christ with diverse gifts (1 Cor. 12). The lack in the stagnant churches is Christ-like humility and servanthood in leadership that would value overall achievement of the congregation as a team above individual applause, just as in great soccer clubs of the world that keep winning laurels.

- Ineffective communication

Respondents in five churches attributed ineffective communication between the senior pastor and subordinates on one hand, and the leadership corps and church members on the other hand as a main factor of stagnation. The communication problem accounts for most of the internal conflicts reported in over 80% of the churches.

While it may be a fact that the pastors and elders are handicapped by a lack of theological or social science training that could adequately prepare them for complexity of ministry, the African culture of gossip equally undermines communication flow in the stagnant church. A pastor that was reportedly doing well was suddenly inundated with anonymous letters on moral charges that no one was ready to prove or be identified with except through gossips. He was discouraged by the degree of anonymity surrounding the perpetrators of the accusations and abandoned the congregation unceremoniously. It confirms the claim that Africans talk a lot and get so indulged in circumlocution that many times end up in unkind criticisms that distract institutional activities and retard progress, church growth inclusive (van der Walt 2008:176).

- Poor ministry & mission focus

In three congregations, there was the factor of poor ministry and mission focus as a cause of stagnation. This is not just a problem of dichotomizing the “missionary mandate” of Matt.28:18-20 from the “cultural mandate of Genesis 1 :26, 27 and Genesis 2:15”, but of a pastor taking the posture of a “postman” delivering a letter to a door step and concluding his assignment over (van der Walt 2007:80, 94). The policies of “Preach And Go” and “no money, no message” as reported in the churches debased the church to a market stall or a

stock-exchange institution. Leaders certainly lose the point made by Fernando that leaders are not chosen to run organizational machinery that can collapse and be abandoned until repaired (Fernando 1985:15-18). On the contrary, pastors are chosen to love, care and abide with the sheep as demonstrated by the Chief Shepherd who loves his own even unto the end (John 13:1; 15:13).

- Frequent leadership changes

Problem of frequent leadership changes as a factor of stagnation occurred, according to respondents, in four of the six churches. In one of the churches, changes are effected principally as a result of conflicts in the congregation between the pastor and the elders. In such instances, the denomination headquarter seems to be unskilled with regard to conflict resolution skill and considers the path of peace to be better provided by distancing the warring partners. In another church, transfer is due to lack of church growth. Pastors that could not change numerical status of their congregations are given the go-ahead for new hands, though there is neither theological training nor practical exposures to equip the ministers. The same applies to congregations where the senior pastors remove elders whose ministry groups become stunted. One of the churches reports a mass resignation of elders from leadership responsibilities due to lack of faith in the new pastor of the church.

Grouped together, leadership changes seem to be due to both denominational and pastoral misunderstanding of biblical leadership. As Adeyemo rightly points out, New Testament leadership implies watching over, directing and managing God's people to divinely desired ends (Adeyemo 2009:68). It involves both administrative and prophetic gifts. On one hand, prophetic leadership takes wise decisions and transforms the lives and conditions of God's people. On the other hand, administrative leadership manages and develops kingdom resources in the church with integrity, striving for improved congregants' conditions (ibid. 70). Such skills are dependent on both spiritual gifting and on-the-job growth.

The leadership of the denominations and congregations appear to regularly stumble in judging between incompetence and complacency among pastors. Incompetent pastors and elders need training and assistance to find their ministry giftedness and calling. Complacent ones need to be removed from leadership position to allow them to repent and

be zealous (Rev.3). However, in the stagnant church, the contrary is sometimes the case; the former are removed while the latter stay put in their comfort zone in the top management team.

Above all, leadership skill and lessons are learnt after a considerable period of staying and serving in a post or mission field. The acquired experience and know-how is frequently a useful skill, which successful leaders bring into new endeavours (Daniels 2006:160). This is the church growth lesson that umbrella organizations of stagnant congregations often miss out on.

CHAPTER 5

5 FACTORS OF CHURCH REVITALIZATION IN NAIROBI CITY: CASE FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports the findings and gives the analysis and interpretations from the responses given by 600 sampled church members on whom questionnaires were administered and 100 leaders interviewed in the six churches on how each congregation views the factors that account for the revitalization of the congregation to make it a turnaround church in Nairobi metropolis. The chapter provides an answer to Research Question (R.Q.) 4 (see Chapter One): What are the perceptions of the church leadership and members of the six (6) churches on church revitalization in Nairobi city?

After reporting the stumbling blocks faced by each congregation on the road to revitalization and the changes effected in the church, the factors of turnaround were reported and analysed, first from the perception of leaders of each congregation and second from the perception of the members. The grid of common factors of revitalization is compiled from both perceptions to show in each church, the joint perception of factors that caused the turnaround of the congregation. List of responses and tables were used in presenting each case for data organization and summary, thus ensuring the data was “completely” presented (Leedy 1989:239).

To achieve stated research objective, as noted in chapter four under ‘data analysis’, the researcher, firstly, systematically organised and analysed the relevant interview items (see Appendix 2), coded them according to category and presented the simple frequency counts and corresponding percentages by the use of tables. Secondly, on a rating of 0 to 10 (6-10 for “relevant” and 0-5 for “irrelevant”), the cross tabulation instrument was used to analyse the variables of relevance and irrelevance of each questionnaire item rated by respondents (see Appendix 3). Finally, comparison was made between the responses from each church’s leaders and members on factors of revitalization. The grid of common

factors of revitalization in each church shows the congruency of opinions of leaders and members, and forms the basis of the proposed model in chapter six of the thesis.

5.2 AFRICAN INLAND CHURCH, DANDORA

5.2.1 Between stagnation and revitalization

- Problem of pastoral acceptance

The present pastor of AIC is at the helm of leadership under which the congregation is experiencing a turnaround. Having been a member of the congregation as mere congregants for many years and then serving as assistance to the pastor under whom the church had remained stagnant and perceived unbiblical in ministry, the new senior pastor faced the problem of acceptance in his move to address the issue of stagnation confronting the church. The resistance was first due to his personality as perceived by the long-term members and serving elders who saw him as too young in age and in ministry to lead the flock. To compound their problem, he was still in the seminary studying for a Master's degree in Theology. However, that was not all that challenged the status quo.

There was also the fierce opposition to his introduction of what they termed "Pentecostal tendencies" in a traditionally mainline denomination. The older generation could not reconcile themselves with the new outbursts of congregants in chorus singing and hilarious prayer in what the pastor calls "Holy Ghost tongues of Acts 2:1-4". When confronted by these factors, the pastor said he almost quit his pulpit at the very take-off, but for the sustaining grace of God. He constantly reminded the congregation of the blessings that attend obeying biblical teachings and practice on life and ministry, and this eventually helped to soften the opposition to his new approach to church worship and outreach.

- Financial probity

A good ground for revitalization was laid when the new pastor introduced a system of transparency and accountability in the finance of the church. According to one of the elders, the new pastor was perceived early by the flock to be a better manager of church resources than his predecessors. Elder Muiru says:

Previous pastors had utilized fund for satisfaction of immediate personal needs. When new breeds of honest accounting officers were appointed, the signal goes out that a new era of accountability has come. In time, giving grows along with the numerical strength of the church, and the acceptance of the pastor was a forgone conclusion.

Alluding to the same, the Senior Pastor points to the excitement of congregants as financial reports are read quarterly and comparative analysis with the approved budget presented openly in the congregation. No one needs to persuade the church that the pastor walks his talk and merits followership commitment. In one single month, tithing rose from a meagre 30 000 Shillings to 110 000 Shillings, and the figures continuously went up.

5.2.2 Perception of leaders on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on the perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from interview guides 14, 15, and 16 (Appendix 2) were analysed. In the African Inland Church, Dandora, seven key elements, whose frequency counts and percentages are reflected below in Table 5 below, show the perception of church leaders on factors of revitalization:

Table 5: Perception of leaders of AIC on factors of revitalization

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Effective & available leadership	6	20

Motivational & biblical teaching	4	13
Prayerfulness and supernaturalism	3	10
Evangelism and diversified outreaches	5	17
Ministry groups, C.E.D and cells	6	20
Mobilized members and youths	3	10
Atmosphere for unity & security	3	10
TOTAL	30	100

n=30

5.2.2.1 Analysis and interpretations

As shown in the table above, two major factors top the list of the revitalization dynamics of the African Inland Church. These are “effective and available leadership” (20%) and “ministry groups” (20%). “Evangelism and diversified outreaches” scored 17% to occupy the third position while “motivational and biblical teaching” (13%) occupies the fourth ring of the ladder as a turnaround factor. The remaining four of the seven categories are of equal importance, according to the perception of the church leaders, as agents of growth and revitalization. These include “prayerfulness and supernaturalism”, “mobilized members and youths” and an “atmosphere for unity and security” in the church. Each of the factors had a frequency of 3 out of 30 and a 10% overall score.

The stagnation of the church, as analysed in chapter four, centred on non-available, non-responsive, and non-credible leadership. A positive change in guard changed all that in the church and caused the change in the attitude of members towards leadership and the invitation of community members to join the church. The senior pastor, around whom the change rotates, describes the approach he took in causing the turnaround as he became the new shepherd. On reorienting the church worship for contextual relevance in a city where the Pentecostals call the short in phenomenal growth, he says:

When I came here I told God that I wanted worshippers to feel they are really worshipping God, and God has really fulfilled that. AIC has its rigid system but I made the church service to meet the worship needs

of the people. I made worshippers feel free to jump if they excited to do so, a phenomenon that appeals greatly to the youths. Elders were free to sing aloud and worship with biblical freedom. The new approach caught the interest of congregants and people in the Estate, and before long the sanctuary started to get filled up with new comers.

This is the secret behind the sudden surge of youths into the congregation, leading to the commencement of a separate English service every Sunday to give the young secondary schools and higher intuitions students an appropriate worship atmosphere, the lack of which has driven many of them to surrounding Pentecostal congregations in the community. Incidentally, the elders (wazees) seem to be equally enjoying the new wave of individual worship expression. Elder Kiambu, one of the oldest in the eldership board, expressed that the hand clapping, chorus singing and attendant testimonies to answered prayers encouraged him to get involved in teaching the word and preaching along with the new pastor on the pulpit. Moreover, “it pulls people in and brings the new growth we now experience”, according to him.

On the issue of availability as against pastoral absenteeism that characterized the reign of past pastors, the Senior Pastor buys into the people with a novel people-person approach that emphasis a “people-oriented” leadership service rather than an “organization-oriented” ministry (Maxwell 2001:10). He says:

I identify the needs of the people and open a day for counselling when they could freely come and share with me. This is something they have never experienced before, so the opportunity of meeting the pastor at a personal level and freely share with him gave them a long-desired sense of belonging.

The key ministry groups that are propelling the growth of the church are the Christian Education Department (C.E.D), the cell groups that operate in form of prayer fellowships in the community, and the vibrant worship team where youth involvement is pronounced.

Again, the Senior Pastor is the brain behind the effective functioning of these departments. He says of his part vis-à-vis their contribution to growth:

We have CED (church education department) in our denomination. This has almost died in our local branch before my appointment, so I got leaders trained who laboured with me to get the group resuscitated. Presently, the church has eleven functioning CED groups. They afford the opportunity for people to meet in small groups and share with one another. This has promoted the growth of the church. There are also the Tuesday prayer fellowships in the Estate. This was not doing well before. I personally went to all these groups to encourage people to attend and rally round the leaders so that now they do it faithfully though I am not there. I also introduced Bible Study groups in the Estate. This has helped the spiritual development of the people and I get good responses of attendance. Those who come here are fed with the word of God through these different forums. And when it comes to Sunday worship time, the music from the choir is an inspiration that keeps worshippers coming.

5.2.3 Perception of members on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from questionnaire item 11 (Appendix 3) were analysed. On a rating of 0-10, respondents determined the degree of contribution to growth of 26 given factors to the ongoing revitalization of the church by assigning a number to it, 0 for non-contribution and 10 for highest contribution. The researcher determined the relevance of each factor to growth by assigning “Relevant” to ratings with 6-10 score and “Irrelevant” to ratings with 0-5 score. The results, for the African Inland Church Dandora, are reflected in table 6 below:

Table 6: Rating of relevance of growth factors to revitalization of AIC

Category	Total (6-10) Rating	Total (0-5) Rating	Relevant	Irrelevant
a. Care and concern for members	52	19	✓	
b. Cell group work	44	23	✓	
c. Children ministry	55	16	✓	
d. Church building and assets	46	25	✓	
e. Church doctrines and beliefs	51	17	✓	
f. Church planting and mission work	45	25	✓	
g. Dynamic youth ministry	47	25	✓	
h. Effective incorporation of new members	45	23	✓	
i. Evangelism by members	53	19	✓	
j. Expository preaching from the Bible	55	16	✓	
k. Fighting for rights of the oppressed in society	38	31	✓	
l. Friendly atmosphere for new and old members	46	19	✓	
m. Healings, miracles and deliverances	43	26	✓	
n. Holiness and integrity in leadership	48	21	✓	
o. Mass media and electronic evangelism	28	42		✓
p. Messages of prosperity, health and blessings	50	18	✓	
q. Music and worship style	61	10	✓	
r. Prophetic utterances and revelations	37	32	✓	
s. Publicity and marketing of church activities	30	38		✓
t. Prudent and accountable management of resources	39	26	✓	
u. Strategic location of church building in the city	32	35		✓
v. Strong pastoral leadership	62	8	✓	

w. Team leadership among church workers	54	16	✓	
x. Tribal influence of church on attendees	40	30	✓	
y. Training and empowering members to serve	48	22	✓	
z. Vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ	55	15	✓	

5.2.3.1 Analysis and interpretation

As indicated in Table 6 above, 23 selected growth factors are perceived by members of AIC, Dandora to contribute to the growth of the church. These factors could be categorized into the following nine main groups of elements of revitalization:

- Church ministries and youth involvement, indicated by the two factors of the “Children ministry” and “dynamic youth Ministry” of the church.
- Physical facilities represented by “church building and assets”.
- Preaching and spiritual development, indicated by the teaching of “Church doctrines and beliefs”, “expository preaching from the Bible”, “messages of prosperity, health and blessings”, and “vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ”.
- Atmosphere for unity and worship, indicated by “friendly atmosphere for new and old members”, “music and worship style”, and “team leadership among church workers”.
- Prayers and supernaturalism, indicated by the factor of “healings, miracles and deliverances” and “prophetical utterances and revelations”,
- Leadership, indicated by “holiness and integrity in leadership”, “prudent and accountable management of resources”, and “strong pastoral leadership”.

- Evangelism and empowerments indicated by “church planting and mission work”, “evangelism by members”, and “training and empowering members to serve”.
- Cell groups and care ministries, indicated by “care and concern for needy members”, “cell group work”, and “effective incorporation of new members”.
- Church tribe and societal influence, indicated by “tribal influence of church on attendees” and “fighting for rights of the oppressed in society”.

The implication is that the AIC grows on all fronts of basic church growth indexes according to the members, except for the three elements of “strategic location of church building in the city”, “mass media and electronic evangelism” and “publicity and marketing of church activities”. The fact that some of these areas of city mission demand substantial financial strength explains why the AIC, with its limited financial ability, may shy away from them.

Two factors had the highest scoring in term of their perceived contribution to growth. First is “strong pastoral leadership” with a rating of 62 against 8. The church had stagnated for many years principally due to poor pastoral leadership. The frequent transfers, the leadership politics and the pastoral confrontations have all contributed to weaken the church before the advent of the new pastor, who has not only demonstrated effective managerial ability but has modelled the life of Christ and what he teaches on servant leadership.

The second highest ranked factor is “music and worship style”. It is rated 61 against 10. This is the effect of the newly introduced Pentecostal brand of worship and music that allows self-expression as against western style of emotionally restraint music that characterized worship in the denomination of African Inland Church. Modern musical instruments, manned by many from the youth department, was observed by the researcher as catalysts for the inspirational worship sessions that draw the attention of youths and adults alike to the Sunday services of the church.

However, though the standard of the church building (see Fig. 5) may be relevant to the Dandora suburban dwellers, and so scores 46 against 25 on relevant rating, it seems to the

researcher that it falls short of what metropolitan Nairobians see, in the likes of Nairobi Pentecostal Church, the All Saints Cathedral, All Nations Gospel Church (Fig.7), as well as in other modern cathedrals that litter the city. The location of the building at few kilometres from residential quarters in the Estate account for the irrelevant rating score giving to “strategic location of church building in the city” by the church members.

Nevertheless, the members’ perception gives a good basis for comparison with that of leaders to show the commonly agreed factors responsible for the turnaround of the African Inland Church, Dandora branch.

5.2.4 Grid of common revitalization factors of AIC

Findings from a comparative analysis of the perception of church leaders of AIC, Dandora (Table 5) with that of the members (Table 6) show that the following eight elements, as reflected in the table below, are the critical elements of revitalization in the church:

Table 7: Common perception of leaders and members of AIC on revitalization Factors

FACTORS	LEADERS' PERCEPTION	MEMBERS' PERCEPTION
1. Effective leadership	✓	✓
2. Biblical teaching & spiritual development	✓	✓
3. Prayerfulness and supernaturalism	✓	✓
4. Evangelism and diversified outreaches	✓	✓
5. Cells, Care and Ministry groups	✓	✓
6. Mobilization and empowerments	✓	✓
7. Atmosphere for unity & team spirit	✓	✓
8. Dynamic youth involvement	✓	✓

5.2.4.1 Analysis and interpretation

The leaders' views and that of members coincide on the above eight elements with minimal differences due to use of language in expression and areas of little or more emphasis. The leaders, for example, perceive the ministry groups including men, women, youth and children as a unit that functions collaboratively with the church departments like praise and worship teams in promoting the growth of the church. Members, on the other hand, give a much higher rating to the music and worship style and youth involvement as contributors to growth among other groups and department. This however, does not significantly change the results as the research is on factors contributing to revitalization and not on the degree of relevance of such factors as agents of revitalization (another study on this will be needed to know which factors churches should prioritize above others in the pursuit of church growth).

The researcher notes the difference in the opinions of leaders and members on the subject of church tribe and fighting for rights of the oppressed. While none of the leaders interviewed mentioned these factors as contributors to growth, 40 members rated the influence of tribe on growth to be relevant, while 38 perceive the church as relevant on fighting for the rights of the oppressed. The difference may be due to a gap between the leadership and the members at the church grass root level. The church is located outside Dandora Estate residential quarters. The Pastor (and perhaps some other significant leaders) do not live in the Estate, possibly causing them to be disconnected from all the labour that goes on among members to win their tribesmen and to defend their interests in an unjust milieu. The fact that the church does not keep bio-data of its members makes complete information on members by the leaders more difficult in a growing congregation.

Of the eight elements of common perceptions of revitalization illustrated in Table 7 above, four seem to have occupied the greatest attention of both leaders and members judging by the scores given to them. These are the factors of pastoral leadership, ministry groups (including the C.E.D, music and worship departments and the cells system); evangelism and the teaching of the word of God.

5.3 ALL NATIONS GOSPEL CHURCH (PEFA), GITHURAI

5.3.1 Between stagnation and revitalization

- Resistance to change

In the pursuit of revitalization, findings show that there was open resistance from church members and leaders to the changes that were introduced by the new pastor that was the change agent to take the church out of its life of stagnation. The resistance was demonstrated through the use of discouraging and hurtful words from some sections of both leadership and membership of the congregation. The congregation's past experience of pastoral failures equally led to the negative attitude of hesitance in giving the right hand of fellowship to the new pastor and his intended program that would effect change in the church's vision and mission. Pastoral discouragement marked this initial take-off, but the feeling was temporary as members and leaders started to approve the new face of improvement the church was wearing, and consequently to the pastor that was initiating them.

- Pastoral personality and improved financial and structural developments

One noticeable change in the interim between stagnation and revitalization is the improved financial state of the church in response to the pastor's appeal for structural improvement. The Senior Pastor attributed the huge response to his appeal to "the favour of God" and a new sense of divine presence in the congregation. On how these prepared the ground for the turnaround the church experiences, he gives the explanation below, in his own words.

"Favour of God is a major factor in changing the fortune of a congregation. It is as the angel telling Mary, 'you have found favour with God'. There are pastors in the community who pray and preach better and hold higher academic qualifications than those in ANGC but one can say that God has specially bestowed favour on this church. An example is in the building of the new sanctuary, God instructed the construction at a time when membership was too few to imagine the possibility of such a project, but the church

decided to obey. The pastor asked every member to give a weekly offering of 20 Kenya shillings (about a quarter of a dollar). Every member in the church participated without exception, even the kids told their parents to give them 20 Shillings as offering for the project. Today, every member owns the building and it accounts for why none could be chased out of the sanctuary at the will of any shepherd or elder.”

On the purchase of the first bus owned by the church, the pastor this time asked for a 50 Shillings contribution per member on a regular basis for four years, this was faithfully obeyed and led to the eventual purchase of two big buses, a venture unknown to the denomination or community before this time. None of these could be said to be the doing of a man, judging by the small number of members and the prevailing circumstances. However, the Spirit of God moves on the church as the pastor keeps his vessel holy, bearing in mind the words of Jesus that say: ‘blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God’ (Matt.5:8). That is where the church finds itself preoccupied to focus on the demand of Psalms 24:3-5 that says:

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

5.3.2 Perception of leaders on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from interview guide 14, 15, and 16 (Appendix 2) were analysed. In the All Nations Gospel Church (PEFA), Githurai, nine key elements, whose frequency counts and percentages are reflected below in Table 8, show the perception of church leaders on factors of revitalization:

Table 8: Perception of leaders of ANGK on factors of revitalization

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
United and supportive atmosphere	5	9

Biblical, holistic teaching	3	6
Structures and facilities	5	9
Mobilized membership & youths	8	15
Visionary pastoral leadership	9	17
Incorporation & care of members	4	7
Cell groups & ministries	7	13
Earnest prayers & divine manifestations	6	11
Explosive evangelism	7	13
TOTAL	54	100

n=54

5.3.2.1 Analysis and interpretations

As shown in the table above, church leaders perceived the major revitalization factor of the ANGC, Githurai congregation to be the presence of “visionary pastoral leadership” (17%). This is closely followed by the factor of involvement of “mobilised membership and youths” (15%). “Cell groups and ministries” together with “explosive evangelism” share the third position in terms of contribution to revitalization with a score of 13%. In a not distant fifth position is “earnest prayers and divine manifestations” with 11% score.

Pastor James Wesonga, the senior pastor of the ANGC, deliberately and sacrificially makes himself available for the flock he leads. His vision of servant leadership is the trio of humility, simplicity and availability in shepherding. It keeps his office door open and unmanned for counselling services to his almost 3 000 congregants. They do not only come during his office hours, they have his attention, according to his daughter in an interview with the researcher, even in the dead of the night, if only the needy member would call the pastoral emergency line. His lunch, after the Sunday service that the researcher visited and preached for him was the same simple meal that was served to other co-ministers of the day, irrespective of hierarchy. He went beyond convenience when he shared that meal (and took the lesser portion) with the young leader of Praise and Worship team who was waiting to be interviewed by the researcher.

This attitude gets the membership of the church, especially the youths, highly mobilized to follow in his footsteps, confirming the claim by Maxwell (2001:131, 132) that children insist on behaving like their parents and that disciples are reproduced not as much as through what they are told (on pulpit), but much more after the pattern of who their leaders are (in private). The pastor pays particular attention to youths and their problems. He says:

I concentrate on young people. Before now, the Kimbo community had a lot of them and so it became the church's target audience. As they become converted, they join the church membership, grow up into adult life and get married as Christians. Such youths constitute the present corps of elders of the community. That explains why main focus till date is on young people and children. It is such a consuming passion that even school kids could walk straight into my office and have a chat.

That the pastor is driven by his vision for mission is attested to by the fact that his meagre salary notwithstanding, he would venture to sponsor projects from his conviction in cases of denial of funds from the elders' board so that the church would grow and the community be evangelized. The researcher met him the second day of his seven-day fasting over the 'slow' growth of his congregation vis-à-vis the phenomenal growth of the Kimbo community where the church is located in Githurai location of Kasarani Division.

Emphasis is also put on the cell group work as a means of bringing the community to the saving knowledge of Christ through informal evangelism and neighbourhood care ministries. The over 50 cell leaders hold weekly training on Saturdays with the Senior Pastor. They give regular reports, as a matter of urgency, on members' growth and call for help for those that need pastoral care and attention beyond what the cell offers.

One more reason for the contributory factor of mobilized members and youths is the place of care and enablement in ministry. The church has extremely well-spread micro-financing projects that cater for the needy in its membership (see Chapter 3). There are computer training facilities for unemployed school leavers, a sewing institute for maids and

marginalized women in the community, a motor cycle transport business for converted community gangsters who in their new found faith have no means of livelihood.

Beyond meeting secular aspirations, there is spiritual fulfilment for youths who enjoy the regularly-sponsored indoor carnivals and outdoor trips around the city and beyond for missionary activities. The growth momentum that these produce is a confirmation of the claim that followers accept the premise of followership when a leader performs his functions in ways that promote individual interests and collective well being of his followers (Dym and Hutson 2005: 135).

5.3.3 Perception of members on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from questionnaire item 11 (Appendix 3) were analysed. On a rating of 0-10, respondents determined the degree of contribution to growth of 26 given factors to the ongoing revitalization of the church by assigning a number to it, 0 for non-contribution and 10 for highest contribution. The researcher determined the relevance of each factor to growth by assigning “Relevant” to ratings with 6-10 score and “Irrelevant” to ratings with 0-5 score. The results, for the All Nations Gospel Church Kimbo-Githurai, are reflected in table 9 below:

Table 9: Rating of relevance of growth factors to revitalization of ANG C

Category	Total (6-10) Rating	Total (0-5) Rating	Relevant	Irrelevant
a. Care and concern for members	81	51	✓	
b. Cell group work	86	47	✓	
c. Children ministry	91	42	✓	
d. Church building and assets	96	37	✓	
e. Church doctrines and beliefs	82	47	✓	
f. Church planting and mission work	86	45	✓	
g. Dynamic youth ministry	84	46	✓	
h. Effective incorporation of new members	75	57	✓	

i. Evangelism by members	82	50	✓	
j. Expository preaching from the Bible	92	39	✓	
k. Fighting for rights of the oppressed in society	52	75		✓
l. Friendly atmosphere for new and old members	82	42	✓	
m. Healings, miracles and deliverances	64	67		✓
n. Holiness and integrity in leadership	95	36	✓	
o. Mass media and electronic evangelism	42	90		✓
p. Messages of prosperity, health and blessings	83	47	✓	
q. Music and worship style	103	29	✓	
r. Prophetic utterances and revelations	71	58	✓	
s. Publicity and marketing of church activities	70	57	✓	
t. Prudent and accountable management of resources	76	43	✓	
u. Strategic location of church building in the city	84	42	✓	
v. Strong pastoral leadership	106	27	✓	
w. Team leadership among church workers	95	37	✓	
x. Tribal influence of church on attendees	61	66		✓
y. Training and empowering members to serve	95	38	✓	
z. Vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ	112	17	✓	

5.3.3.1 Analysis and interpretation

As indicated in Table 9 above, 22 selected growth factors are perceived by members of ANGIC, Githurai to be contributing to the growth of the church. These factors are classified under the following nine categories of revitalization factors:

- Church ministries and youth involvement
- Physical facilities
- Preaching and spiritual development
- Atmosphere for unity and worship
- Prayers and supernaturalism
- Leadership
- Evangelism and empowerment
- Cell groups and care ministries
- Media and marketing outlets

The members gave the highest rating of relevance to the two factors of preaching the word of God and pastoral leadership. For example, the communication of “vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ” has a score of 112 against 17 to occupy the first position in the rating scale. “Strong pastoral leadership” follows with a score of 106 against 27. That preaching and teaching the Bible is key to members is equally reflected in the rating of 92 against 39 given to “expository preaching from the Bible”, while the importance attached to the leadership factor is again shown in the high rating of 95 against 36 that “holiness and integrity in leadership” as a factor of growth scores. It portrays the ANGIC as a church that grows mainly from the pulpit. The message and the messenger of the word determine the life of the congregation. While other factors are not minimized, it is the preacher and his preaching that majorly revitalizes the ANGIC, Githurai branch.

Notwithstanding, responses from members show that the ANG C grows on all fronts of basic church growth indexes, except for the four components of “fighting for the rights of the oppressed in society”, “healings, miracles and deliverances”, “mass media and electronic evangelism”, and “tribal influence of church on attendees”. Some of the perceptions need to be qualified because of the contradictory experience of the researcher concerning the reality of the church life of ANG C.

The members seem to perceive the “fighting for the rights of the oppressed in society” only as a militant or political act, neither of which interest the leadership of the church. The focus of the church is on the socio-economic dimensions of oppression, symbolized by unemployment, underemployment and poor standard of living of its members on the one hand, and that of the entire community on the other hand. It is this conviction that accounts for the ongoing welfare projects of computer training classes, sewing institute, bus and motorcycle transportation businesses being run by the church for the unemployed members, the marginalized slum community and those living below the poverty line in and around the neighbourhood (see chapter 3 of this research for a detailed analysis). In reality then, the church is engaged in fighting for the rights of the oppressed except that it is in a different dimension from the perception of its members.

Church tribe no longer seems to have a grip on the congregation. The leadership cadre as well as manner of worship is completely de-tribalised, making room to a contextualized Pentecostal model of leadership and worship that projects the western style in the English first service and the Kenyan style in the Swahili second service. The fact that the Senior Pastor is a foreign missionary may have helped this development in the ANG C more than in other congregations under study.

Another factor perceived to be of no relevance to the growth of the church is media and electronic evangelism. It is still an unexplored area by the congregation. This is much reflected in the words of the Senior Pastor. He said to the researcher during the interview “Right now I am dreaming of doing what our church has not done before. I am going to the media this year so that I can showcase a different image of the community of our church”.

However, the members' perception gives a good basis for comparison with that of the leaders to show the commonly agreed factors responsible for the turnaround of the All Nations Gospel Church (PEFA), Kimbo-Githurai branch.

5.3.4 Grid of common revitalization factors of ANG C

Findings from a comparative analysis of the perception of church leaders of ANG C, Githurai (Table 8) with that of the members (Table 9) show that ten elements, as reflected in Table 10 below, are the critical elements of revitalization in the church:

Table 10: Common perception of leaders and members of ANG C on revitalization factors

FACTORS	LEADERS' PERCEPTION	MEMBERS' PERCEPTION
1. United and supportive atmosphere	✓	✓
2. Biblical preaching and teaching	✓	✓
3. Physical facilities	✓	✓
4. Youth involvement	✓	✓
5. Leadership	✓	✓
6. Cell groups and care ministries	✓	✓
7. Evangelism	✓	✓
8. Church ministries	✓	✓
9. Mobilization and empowerment	✓	✓
10. Incorporation and care ministries	✓	✓

5.3.4.1 Analysis and interpretation

Leaders' view and that of members coincide on the above ten elements as being responsible for the turnaround of the ANG C from a stagnant to a revitalized church. There is, however, a major divergence on the views expressed by each group on the role of prayer and supernaturalism in the revitalization of the church. While the leaders describe the church as a centre of "earnest prayers and divine manifestations", only 64 members (as against 67) rated "healings, miracles and deliverances" as relevant to growth. However,

the “irrelevant” rating is overshadowed by another element of the supernatural, “prophetical utterances and revelations”. Members give the factor a high relevance rating of 71 against 58.

The difference in perception seems to be due to absence of visible, tangible healings in the normal life of the congregation. The Senior Pastor noted this possibility and gave it as one of the reasons why he invites ministers of “greater anointing for signs and wonders” to minister constantly to the congregation. That the church is highly mobilized on prayer is obvious to the researcher. His first contact with the Senior Pastor was on the second day of a seven-day prayer and fasting session for numerical growth of his church and for a breakthrough of conversion in the phenomenally growing church community of Kimbo-Githurai. Simultaneously, the congregation was equally at the tail end of a 40-day rotational prayer-fasting schedule for revival. If this is the normal life of the church, then the role of congregational prayerfulness cannot be wished away in its growth momentum.

5.4 DELIVERANCE CHURCH

5.4.1 Between stagnation and revitalization

- Healing the wounded

The greatest challenge in the attempt to launch the revitalization process of Deliverance Church, Githurai after its years of stagnation was the large number of spiritually wounded members who remained confused and disillusioned with the split in the church. Added to this was the unceremonious departure of a beloved pastor who is replaced with a perceived low-in-rank minister. Matters were not helped by the fact that the bishops, who have been holding forth, in rotations, had to stop visiting the congregation and ministering to people whose wound was just healing.

Unable to reconcile themselves to the truth that something good can come out of Nazareth (John 1:46), members kept going out of the fold to seek counselling from the formerly visiting church bishops. However, the new pastor demonstrated a large leadership heart by

loving the people despite the developments. He demonstrated mature understanding of the plight of the flock and intensified his ministries of visitation, prayer and encouragement to individuals and families. He gave the congregants needed time to heal and to voice their doubts and expectations from the new leadership. It eventually paid off, and the groundwork for revitalization was laid.

- Pastoral dilemmas

Another stumbling block to revitalizing the church was a number of pastoral dilemmas that hindered an effective take-off of needed changes. One example is the ensued qualification rivalry between the assistant pastor who holds a master's degree in Theology and the senior pastor with a lesser and unrelated qualification for ministry. The former considers himself as the rightful person for the post of senior pastor, while the latter knows he is 'the chosen one' for the duty. The confusing atmosphere becomes pronounced as the senior pastor, according to one of the leaders in the church, lacks the authoritative personality expected in a crisis situation to draw a dividing line that everyone ought to respect for institutional survival. Furthermore, the senior pastor had no power to hire and fire. The administrative staff remained under the leadership of the assistant pastor, as it was since the era of stagnation. According to the senior pastor, it took a combination of personal integrity and counselling skill acquired in his university days to see him through the long, trying time.

5.4.2 Perception of leaders on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from interview guide 14, 15, and 16 (Appendix 2) were analysed. In the Deliverance Church, Githurai, nine key elements, whose frequency counts and percentages are reflected below in Table 11, show the perception of church leaders on factors of revitalization:

Table 11: Perception of leaders of DC on factors of revitalization

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Atmosphere of unity	5	6
Evangelism and outreaches	8	10
Mobilized membership & youth	6	8
Cell groups and ministries	9	11
Divine presence & spiritual growth	6	8
Training and discipleship (Encounter)	14	18
Bible Studies & biblical teachings	8	10
Prayerfulness and supernaturalism	10	13
Model & communicating leadership	13	16
TOTAL	79	100

n=79

5.4.3 Findings and interpretation

As indicated in the table above, “training and discipleship” (18%) tops the list of factors that caused the turnaround of the Deliverance Church, Githurai location. Second on the list is “model and communicating leadership” with a score of 16%, followed by the factor of “prayerfulness and supernaturalism” (13%). “Cell groups and ministries” had 11% to be the fourth factor of revitalization while “evangelism and outreaches” together with “bible studies and biblical teachings” shared the fifth position with a joint percentage score of 10.

Almost all the factors of revitalization are tied to one driving force, the dominance of training and discipleship in the life of the Deliverance Church, Githurai. It dictates leadership drive, promotes the intensity of prayers, raises the growth and development of cell groups, as well as controls the evangelism strategy and hermeneutical interpretations of the Bible by the church. This dominant objective is obvious to every first comer to the congregation; the sign post of the church at its entrance publicises the DC motto: “Every Christian a leader” (see Fig.11). The two tools the church uses to implement this are the leadership cells and the Encounter.

- LEADERSHIP CELLS

The “LEADERSHIP CELL” is a group of twelve couples led by the senior pastor and his wife. It is a “closed cell”, that is, it cannot grow beyond the twelve couples. During meetings, the men come apart and are led by the pastor, while the pastor’s wife chairs the ladies’ discussion. They are the leaders of the church’s cell leaders. The charge they receive is to model the life of Christ and his ministry to the rest of the congregation. This they do by meeting twice in a row for teaching (on weekly basis) and going out to practically evangelize on the third. Souls that are saved in such outreaches are personally trained to become disciples and constitute a cell group to be led by the trainer from the Leadership cell.

In time, the cell grows and becomes closed to outsiders by turning it into a cell for cell leaders who will continue the same process by each couple in the cell reaching out to form other cells. As leadership cells multiply around the Githurai community of the church, souls are increasingly won, the church grows numerically and the spate of leadership production increases, causing the church to have enough manpower to direct its affairs in all departments and groups of the church. Different categories of members are also brought into the kingdom of God - from the very poor in the low income settlements surrounding the church to academics from two of the main universities in the city, the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University. A corps of enlightened spiritual leaders, who have been won to Christ from different sectors of the society and are now dependable disciples in the church, help to serve as spiritual guides in the Encounter, a unit which serves as the live wire of the revitalization process of the church.

- THE ENCOUNTER

Perhaps the most powerful tool of discipleship employed by the Deliverance Church is the “ENCOUNTER”. The program is divided into three training stages: encounter, post-encounter and re-encounter. It is anchored for the church by the associate pastor who cumulatively leads as the senior pastor’s wife in charge of women in the congregation. Her detailed narration is reported below and it shows how the encounter program runs in the church.

“Encounter is about growing the church, spiritually and numerically. The objective is to make participants become leaders in the service of Christ and of his church. The vision is born out of the realization that the church harbours people who are wounded, sometimes unforgiving and are handicapped by besetting sins that keep them from being the people that God intends them to be. With the church’s vision of “EVERY CHRISTIAN A LEADER”, encounter targets healing every member who comes into the church, and then sends these people forth in the ministry of healing others.”

(The researcher sees this as following the footsteps of the three-fold ministry of Jesus who went about preaching, teaching and healing and sending out the disciples to do likewise, Luke 4:18, 19; Acts 10:38; Matt.4:23; 9:35; Luke 9:2; 10:9).

The week before the encounter begins, interested first time participants among new and old members are mandatorily require to observe a spiritual preparation of three days of prayer and fasting. From the time they come to the church premises for the take-off on a Friday, they put off their phones and do not speak again until Sunday afternoon after the program. The trainees are gender grouped into four per group with a GUIDE as the fifth person. The guides have already gone through the process and serve as spiritual watchmen. They listen to a general talk by the program director on the retreat ground on what it means to encounter God in life; they in turn then meet the trainees in the rooms sharing same on a one-to-one talk and encouraging deep meditations on the lessons learnt. This is called the BREAK AWAY session in the encounter, a kind of breaking away from people to simply meditate, as no loud prayers are permitted.

The first night’s experience is geared towards self-encounter, using the model of Zacchaeus climbing the sycamore tree in order to encounter Jesus (Luke 19:1-10). Here the chains of all limitations (using the parallel of height hindrance of Zacchaeus) are broken as participants reflect on their lives on buried issues of hurts, non-forgiveness, besetting sins, guilt, etceteras and present those failures at the foot of the cross in the second session on Saturday morning, which is dedicated to revealing the Cross of Christ in another teaching and personal talk session. Participants are symbolically taken through the process of the cross to see what the salvation of humanity cost Jesus. As the scenes are made vividly real through meditation, the most hardened heart melts; the Christians who

meddle with sin and do not take their personal salvation seriously experience authentic restoration from backsliding.

They come to church to testify their experience the next day to encourage others and proclaim their victory. The researcher attended one such testimony Sunday. The Associate Pastor gave samples:

“A Christian widow whose husband died a long time ago, but was bitter against him for his “evil deeds”, got healed at heart in one of the Encounter sessions. Another who was a rape victim at age five but now a mother of grown up teenagers was still hurting from the burden of her abuse until she came for the Encounter. Her hurt was healed and she came to the open church to declare her total deliverance.”

After encountering OTHERS who have wronged them, participants are not allowed to leave the retreat ground on Saturday until they listen to the talk on “CLOSING DOORS”. This concerns what to do to maintain spiritual victory after the divine deliverance that each has experienced. This includes the post-encounter experience of ten Sundays of detailed personal devotion recordings, early attendance in church and an eventual registration in the School of Leaders.

At the SCHOOL OF LEADERS (SOL), there are three levels of lessons, each running for TEN SUNDAYS of two hours per Sunday. Level one addresses the issue of Bible doctrines; level two is on finance and success in life while level three is on the “Open Cell”. The open cell addresses the strategy and manner of starting and operating cell groups and discipling converts who want to be registered for upcoming Encounters. No participant graduates from the SOL until he/she begins a new cell group.

Graduates from the School of Leaders go for a convocation ceremony at the “RE-ENCOUNTER”. The re-encounter takes a night and an afternoon, Friday night to Saturday afternoon. Here the graduates are commissioned as hands are laid on them and are given the Christ-like towel of servant leadership (John 13:5). The ceremony over, they should embark on winning souls and making disciples of nations (Matt.28:18-20). They begin cells; meet other believers and invites the neighbourhoods to Christian fellowship, care and training for kingdom service. In these cells, the practical application of the pastor’s

message for the Sunday is discussed and gender group meetings take care of family-related issues and involvement with the larger society.

The entire system is sustained by the factor of a “model and communicating leadership” that is well entrenched in the hierarchy of the church. This is exemplified by the senior pastor’s family life. Respondents speak about this with passion; the associate pastor declares that her joy lies in being a spiritual mother to the congregants.

The fact that the couple met at the Bible school with each sustaining a strong conviction on divine call to the ministry seems to be an asset. A pastoral family with strong passion for holiness of life and credibility in leadership cannot but positively impart the congregation, especially as the virtues are emphasised in the weekly Bible studies that complement the church’s Sunday sermons. The senior pastor’s training as a professional counsellor is an additional impetus in building the communication skill of the under-shepherds in training.

5.4.4 Perception of members on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from questionnaire item 11 (Appendix 3) were analysed. On a rating of 0-10, respondents determined the degree of contribution to growth of 26 given factors to the ongoing revitalization of the church by assigning a number to it, 0 for non-contribution and 10 for highest contribution. The researcher determined the relevance of each factor to growth by assigning “Relevant” to ratings with 6-10 score and “Irrelevant” to ratings with 0-5 score. The results, for the Deliverance Church Githurai, are reflected in table 12 below:

Table 12: Rating of relevance of growth factors to revitalization of DC

Category	Total (6-10) Rating	Total (0-5) Rating	Relevant	Irrelevant
a. Care and concern for members	58	55	✓	
b. Cell group work	65	45	✓	
c. Children ministry	80	33	✓	
d. Church building and assets	58	54	✓	
e. Church doctrines and beliefs	73	36	✓	
f. Church planting and mission work	68	43	✓	
g. Dynamic youth ministry	88	21	✓	
h. Effective incorporation of new members	74	27	✓	
i. Evangelism by members	81	30	✓	
j. Expository preaching from the Bible	86	22	✓	
k. Fighting for rights of the oppressed in society	41	65		✓
l. Friendly atmosphere for new and old members	74	30	✓	
m. Healings, miracles and deliverances	78	32	✓	
n. Holiness and integrity in leadership	89	20	✓	
o. Mass media and electronic evangelism	34	74		✓
p. Messages of prosperity, health and blessings	63	43	✓	
q. Music and worship style	82	27	✓	
r. Prophetic utterances and revelations	60	49	✓	
s. Publicity and marketing of church activities	50	56		✓
t. Prudent and accountable management of resources	78	24	✓	
u. Strategic location of church building in the city	66	40	✓	
v. Strong pastoral leadership	92	19	✓	

w. Team leadership among church workers	87	23	✓	
x. Tribal influence of church on attendees	40	66		✓
y. Training and empowering members to serve	89	21	✓	
z. Vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ	92	18	✓	

5.4.4.1 Analysis and interpretation

As indicated in Table 12 above, 22 selected growth factors are perceived by members of DC, Githurai to be contributing to the growth of the church. These factors are classified under eight main categories, they are:

- Church ministries and youth involvement
- Physical facilities
- Preaching and spiritual development
- Atmosphere for unity and worship
- Prayers and supernaturalism
- Leadership
- Evangelism and empowerments
- Cell groups and care ministries

The implication is that the DC grows on all fronts of basic church growth indexes, according to the members, except for the four elements of “fighting for rights of the oppressed in society”, “mass media and electronic evangelism”, “publicity and marketing of church activities”, and “tribal influence of church on attendees”.

The low financial capacity of the church coupled with its preoccupation with evangelism and discipleship to rebuild its weakened morale and scattered flock seem to make some of these elements take the back role for the meantime. One element that ought to form the “irrelevant” group but missing on the list is “church building and assets”. It was rated 58 to 54 on level of relevance.

On the issue of church tribe, the Senior Pastor offer an explanation for its minimal influence on growth, he says: “It is a blessing in disguise that I do not come from the Kikuyu tribe that dominates the surrounding church community. This gives me the leeway to mobilize the entire church on reaching all tribes in the city with equal commitment”. This tribe-neutrality stance of the pastor equally makes it easy to build the leadership corps of the church around all tribes that are represented in the congregation, making prospective members’ choice based on factors outside tribal patriotism.

The dynamic influence of youth on the growth of the Deliverance Church is noted in the overwhelming rating of the factor by 88 members (as against 21) as being a relevant contribution to the ongoing revitalization of the congregation. The youth permeates almost all aspects of the church life, especially in the worship team, ushering, the Encounter and even the eldership. This is understood from the fact that the church split of 2002 took the church to a new beginning of raising dedicated members, which it seems to have found in the young folks who were less intimidated by the negative history and institutional rifts that tore the church apart.

Arguably no other factor surpasses the joint leadership commitment, love and unparallel integrity of the Senior Pastor and his wife in keeping the church growing at its present outstanding rate. Of the two highest rated growth factors with a relevant score of 92, “strong pastoral leadership” is one. The high rating of the factor of “holiness and integrity in leadership” (89 against 20 in relevance to growth) is another pointer to the role moral leadership plays in church growth. The couple visits members together, solves issues in unity and ministers at each person’s level of gifting and anointing that the members confess do keep their expectations constantly met. It is the secret to what the congregants call the favour of God upon the congregation.

5.4.5 Grid of common revitalization factors of DC

Findings from a comparative analysis of the perception of church leaders of DC, Githurai (Table 11) with that of the members (Table 12) show that nine elements, as reflected in Table 13 below, are the critical elements of revitalization in the church:

Table 13: Common perception of leaders and members of DC on Revitalization Factors

FACTORS	LEADERS' PERCEPTION	MEMBERS' PERCEPTION
1. Atmosphere for unity	✓	✓
2. Evangelism and outreaches	✓	✓
3. Youth involvement	✓	✓
4. Cell groups	✓	✓
5. Church ministries & mobilized membership	✓	✓
6. Training and empowerment	✓	✓
7. Preaching and spiritual development	✓	✓
8. Prayers and supernaturalism	✓	✓
9. Credible, pastoral leadership	✓	✓

5.4.5.1 Analysis and interpretation

There is unanimity of perception of leaders and members of Deliverance Church, Githurai on the above nine elements as the factors responsible for the revitalization of the church. A pastoral leadership that is passionately described as credible on management of church resources, moral in relationship, exemplary in family life and effective in strategic training tops the list of agreed factors of revitalization. That the church is built on making every Christian a leader explains the aggressiveness in the congregation's pursuit of the cell system of evangelism, discipleship and care. The highly fruitful Encounter program of discipleship, anchored by the wife of the Senior Pastor who doubles as the church's Associate Pastor, remains the backbone of the church's growing number of kingdom workers and balanced church growth.

One obvious and strange point of divergence in perception between the leaders and members is on the contribution of the “church building and assets” to revitalization. Though observably the church’s greatest obstacle to growth and equally so expressed by both the Pastor and all elders interviewed, 54 members rate it a growth factor. Perhaps, the obvious strategic location of the church in the crowded market/residential quarter of Githurai 45 overshadow the perception of the members above the narrow confine in which the church building is erected. The Senior Pastor himself laments this when he declares:

The constraint of space constitutes the greatest nightmare of the church. I believe we are a good church, doing the best we can, but we are squeezed between residential houses. We have no parking lot as the neighbours build kiosks that hinder movements and we have no right to stop them. Even if we had the finance to buy up their space for expansion, we cannot be sure of their willingness to accept an offer. It is the duty of Nairobi City Council to solve problem of road network, ours is to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

5.5 GOSPEL REVIVAL CENTRE CHURCH, RIRUTA

5.5.1 Between stagnation and revitalization

- Resistance to leadership change

Findings show that the attempt by the GRCC to initiate changes following the period of stagnation was met with resistance by the congregation and confrontation by some in leadership positions. The resistance was mostly against the change in pastoral leadership following the death of the old pastor, the circumstances of whose death remain largely unclear to many members who prefer to attribute it to spiritual elements rather than mere automobile accident that it was.

The congregational resistance equally leads to a lack-lustre posture in followership. There was a case of ‘wait-and-see’ attitude leading to non-committal of members and top leadership to church vision and goals.

- Installation of new leadership structure

As the new pastor gradually gained the confidence of the congregation and the church starts to own the newly introduced vision for growth, “a central leadership structure, flowing top-down was installed to replace the bottom-up arrangement that did not give sufficient room for leadership authority over church direction”, according to the Senior Pastor. The new structure removed the confusion of members as to who was responsible for what in running the affairs of the church. More people started offering themselves to the Lord’s service as volunteers. The level of financial giving to the church rose and a new piece of land for church building was bought. All these prepared the church for the eventual numerical growth that followed.

5.5.2 Perception of leaders on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from interview guide 14, 15, and 16 (Appendix 2) were analysed. In the Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta, seven key elements, whose frequency counts and percentages are reflected below in Table 14, show the perception of church leaders on factors of revitalization:

Table 14: Perception of leaders of GRCC on factors of revitalization

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Biblical preaching & bible studies	8	15
Intensive corporate prayers	9	16
Diversified outreaches & training	10	18
Effective, ethical & sacrificial leadership	7	13
Mobilized membership and youths	6	11
Atmosphere of unity and restoration	10	18

Cell groups and ministry groups	5	9
TOTAL	55	100

n=55

5.5.2.1 Findings and interpretation

As shown in the table above, “diversified outreaches and training” and “atmosphere of unity and restoration” received the highest score (18%) as factors of revitalization in the GRCC, according to the pastors and elders that constitute the leadership in the church. Next to these two leading areas was “intensive corporate prayers” (16%), which was closely followed by “biblical preaching and bible studies” with a score of 15%. The factors of leadership (13%) and youth involvement (11%) though not in the group of the top five are closer to it than the role of home cells and other ministry groups in the church with 11% and 9% respectively.

Leaders in the GRCC hold the view that igniting the fire of revival in Nairobi city demands a wake-up call to prayers and fasting in the congregation and the preaching of the word of God as the apostles did in the Acts of Apostles. To carry out both duties, the church holds regular internal and external meetings like seminars, indoor revivals, conferences, and weekly bible studies where the word of God is preached and intensive prayers offered. Many of the regular meetings also provide forums for encouraging, training and motivating leaders to become active and committed to the vision and mission of the church.

Most importantly, the meetings are interactive platforms geared towards uniting members who have long suffered from tribal schism, political differences and spiritual suspicion during the years of stagnation and ‘strange occurrences’ in the body polity. The more the word is preached and obeyed, the more cohesion comes into relationships and forgiveness becomes the order of the day, leading to more restoration and less tension. It is then no wonder the close interrelatedness of the leading four factors that brought about the turnaround of the congregation- “diversified outreaches and training”, “atmosphere of unity and restoration”, “intensive corporate prayers” and “biblical preaching and bible

studies”. This confirms the claim of Buys (1989: 264) that “the church as a whole must give testimony of Jesus Christ with their practicing of mutual love and fellowship” and that “growth will not take place if mutual love and persistent prayer in the congregation does not take high priority”.

It is not clear how much the Annual Convention of over a hundred churches organised by the church every August contributes to its revitalization. However, the GRCC shows a lot of commitment to inter-church forum where different preachers of different gifts minister to build up church members and foster spiritual growth. The church seems to share Calvin’s view that that God deliberately does not bestow all gifts on any one person to prevent independence and isolationism, but rather every one receiving a certain measure to be brought into a common pool of mutual service in the body of Christ (Calvin 1849:271). In other words, as Mashau (2008:90) puts it: spiritual gifts are not conferred upon the church by God in vain, neither are they meant for individual enrichment at will. The common advantage that God seeks for Christ’s church is the edification of believers and the work of the ministry (Eph.4:11, 12). Gifts are given to achieve this and not for personal advantage and as Calvin again insists: “the society of the godly cannot exist except when each one is content with his own measure, and allows himself by turns to be assisted by the gifts of others” (Calvin 1849:404). Evidently, the GRCC holds this view very dear in its commitment to ministers’ conferences, which seems to be positively imparting the many participating congregations, judging by their regular attendances and numerical representations.

The Television and Media Ministry of the church is another medium through which the emphasis on the preaching of the word is actualized on a regular basis. The participation of youths among the larger mobilized members and the strategic role of the ministry groups, especially the cell groups and praise-worship teams are noted by the leaders as contributors to the ongoing revitalization in the church.

5.5.3 Perception of members on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from questionnaire item 11 (Appendix 3) were

analysed. On a rating of 0-10, respondents determined the degree of contribution to growth of 26 given factors to the ongoing revitalization of the church by assigning a number to it, 0 for non-contribution and 10 for highest contribution. The researcher determined the relevance of each factor to growth by assigning “Relevant” to ratings with 6-10 score and “Irrelevant” to ratings with 0-5 score. The results, for the Gospel Revival Church Centre Riruta, are reflected in table 15 below:

Table 15: Rating of relevance of growth factors to revitalization of GRCC

Category	Total (6-10) Rating	Total (0-5) Rating	Relevant	Irrelevant
a. Care and concern for members	58	55	✓	
b. Cell group work	71	41	✓	
c. Children ministry	82	29	✓	
d. Church building and assets	70	42	✓	
e. Church doctrines and beliefs	76	35	✓	
f. Church planting and mission work	70	40	✓	
g. Dynamic youth ministry	76	36	✓	
h. Effective incorporation of new members	57	53	✓	
i. Evangelism by members	53	59		✓
j. Expository preaching from the Bible	86	23	✓	
k. Fighting for rights of the oppressed in society	40	71		✓
l. Friendly atmosphere for new and old members	61	51	✓	
m. Healings, miracles and deliverances	44	67		✓
n. Holiness and integrity in leadership	77	33	✓	
o. Mass media and electronic evangelism	54	57		✓
p. Messages of prosperity, health and blessings	55	54	✓	
q. Music and worship style	75	39	✓	
r. Prophetical utterances and	49	57		✓

revelations				
s. Publicity and marketing of church activities	48	60		✓
t. Prudent and accountable management of resources	61	40	✓	
u. Strategic location of church building in the city	45	61		✓
v. Strong pastoral leadership	84	26	✓	
w. Team leadership among church workers	80	30	✓	
x. Tribal influence of church on attendees	21	86		✓
y. Training and empowering members to serve	74	38	✓	
z. Vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ	92	17	✓	

5.5.3.1 Analysis and interpretations

As indicated in Table 15 above, 18 selected factors are perceived by members of GRCC Riruta, to be making relevant contribution to the growth of the church. These are grouped under the following seven categories of factors of revitalization:

- Church ministries and youth involvement
- Physical facilities
- Preaching and spiritual development
- Atmosphere for unity and worship
- Leadership
- Evangelism and empowerment
- Cell groups and care ministries

The implication is that the growth of the GRCC is not significantly influenced by the other eight elements of “evangelism by members” with a score of 53 against 59 on rating of relevance; “fighting for the rights of the oppressed in society” (score 40 as against 71); “healings, miracles and deliverances” (score 44 as against 67); “mass media and electronic evangelism” (score 54 as against 57); “prophetical utterances and revelations” (score of 49 as against 57); “publicity and marketing of church activities” (score 48 as against 60); “strategic location of church building in the city” (score 45 as against 61); and “tribal influence of church on attendees” (score 21 as against 86).

However, an analysis of the seven main categories under which the selected 18 factors that are rated relevant fall, show that the church members do not actually diminish the role of such growth elements as evangelism, prayers and preaching in the revitalization of the church, on the contrary such factors are accentuated under the umbrella of different ministry groups and functions.

Three omissions in the rating of factors of revitalization by members demand special attention because of their importance in church growth. The first is “evangelism by members”; the other two are “healings, miracles and deliverances” and “prophetical utterances and revelations”, two elements of the presence and efficacy of prayers in the church. The three would be examined under the broad categories of evangelism and prayers in the GRCC.

- Evangelism in the GRCC

Evangelism in the GRCC is carried out mostly under the umbrella of the various church ministry groups. This includes an effective ministry towards men, women and children. It also embodies a dynamic youth ministry that searches for teenagers and young adults to bring to the saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Many of these ministry groups fuel their membership through the various seminars, workshops, and numerous outreaches the church regularly carries out. Members seem to perceive that these evangelistic outreaches take more of their time and yield more fruits than person-to-person soul-winning work that has no church activity or program to serve as invitation

bait. While the church therefore could be said to be evangelistic, it has no special day of evangelism, as practiced by some churches in Nairobi city.

- Prayers in the GRCC

There is a strong connection between the “atmosphere for unity and worship” and the prayer ministry of the GRCC. Responses from the members give a positive nod to the influencing factor of an atmosphere for unity and worship in the growth of the church. The elements rated relevant here include a “friendly atmosphere for new and old members”, “music and worship style” of the church, and ‘team leadership among church workers’. This atmosphere is significant noting the pervasive spirit of suspicion and name calling that characterized the stagnation period of the congregation in the wake of strange death occurrences among the top leadership hierarchy of the church. The Pentecostal worship approach that lights up the congregation in its three services every Sunday equally has a special appeal to both new and old members who do not only respond by “worshipping in the spirit”, but equally persuades many to so join.

These worship sessions are characterized with intercessory prayers and supplications for persons, institutions and nations on personal needs and the accomplishment of *missio Dei* in the world, making the GRCC a praying congregation. Prophetic utterances are not uncommon in such sessions too. Furthermore, the Pastors and elders confirm that every Friday night is set apart for an all-night prayer meeting that requires the participation of the entire church (see Chapter 3). These prayers have assisted in procuring spiritual healing for the church on matters that hitherto divided it politically, tribally and spiritually. However, members seem to perceive healing more in the realm of cure from physical than spiritual ailments.

On the list of positive rating are the leading factors of “preaching the “vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ” with a score of 92 against 17 and “expository preaching from the Bible” with scores of 86 against 23. It shows the pre-eminence that the GRCC gives to preaching and teaching the Word in its meetings. The pastor explained that the goal of all the weekly meetings is to achieve the teaching of the Bible to members on a non-stop manner. Members see this as a continual catalyst for growth.

Leadership equally plays a key role in the growth of GRCC. Responses from respondents show a rating score of 77 as against 33 for “holiness and integrity in leadership” as a contributing factor to growth; “prudent and accountable management of resources” by leaders got 61 score as against 40 in relevance; and “strong pastoral leadership” score an all high rating of 84 for relevance as against 26 for irrelevance. These scores are the testaments of the strategic role of leadership that is credible, resourceful and a model in church revitalization.

Conclusively, the members’ rating for factors of growth seems to include not just the main categories that are clearly compartmentalized in the church work, but also the “invisible curriculum” (cf. Luther 2001:163) of prayers and empowerment of members that find expressed in other more visible church endeavours. In the same vein, the fact that 70 members as against 42 rate “church building and assets” as a factor of growth show the importance of physical facilities to the revitalization of the church, even if as indicated by 61 responses, the church building is not strategically located in the city to sufficiently impart growth.

5.5.4 Grid of common revitalization factors of GRCC

Findings from a comparative analysis of the perception of church leaders of GRCC, Githurai (Table 14) with that of the members (Table 15) indicate that ten elements, as reflected in Table 16 below, are the critical factors of revitalization in the church:

Table 16: Common perception of leaders and members of GRCC on revitalization factors

FACTORS	LEADERS’ PERCEPTION	MEMBERS’ PERCEPTION
1. Evangelism via church planting, mission & outreaches	✓	✓
2. Church ministry groups	✓	✓
3. Youth involvement	✓	✓
4. Strong & ethical pastoral leadership	✓	✓
5. Atmosphere for unity and worship	✓	✓

6. Cell groups	✓	✓
7. Training and empowering members to serve	✓	✓
8. Congregational prayers in worship and meetings	✓	✓
9. Teaching biblical doctrines and intensive faith	✓	✓
10. Mobilized membership	✓	✓

5.5.4.1 Analysis and interpretation

The comparative perceptions of both church leaders and members of GRCC on factors of the church's revitalization show some marked differences in the understanding of how evangelism is practiced in the congregation and the way the outreaches and cell groups of the church influence its evangelistic work and numerical growth. A common view, on the other hand, is held on the subject of such key factors as leadership, atmosphere for unity and team spirit, and the supremacy of the preaching the word of God. The points of divergence and convergence are briefly examined below.

Evangelism as a growth factor is perceived by the church leaders to be achieved through the regular seminars, revival meetings and evangelistic crusades the church holds to attract unbelievers to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while at the same time edifying the believers to grow in Christlikeness. On the other hand, the members see the church mission work in the city and its church planting activities as the most influential aspects of the congregation's evangelistic work. The perceptive from both sides confirm the claim by Buys (1989:265) that "spiritual growth and growth in numbers are very closely linked", and that believers' "adoration of their Lord in public worship, their teaching and pastoral work and their fellowship should equip them for their task as co-workers in both the quantitative and qualitative growth of the church".

Besides the diversified outreaches and church planting mission, another soul-winning thrust of the church is in its cell groups that are scattered around the residential quarters of the members. The cell groups serve as avenues for evangelizing the neighbourhoods of the church in an informal way. Souls won are effectively incorporated through constant visitations, prayers and practical care ministries. Incorporation also includes the

identification of gifts and talents with the intent of incorporating the disciples made into the different service departments of the church. It seems then that while members may not see the relevance of a non-existing day for evangelism and training, the responsibilities are being carried out as a lifestyle within the cell group system of the Gospel Revival Centre Church, Riruta.

Another factor for revitalization of the GRCC that is much emphasised is the unique team leadership spirit that pervades the church work of the congregation. Team leadership is reflected in the GRCC in two main faces. The first face is in the sharing of the pulpit among pastors and full-time ministers who preach the all-week lunch hour services and other daily meetings that take place in the sanctuary. The distribution reflects the acceptance by the church hierarchy that church leaders are not uniformly gifted (Adeyemo 2009:67), yet each gift and style from God should be allowed to function for the edification of the body of Christ (Rom.12:6-8). In addition, each of these meetings requires singers and other attendants who do not only give their talent but time to see that preaching and care of members is primal in the life of the church.

The second face of team spirit is in the agreement to preach the “vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ” in an expository presentation that is devoid of contradiction in biblical hermeneutic as agreed upon by the elders and ministers. The many meetings and different preachers on the pulpit of GRCC open the loophole for doctrinal disagreement and deviation but this is not reported in the life of the church, neither by the leaders nor by church members.

Respondents also show the great importance attached to the place of leadership and holistic preaching in the congregation as factors of its revitalization. Both the top and subordinate leadership corps are described by interviewees to be encouraging, equipping, showing the way as models and communicating clearly the visions of the next stage in the mission of the church. Each leader understands the church as the family of God and responsibly holds the father-figure in it by guiding and leading the flock to the safe haven (Fernando 1985:15).

Respondents speak of the church’s commitment to an uncompromising preaching of the Bible in all its meetings. Bible studies are geared towards expository teaching that satisfies

spiritual thirst and hunger. Inspirational teachings on “messages of prosperity, health and blessings” are rated relevant to growth, though with an average score of 55 against 54, an indication that the congregation strives for a balanced view of the Gospel on both spiritual and physical needs of its congregants. It is a delicate balance that is not a common ground among many urban Pentecostals and charismatic groups. Only a few congregations in the urban settings of Africa and perhaps elsewhere are tutored on the fact that the lordship of Christ over creation and circumstances in the life of all humanity calls for holistic preaching that brings unbelievers to repentance and saving faith, as well as bring believers to restoration from backsliding and entire sanctification (Buys 1989:264).

5.6 PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, NEW DANDORA

5.6.1 Between stagnation and revitalization

- Structural face lift

Giving the church a face lift is a major preoccupation of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora in the wake of re-engineering the church for a turnaround growth. Leaders report that the construction of the sanctuary was so poorly done that it was a matter of time before it collapses. The new pastor raised loan to do a re-built and bought plastic chairs that replaced the wooden benches, making sitting during worship sessions more comfortable. These novel leadership initiatives ignited the interest of the congregation and the observing community of the church and endeared the new pastor to them as a shepherd with vision. The development provoked the beginning of internal and external church growth.

In hindsight, the Senior Pastor concludes:

“No one could pastor a 21st century church the way it was done twenty years ago and expect revitalization. What the PAG does to initiate change is to watch the way the world goes and the pull it has on church

members, then the church respond accordingly, bearing in mind the limits of scriptures. Any attempts to consciously or unconsciously punish church people by old fashioned approach to kingdom work will only kill motivation and engender stagnation.”

- Financial bottlenecks and breakthroughs

Finance was reported to have constituted a barrier to executing some projects that were earlier targeted to promote the revitalization process of the church. The majority of the members were jobless, single mothers and school-age children outside the education system. The demand for charity and necessary projects far outweigh the financial supply from tithes and offerings. The church intensified its commitment to prayers and fasting, the teaching of the word and the raising of the faith of members to see the invisible and believe the impossible. It was not long before the fruits started coming in, jobless members started testifying of securing good employment, businesses were experiencing financial breakthroughs, tithes increased in the covers of the church, members buy cars and celebrate marriages-all signifying the beginning of a new era for the church.

5.6.2 Perception of leaders on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from interview guide 14, 15, and 16 (Appendix 2) were analysed. In the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church, Dandora, ten key elements, whose frequency counts and percentages are reflected below in Table 17 show the perception of church leaders on factors of revitalization:

Table 17: Perception of leaders of PAG on factors of revitalization

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Intensive prayers & fasting	4	8
Preaching & teaching the word	5	10
People-centred leadership	7	13
Atmosphere of unity and team spirit	5	10

Cell groups	7	13
Integration, care and conservation	5	10
Great youth involvement	6	11
Ministry groups	6	11
Mobilized and trained members	5	10
Diversified outreaches	2	4
TOTAL	52	100

n=52

5.6.2.1 Analysis and interpretation

As shown in the table above, the leading revitalization factors in the PAG, according to the perception of the church leaders are “people-centred leadership” and “cell groups”, each with a score of 13 %. The next two factors, “great youth involvement” and “ministry groups” also share points of 11% score to occupy the third position of influence on revitalization in the church. Following these are four other factors that tally on 10% score, each having a frequency of 5 out of 52. They are “preaching and teaching the word”, “atmosphere of unity and team spirit”, “integration, care and conservation” of members, and “mobilized and trained members”.

Members of the Board of Elders concur that among the factors of revitalization of PAG, focused leadership is number one. Elder Saitoti, who has been in the church almost since inception says: “In comparison with the past leadership since I join the church, the present good leadership is the key to the growth of the church. Good leadership is one that is people-centred, leaders who like to know what interest the members and what views members hold over the congregation”. The general perception is that the present corps of leadership leads from both the front and back, that is, checking what is itching at the back while still providing direction for all at the frontline.

The leadership message to note here is that when members know that that their leaders have them in mind and empathise with the issues affecting them, obedience becomes the norm and response to calls for meetings, outreaches and responsibilities become massive

and encouraging. Everybody feels important and needed and so gets involved in the vision and mission of the church, making church work easy and church growth a reality.

It is this kind of commitment that explains the massive growth of the church since the cell group was re-launched in February, 2003. From a stagnant membership of 100 people, the church grew beyond 150% numerical growth in five years to register an attendance of over 500 congregants worshipping in two Sunday services conducted in the English and Swahili languages (Atoyebi, 2008:4). Elder Wambui calls the unit “the grass root ministry of the church”. The Senior Pastor describes the cell group as an avenue for members to grow in the image of Christ as they practice at neighbourhood level true love for one another through the ministries of visitation, prayer and social concern. Each cell leader is given a goal of adding three to four new members per month to the fold. He or she has to keep the church leadership informed with the goings-on in the cell and deliberately act to make both the old and new members feel the pastor cares for them.

The drive for numerical and spiritual growth through the cell group positively imparts the youth group, getting teenagers and young adults more involved in evangelism and in the different ministry groups of the church, especially in the evangelistic, praise-and-worship, ushering and prayer teams. According to the Associate Pastor, “the focused youth ministry has drawn a lot of young people to the congregation. The dynamism of the group is shown by the fact that approximately 50% of the congregants fall below 40 years of age”.

In the same vein, the Senior Pastor loftily describes the youth ministry of the church and its strategic implication for church growth. He says:

Our church grows out of the youth ministry. We arrange special retreats for them and make such to be exciting by arranging tours to different towns for a day or two. They are made to meet people of other denominations and learn different biblical approaches to the mission of God as practiced, for example, by the Anglicans, the Baptist, and other charismatic/evangelical groups in Kenya. It is a strategy that proves effective in growing the PAG church from the youth wing.

Other church ministry groups with far-reaching impact on revitalization include the men ministry, the choir and the women ministry. Of special mention in the responses of respondents is what one of the leaders describes as “the strong women department” of the church. This is a very active sector where ladies’ evangelism and discipleship are aggressively pursued. Once saved, the group enlists them into the weekly Saturday teaching and training session for women and assigns them spiritual responsibilities that keep them growing and committed to the Lord and the church. On the part of the church leadership, permission and encouragement is given so that the ladies’ group is exposed to different speakers coming on to minister on specific areas of women’s needs. This open door to ministers of the true Gospel to come in and edify the PAG church is one factor that makes its leadership very distinct from many others in Nairobi, with the exception of the turnaround ones under study.

5.6.3 Perception of members on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from questionnaire item 11 (Appendix 3) were analysed. On a rating of 0-10, respondents determined the degree of contribution to growth of 26 given factors to the ongoing revitalization of the church by assigning a number to it, 0 for non-contribution and 10 for highest contribution. The researcher determined the relevance of each factor to growth by assigning “Relevant” to ratings with 6-10 score and “Irrelevant” to ratings with 0-5 score. The results, for the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Dandora, are reflected in table 18 below:

Table 18: Rating of relevance of growth factors to revitalization of PAG

Category	Total (6-10) Rating	Total (0-5) Rating	Relevant	Irrelevant
a. Care and concern for members	41	29	✓	
b. Cell group work	62	10	✓	
c. Children ministry	45	25	✓	
d. Church building and assets	56	14	✓	
e. Church doctrines and beliefs	39	30	✓	

f. Church planting and mission work	29	40		✓
g. Dynamic youth ministry	36	34	✓	
h. Effective incorporation of new members	40	29	✓	
i. Evangelism by members	40	30	✓	
j. Expository preaching from the Bible	54	15	✓	
k. Fighting for rights of the oppressed in society	26	41		✓
l. Friendly atmosphere for new and old members	45	22	✓	
m. Healings, miracles and deliverances	35	33	✓	
n. Holiness and integrity in leadership	46	24	✓	
o. Mass media and electronic evangelism	14	56		✓
p. Messages of prosperity, health and blessings	43	25	✓	
q. Music and worship style	61	9	✓	
r. Prophetic utterances and revelations	19	51		✓
s. Publicity and marketing of church activities	23	46		✓
t. Prudent and accountable management of resources	39	30	✓	
u. Strategic location of church building in the city	54	16	✓	
v. Strong pastoral leadership	68	5	✓	
w. Team leadership among church workers	50	19	✓	
x. Tribal influence of church on attendees	24	45		✓
y. Training and empowering members to serve	35	34	✓	
z. Vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ	58	11	✓	

5.6.3.1 Analysis and interpretation

As indicated in Table 18 above, 21 selected growth factors are perceived by members of PAG New Dandora, to be relevant growth factors in the revitalization of the church. These factors are classified under eight main categories, as analysed below:

- Church ministries and youth involvement

The major ministry groups in the church include the men's ministry, women ministry, children and youth departments. Members rated the relevance of children ministry as 45 against 25. "Dynamic youth ministry" got a rating score of 36 against 34. There are also the ushering, choir, construction and other departments targeting the functional use of gifts and talents of members who want to serve in the vineyard of the Lord. It equally provides growth avenue for new believers wanting to climb the leadership ladder and "in need of the care of a mentor and some unhurried time to grow" (Smither 2007:309). The women ministry is vibrant with most of their leaders serving as cell leaders and offering a weekly training program to both new and old lady members (Atoyebi 2008:45). The youth arm of the church has become more dynamic in involvement in evangelism and missions. The importance of the sector to the church is explained by putting it under the supervision of the associate pastor, a man with two masters' degrees in mission and librarianship and having a passion for youth work in Nairobi city.

- Physical facilities

Members seem to be excited with the new sanctuary of the congregation that is sufficiently modern to attract residents in the Estate where it is situated as well as provide enough comfort for worshippers (see Fig. 19). The enthusiasm is reflected in the rating of "church building and assets" by an overwhelming score of 56 against 14, and of "strategic location of church building in the city" by 54 against 16. According to the Associate Pastor, the new three-story building under construction, designed to house the soon-to-commence education centre of the church is a factor the members perceive as an

excitement in the community and a bait to draw the unbelieving parents wanting affordable education for their children. Members perceive that the projects bring some community members to the Sunday services and cell meetings of the church.

- Preaching and spiritual development

Among the top ranking factors of growth in the PAG, according to the church members, is the preaching ministry in the church. This is indicated by the factors of communicating “vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ” and “expository preaching from the Bible”. The former had a score of 58 against 11, while the latter scored 54 against 15 in term of rating of relevance. The emphasis in the church is on the teaching ministry on a systematic and expository nature, taking the members through the total counsel of God as revealed from one book of the bible to the other. As expressed by the associate pastor, the teaching is done with a goal: “to see in the members changes in both spiritual and social dimensions that is reflective of the teachings the church offer”.

- Atmosphere for unity and worship

The “friendly atmosphere for new and old members” is scored 45 against 22 in favour of relevance to the growth of the church by members. This atmosphere is cultivated by two factors, the detribalization of the church’s ministries and the overt spirit of “team leadership among church workers”. The latter is overwhelmingly rated with a score of 50 against 19 as a contribution factor to revitalization. In an interview with one of the elders, this posture is achieved by the insistence on projecting Christ rather than the church or its leadership during evangelism and outreaches to the community. By design, the church also ensures that leadership positions among the saved cut across tribes and groups represented in the church.

- Prayers and supernaturalism

The factor of “healings, miracles and deliverances” that is supposed to showcase the ministries of prayers and supernaturalism is rated by members with a score of 35 against

33. “Prophetic utterances and revelations” is given a negative score of 19 against 51. This may give an impression of prayerlessness and absence of the miraculous in the church. However, prayers in the PAG are more expressed in the house fellowships where members find respite and fulfilment as they pray “together for personal needs and sharing testimonies of answered prayers” (Atoyebi 2008:44). The more the needs of people are met, the more their interest is aroused to identify with the church as visitors and members, making the prayers in the cells and the resultant answers received there a cause of the church’s numerical growth.

- Leadership

“Strong pastoral leadership” with a rating score of relevance of 68 against 5 is the highest rated factor of revitalization of PAG, according to the members. It portrays the high value that members place on their pastor who, according to one of the leaders, is contrasted to other pastors who abdicate their duties and who, though on full-time service, loiter round the streets of Nairobi in search of alternate means of increased earning powers.

- Evangelism and empowerments

Though “church planting and mission work” is rated irrelevant to growth of PAG, as already explained in this section, the relevant roles of evangelism and empowerment is shown in the rating of 40 against 30 given to the factor of “evangelism by members”, and of 35 against 34 scored by “training and empowering members to serve”. The most practiced form of evangelism by the members is the “felt-need evangelism” at the house fellowship level (Atoyebi 2008:61). In such instances, cell group leaders and members carry out weekly visitation and evangelization that help them discover material privation in the community, which in turn attract members’ prayer support for supply and practical giving of basic needs as relevant evangelistic tools.

- Cell groups and care ministries

The factor of “care and concern for members” that are needy is rated 41 against 29. Many times this care ministry is practiced through the cell group system where genuine pastoral concern is demonstrated by helping in household chores, teaching of social skills like sewing and cooking or in financing a microeconomic venture that could lead to gainful self-employment (Atoyebi 2008:61).

Conclusively, it seems that the PAG grows on all fronts of church growth indexes, according to the members, except in the five elements of “church planting and mission work”, “fighting for rights of the oppressed in society”, “mass media and electronic evangelism”, “prophetical utterances and revelations”, and “tribal influence of church on attendees”. The reasons for the less than optimal performance in these sectors are not far fetched.

The church does not emphasise the planting of independent congregations because its domain of influence, according to denominational order, may not extend beyond the New Dandora Estate. The fact that its budget needs to be approved by the hierarchy of the denomination may have also severely limited its mission work. There is apart from the limited financial capability of a church that may not count more than five cars in its Sunday worship services of a little less than a thousand members (Atoyebi 2008:61).

On the issue of church tribe, the members seem to detest tribalism with a passion. The Senior Pastor sees the uniqueness of the church in Nairobi city in its sense of accommodation of every tribe, a major reason why vernaculars are not permitted on the pulpit. In the words of the Associate Pastor, the issues involved are weightier. He says:

Tribal affiliation and consideration in choice of leadership around pastors is a great disease in Nairobi. It is sometimes borne out of not wanting to hear and know opposing views to what a leader holds. So there is the tendency to always want to have people in leadership who only agree with the overall leader. But the contrary is the case in the eldership board of the New Dandora PAG. An issue could come up

and a board member would raise his opposition to the pastor's ideas and give his genuine reasons for differing. The point we are trying to make to the church world of Nairobi is that in establishing the leadership cadre of a church, it is good to look for a group of people with diverse and helpful perspectives that would build the body of Christ.

The implication of detribalization to revitalization, as portrayed by the turnaround churches, PAG inclusive is that only a united body of Christ teaming together could promote church growth, not a clan of tribesmen in monopoly of church powers.

5.6.4 Grid of common revitalization factors of PAG

Findings from a comparative analysis of the perception of church leaders of PAG, Dandora (Table 17) with that of the members (Table 18) show that ten elements, as reflected in Table 19 below, are the critical elements of revitalization in the church:

Table 19: Common perception of leaders and members of PAG on revitalization factors

FACTORS	LEADERS' PERCEPTION	MEMBERS' PERCEPTION
1. Prayers, fasting and supernaturalism	✓	✓
2. Expository teaching of God's word	✓	✓
3. Credible and effective pastoral leadership	✓	✓
4. Atmosphere for unity and worship	✓	✓
5. Team spirit	✓	✓
6. Cell group system	✓	✓
7. Care ministries and conservation of members	✓	✓
8. Youth involvement in ministry	✓	✓
9. Ministry groups' evangelism and outreaches	✓	✓
10. Mobilized and trained members	✓	✓

5.6.4.1 Analysis and interpretation

There is unanimity of perception of leaders and members of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, New Dandora on the above ten elements as the factors responsible for the revitalization of the church. Three of the leading factors, according to the perspectives of the leaders and members, demand special mention.

- Strong pastoral leadership

The pastoral leadership is described by respondents as honest and truthful in matters of personal and financial dealings. He is said to be an effective manager of resources. Though the pastor adequately delegates responsibilities after setting goals to be achieved, respondents claim he is available to members and leaders when needed and spends considerable time developing and equipping saved members for kingdom service. The exposure he gave to church departmental workers to learn from other churches and bringing in of ministers from other denominations to teach the congregations is perceived as evidence of freedom from ecclesiastical fear and a demonstration of humility in ministry.

Besides, the pastor is described as a man with a big heart who does not get bogged down with petty distractions from dissenting views. He described his attitude to opposition in the following words from his lips.

Jesus was a good performer, yet was accused of having the spirit of Beelzebub (Matt.10:25). Moses had Jannes and Jambres who withstood him (2 Tim.3:8). They were stubborn people but the church today needs such people for the pastor's spiritual growth. Even Hannah needed Peninnah to push her to go on her knees in serious prayer for a child (1 Sam.1:1-18). If a man of God has no hurdles to overcome, he may have no testimony to share. Difficult people help pastors get on their knees. The pastors in our church call on associates to be weary of love that has nothing to critique or improve in the hierarchy. Any pastor who is out to please everybody should quit before it is too late as he cannot make it to a glorious end in ministry. It is the consciousness of one's limitations as well as humble acceptance of open and secret resistance without keeping the toxins of bitterness or

revenge that prevent pastoral high blood pressure and heart attack from shepherds over God's flock.

- Cell group work

The second factor that members and leaders give high rating of relevance to is the “cell group work” of the church. Respondents give this a relevance rating score of 62 against 10. That the backbone of the growth of PAG is its cell group system cannot be overemphasised. The church grew at “zero percent per annum” and did not outgrow its 100 membership for over a decade of existence until the house fellowship system was introduced in 2002 (Atoyebi 2008:69). Eye witnesses described the situation of the church before the cell group system as a spiritual restaurant, where people came in and went out with no mechanism of knowing who was who or where any came from (Atoyebi 2008:69). With over twelve cell groups planted in different parts of the New Dandora Estate, growth escalated to over 500 memberships in five years with a reported minimal annual increase of about fifty members (Atoyebi 2008:69). In each of the two Sunday services of the church, the researcher observed cell leaders leading their members to the altar in giving tithes and offerings for the day and to respond to enquiry from the worship leader on the welfare of absentee members. The occasion afforded church leadership and members to note the growth of each cell and gather prayer points for its sustenance. According to respondents, the enthusiasm and empathy attached to each report given every Sunday contributes to the growth of both individual cells and the entire church memberships.

- Music and worship style

Thirdly in the rank of rating relevance is the church's “music and worship style” with a score of 61 as against 9 by the church members; and of much emphasis by the interviewees. There is a kind of peculiar contextualization attached to the music and style of worship of PAG, New Dandora that electrifies its members. The choir will file out to the pulpit dancing rhythmically to a chosen tune that is neither hotly Pentecostal nor coldly mainline. The body movement is noticeable but not provocative. The averagely modest attire prevents a lustfully distractive presentation of the singers. On the pulpit, the rhythm change as the songs for the day is rendered, each song with its own dancing

rhythm; unlike many Pentecostal and charismatic groups the audience is to savour but not join in the singing or dancing. The dance seems to aim at getting and keeping attention focused on the words of the songs, which are often invocations of divine attributes or exhortations to holy demands from scriptures. There are no common loud musical instruments as the appeal is directed more to the spirit than the flesh. Like the daily carriage of the Senior and Associate Pastors, it seems the mode of music and its rendering keep the PAG, New Dandora an extremely sober and disciplined church, yet openly joyful in the Lord.

5.7 UTHIRU PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

5.7.1 Between stagnation and revitalization

- Re-appraisal of vision and mission

Prior to becoming a turnaround congregation, the UPC simply got stacked at a lower than hundred membership, keeping the church in long period of stagnation. The Bishop/Founder blames this on his rigidity in doing church work. He eventually came to the unavoidable decision to become flexible his approach to marketing the Gospel in a fluid urban setting like Nairobi. According to one of the associate pastors, the church board had to sit down and reason with the Founder on the vision setting up the congregation and to seek the way forward to growth. He says:

We all agreed and concluded that the problem of stagnation was with the mission to accomplish the vision of the church. We charged the Bishop to tell us the way forward irrespective of resistance. From then on everybody in the congregation was given the opportunity to offer his/her ability and gifts the best way possible towards advancing the growth of the church. The result was mass involvement in every aspect of church work. There was great excitement in the air and before long, the expected turnaround began.

- Internal resistance to change

With a re-focused view on the church's vision and mission, the leadership cadre of UPC gets the revitalization work of the church began by making changes on different aspects of the mission approaches of the church. This provoked resistance from congregants whose comfort zone is rocked. The new ideas were challenged and it became difficult to move the whole congregation on the path of growth for a period of time. An associate pastor reports the uncomfortable decision that later brought the final enthusiasm reported in the last paragraph above:

The leadership cadre decided that either the people accept and are ready to go with us to grow the church or we will have to go on without them so that they come to realize later that the church has moved out of its cocoon. We continue laying the revitalization foundation and the disgruntled members started noticing that they either partner with the rest or are left behind. Leadership kept pressing on doing the right thing at the right times, moving the church up the ladder of growth. The results began to trickle in and before long the naturally cold members were convinced. They caught the fire of revival and the way of mission was owned by all.

The implication of the UPC experience is that anyone could get stacked in things that do not work. Tradition is a difficult barrier in mission work. Sometimes, the good effect of doing something has expired and stalled but any attempt to cause a change is swiftly resisted in the congregation. Simply changing the order of service to accommodate a new idea or improving the order of songs for a more edifying praise-worship session become major issues that keep some congregants wondering aloud and raising objections. Unlike other institutions, the church is often averse to change. Congregants grow roots and build a tradition on long established systems. Attempts to break such traditions pose a risk of splitting the church and creating factions. The greater danger may not be in the factions

but in leadership bending backward to religiously keep doing what may never work or even have God's hand of approval in it.

5.7.2 Perception of leaders on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from interview guide 14, 15, and 16 (Appendix 2) were analysed. In the Uthiru Pentecostal Church, Uthiru, nine key elements, whose frequency counts and percentages are reflected below in Table 20; show the perception of church leaders on factors of revitalization:

Table 20: Perception of leaders of UPC on factors of revitalization

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Biblical, expository teaching	9	21
Worship, prayers & divine presence	4	9
Evangelism & diversified outreaches	6	14
Greater youth involvement	3	7
Ministry groups and structures	3	7
Atmosphere of unity & team spirit	5	12
Strong, visionary leadership	6	14
Mobilized, committed membership	4	9
Incorporation, Training & discipleship	3	7
TOTAL	43	100

n=43

5.7.2.1 Analysis and interpretations

As shown in the table above, the factor of “biblical, expository teaching” (21%) stands out above others as a unique contributor to the revitalization of the UPC church. Not so close but second in the rank with 14% score are the two factors of “evangelism and diversified outreaches” and “strong, visionary leadership”. The “atmosphere of unity and team spirit” scores 12% above the joint scorers of 9%, “worship, prayers and divine presence”, and

“mobilized, committed membership”. Least on the table are three factors with 7% score each, they are: “greater youth involvement”, “ministry groups and structures”, and “incorporation, training and discipleship”.

Of the six select churches that participated in this study, only the UPC does not experience a change in top leadership rank before the church experience a turnaround. Respondents attribute this to the Founder’s visionary leadership and personal growth in the work of the Lord. The leaders describe him as a man of vision who knows his limits and so equips and allows others to assist him, just as exemplified by biblical Moses being strengthened to sustain his lifted hands by Aaron and Hur while Joshua leads the soldiers to rout the Amalekites on the battle field in the wilderness (Ex.17:8-13). The Bible must have instructed him on *missio Dei* and the wise ways of its execution.

The centrality of the word of God is accentuated in every meeting of the UPC. The preachers pride themselves in their entire dedication to preaching “the uncompromising word of God”. The Bishop puts the picture succinctly:

Preaching is my greatest tool. I am a preaching-teacher and when I am on duty, I can do it for two hours non-stop. But I do not just preach I search for something new in the word that God wants to bring to His people. The goal is two-fold: one, to give proper understanding of the word of God to the flock under shepherding, and two, to build up the church on the solid foundation of the Bible.

One of the associate pastor calls the church’s preaching endeavour, “capacity building of church members in the ministry with the goal of promoting the work of the gospel in the city”. Respondents indicate the heartbeat of the church as a strong desire to see that every member knows how to stand on his/her own anywhere no matter the flood of trials and temptations. That the members would not be swayed by the different winds of doctrines peddled in the city as they come to term with the reasons for their calling into the kingdom. That the members would know who they are in Christ and the responsibilities

entrusted on them by God. To this extent, none would be coerced to serve or give to the work of God and the need of his full-time ministers.

Clear biblical teaching and expository teaching would enlighten believers on how to live and what to do that God may be pleased and the church growing. It is the secret behind the joyful payment of tithes, giving of offerings and a yielding to sacrificial service of the cross, especially in the labour of evangelizing the city and organizing the church's various outreaches to different groups.

Though the congregation is encouraged to preach as modelled by the leadership, the emphasis is more on creating circumstances that would bring a great number of people together for maximal city impart. The church thus holds retreats both for the entire congregation, called Christmas Party, as well as for different units of the church-men, women, youths and children. In such carnivals, all are involved in cooking the meals, building relationships, watching kids in soccer competition, and promoting inter-tribal and multicultural bonding.

Youths are mobilized to bring their peers and entertain them with appealing music and chores that meet their context without disrespecting the scriptures. At other times, the occasions are used for fasting and prayers on all sorts of problems, thus meeting needs of both members and invitees holistically. The combination of such an egalitarian vision from the church leadership and the powerful display of team spirit in an atmosphere of multi-tribal unity persuade the unbelievers to turn from their sins and accept the lordship of Jesus Christ right in open camps devoid of formal sanctuary pull and push.

5.7.3 Perception of members on revitalization factors

In answering R.Q.4 on perception of church leadership and members on factors of church revitalization in Nairobi city, data findings from questionnaire item 11 (Appendix 3) were analysed. On a rating of 0-10, respondents determined the degree of contribution to growth of 26 given factors to the ongoing revitalization of the church by assigning a number to it, 0 for non-contribution and 10 for highest contribution. The researcher determined the relevance of each factor to growth by assigning "Relevant" to ratings with 6-10 score and

“Irrelevant” to ratings with 0-5 score. The results, for the Uthiru Pentecostal Church Uthiru, are reflected in table 21 below:

Table 21: Rating of relevance of growth factors to revitalization of UPC

Category	Total (6-10) Rating	Total (0-5) Rating	Relevant	Irrelevant
a. Care and concern for members	58	25	✓	
b. Cell group work	45	42	✓	
c. Children ministry	78	12	✓	
d. Church building and assets	66	17	✓	
e. Church doctrines and beliefs	82	8	✓	
f. Church planting and mission work	64	23	✓	
g. Dynamic youth ministry	64	26	✓	
h. Effective incorporation of new members	69	20	✓	
i. Evangelism by members	56	33	✓	
j. Expository preaching from the Bible	86	5	✓	
k. Fighting for rights of the oppressed in society	47	35	✓	
l. Friendly atmosphere for new and old members	64	18	✓	
m. Healings, miracles and deliverances	67	23	✓	
n. Holiness and integrity in leadership	74	15	✓	
o. Mass media and electronic evangelism	28	54		✓
p. Messages of prosperity, health and blessings	70	14	✓	
q. Music and worship style	77	10	✓	
r. Prophetic utterances and revelations	67	19	✓	
s. Publicity and marketing of church activities	49	34	✓	
t. Prudent and accountable management of resources	52	20	✓	

u. Strategic location of church building in the city	73	9	✓	
v. Strong pastoral leadership	81	6	✓	
w. Team leadership among church workers	69	16	✓	
x. Tribal influence of church on attendees	48	36	✓	
y. Training and empowering members to serve	67	20	✓	
z. Vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ	80	6	✓	

5.7.3.1 Analysis and interpretations

As indicated in Table 21 above, 25 selected growth factors are perceived by members of UPC Uthiru, to be relevant to the revitalization of the church. These factors are classified under the following nine main categories of growth factors:

- Church ministries and youth involvement
- Physical facilities
- Preaching and spiritual development
- Atmosphere for unity and worship
- Prayers and supernaturalism
- Leadership
- Evangelism and empowerment
- Cell groups and care ministries
- Church tribe and societal influence

Only the factor of “mass media and electronic evangelism” is rated “irrelevant” to growth of the church, with a score of 28 against 54. Like other financially struggling churches in Nairobi, the cost of such methods of outreach may be out of reach for the congregation. There may also be huge limitations on trained personnel to manage such a sector for the church, should it be created. This is not to mention the poor presentation of the worship centre, a factor that may work against the intended goal of the church should such a shed-like structure be beamed on television to Nairobians of cosmopolitan taste.

This raises the question of the non-inclusion of the factor of “church buildings and assets” in the list of rating of “irrelevant” factors. On the contrary, 66 members scored it relevant to growth as against 17 who feel otherwise. The researcher’s surprise in the assessment is due to the fact of his observation (on three occasions that he visited the church and addressed the congregation) that the walls of the worship centre are yet to be completely raised up on all four, the roof is without ceiling, and the concrete floor rough and hard (see Fig.20 and 22).

But there could be another dimension to the member’s positive perspective on the church building. It is a moderate portion of land capable of housing three thousand worshippers in shifts if professionally designed and constructed. After leasing worship centres for over a decade, the church is now on the path of owning the strategically located plot in Uthiru. Members are giving to gradually offset the offering price that initially runs to a considerable millions of Kenya shillings. Every member seems to be too excited about such a prospect and its growth potential to be preoccupied with a negative feeling over the present uncompleted posture of the structure. Moreover, the zealously-committed and kingdom-minded worshippers that constitute Uthiru Pentecostal Church do not also seem to suffer from class intimidation if found in such a sanctuary. What matters to an average UPC member is preaching the word, worshipping the Lord and fellowshiping in a family atmosphere, irrespective of class, tribe or gender.

5.7.4 Grid of common revitalization factors of UPC

Findings from a comparative analysis of the perception of church leaders of UPC, Uthiru (Table 20) with that of the members (Table 21) show that eleven elements, as reflected in Table 22 below, are the critical elements of revitalization in the church:

Table 22: Common perception of leaders and members of UPC on revitalization factors

FACTORS	LEADERS' PERCEPTION	MEMBERS' PERCEPTION
1. Biblical, expository preaching	✓	✓
2. Prayers and supernaturalism	✓	✓
3. Evangelism and diversified outreaches	✓	✓
4. Training and discipleship	✓	✓
5. Youth involvement	✓	✓
6. Church ministry groups and structures	✓	✓
7. Atmosphere for unity and worship	✓	✓
8. Team spirit	✓	✓
9. Strong pastoral leadership	✓	✓
10. Mobilized, empowered membership	✓	✓
11. Care ministries and incorporation through cells	✓	✓

5.7.4.1 Analysis and interpretations

A comparative analysis of the perceptions of members as illustrated in the rating scores in Table 21 and the leaders' interview contents illustrated in Table 20 lead to one main conclusion: Uthiru Pentecostal Church is built mainly on the two factors of preaching and leadership.

Of the four “relevant” factors that are rated by church members with scores of 80 and above, three relate to the preaching and teaching ministry, while the fourth is on the subject of leadership. On the subject of communicating the truth of the Gospel, “expository preaching from the Bible” scores 86 against 5 as a contributing factor to

growth. In the second position of relevance to growth is “church doctrines and beliefs” with a score of 82 against 8. Communicating “vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ” occupies the fourth position in ranking with 80 scores against 6. On the subject of leadership, the factor of “strong pastoral leadership” occupies the third highest ranked position with a score of 81 against 6.

Interviewees equally stretch the pre-eminence of expository preaching, giving it a percentage score (21%) above all other perceived factors of revitalization. Second on the list of leaders’ rating (with a score of 14%) is a leadership style that is described as dedicated, visionary, and transparently strong. The combined perception defines the image of UPC as a giant house with double doors.

The first door, preaching the word of God, entirely defines the work of the church. While there could be many congregations in Nairobi city growing through an emphasis on the health, wealth and status gospel (Gifford 2009:116-128), the UPC insists that that the only thing that will build up the people of God is the word of God. The pastors give undivided attention to this one thing above everything else-the studying and preaching the Bible in its entirety, as understood.

Leadership, within the framework of unity, is the second largest door defining the growth of the UPC. The Bishop/Founder is revered for steering clear from issues of personal sins and unfaithfulness that provokes scandals and damages God’s work. He teaches the need to live a clean life and labours to model same. Beyond personal life testimonies, the leaders enjoy an atmosphere of team spirit in service and each is sworn to fight what they term among them “fellowshiptism” in the church. One of the associate pastors defines what the term means to the leadership corps. He says:

Fellowshiptism is a development whereby particular groups in church choose to walk, eat and handle things together to the exclusion of all ‘outsiders’ in the congregation. Any attempt by those labelled ‘outsiders’ to penetrate the group is normally resisted. Such walls of small groups make new comers miss a sense of belonging. He/she eventually goes away, hurt and hardened, not finding fellowship with

people outside his/her class or tribe. Each leader in the UPC is charged to dismantle such cliques if and when discovered and ensure that all members, irrespective of class, race or tribe are welcome and made to feel at home all along his/her walk with God in the fellowship of the church.

In essence, the UPC church realizes the negative impact of “church tribe” to numerical growth and seeks to discourage it both through pulpit preaching and pastoral practice. All other factors of growth seem to naturally fall into place as the church ensures that the ministry of preaching the word and leading with example are in order. The experience of the church confirms that church growth will be validated within the ambit of Christianity of words and deeds, a scenario where preaching the word is interpreting the preachers’ deeds and the deeds of ministers are validating their words before the hearers (Bosch 1991:420).

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter sets out to provide answer to Research Question (R.Q.) 4 on: What are the perceptions of the church leadership and members of the six (6) churches on church revitalization in Nairobi city? The perceptions of the leaders are reflected in Table 23 below.

- Common leaders’ perception

As shown below in Table 23, the responses from the interviewees were analysed and show that leaders in all the churches are agreed principally on eight factors as agents of revitalization in Nairobi city. These are effective and model pastoral leadership; biblically, holistic and expository teaching; prayerfulness, divine favour and supernaturalism; evangelism and diversified outreaches; mobilized and committed membership; church unity and supportive team spirit; cell groups and ministry structures; and greater youth involvement in the work of the church.

Four churches are unanimous on the relevance of the two factors of complimentary preaching partnership and prominence of spouse in ministry as factors of revitalization, though the agreement is not uniform on both factors per church. Leaders of three other churches approve the contribution of two factors of incorporation and care of members as well as training and discipleship as important turnaround factors. Only two congregations give credence to the role of physical facilities in revitalization, ironically by church leaders with the most modern building of the six, and the other by leaders owning the yet to be constructed structure of the six.

Table 23: Grid of perceived revitalization factors by church leaders of the six churches

Leaders' perceived Factors of Revitalization	AIC	ANGC	DC	GRCC	PAG	UPC
1. Effective, model pastoral leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Biblical, holistic & expository teaching	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Prayerfulness, favour and supernaturalism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Evangelism and diversified outreaches	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Mobilized, committed membership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Church unity & supportive team spirit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Physical facilities		✓			✓	
8. Incorporation and care of members		✓			✓	✓
9. Cell groups and ministry structures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Training and discipleship			✓	✓		✓
11. Greater youth involvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Complimentary preaching partnership	✓	✓		✓	✓	
13. Prominence of spouse in ministry		✓	✓	✓		✓

- Common members' perception

As indicated below in Table 24, the 600 questionnaire responses of the church members from the six churches were analysed and show that members in the six select churches are unanimous on seven main categories of factors of revitalization in Nairobi city. These are church ministries and youth involvement; physical facilities; preaching and spiritual

development; atmosphere for unity and worship; leadership; evangelism and empowerment; and cell groups and care ministries.

Members from five churches rate prayers and supernaturalism as relevant agents of revitalization, while only two churches have their members rate church tribe and societal influence as having any contribution to their growth. While prayers in the church may thus be an indispensable factor of growth, the tribes of church members as well as fighting for their social justice in the larger community have minimal effect on the growth of the churches.

No single church identifies the domain of media and marketing outlets as making any contribution to its growth and revitalization. The researcher assigns two meanings to this development. First is the assumption that the churches lack the finance to venture into the expensive media marketing of the Gospel in Nairobi city. Though ministry work and life can hardly be maximally executed in the absence of finance, money remains a considerable obstacle to the revitalization process of turnaround churches (Dodson 2006:122, 123).

Second is the possibility that media outreach does not contribute significantly to numerical church growth. Though televangelism is a Pentecostal phenomenon, the radio and television could help to inform and teach viewing believers but not convert the unbelieving world who are claimed to be generally “apathetic or hostile in regard to the religious programmes” (van der Merwe 1993:11).

Table 24: Grid of perceived factors of revitalization by members of the six churches

	AIC	ANGC	DC	GRCC	PAG	UPC
1. Church ministries and youth involvement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Physical facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Preaching and spiritual development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Atmosphere for unity and worship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Prayers and supernaturalism	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
6. Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Evangelism and empowerment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

8. Cell groups and care ministries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Media and marketing outlets						
10. Church tribe and societal influence	✓					✓

- Common perception of leaders and members

To obtain a common perception of all leaders and members of the six churches, the researcher chooses to compare the grid of perceptions of leaders and members of all the churches as this gives the image of joint perceptions more clearly than merely considering the grid of combined leaders with that of combined members which are aggregate of sometimes parallel factors.

The grids of perceptions of leaders and members help to form the common grid of revitalization of the six churches which form the basis of the proposed model of revitalization reported in the next chapter of this study.

CHAPTER SIX

6 PROPOSED MODEL AND CONCLUSIONS: FROM STAGNATION TO REVITALIZATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Nairobi city has an approximate population of five million people, but fewer than 20 percent of the urbanites attend any of the churches in the city (Kim 2009:67). The implication of this is that the city falls among the unreached urban centres of Africa and the world, though the Kenyan nation is said to be Christian. According to Henry Mutua (Kim 2009:67, 68), a key missiological factor to consider in bringing about a change in the situation is the need for the development of “relevant models for church planting and growth” that will be feasible in the African cities. He argues that “one gets the impression that with few exceptions, the church in the African city is still operating on models developed elsewhere”, and that “because the church is now well established in the city new methods and models need to be developed” to communicate the Gospel effectively to the contemporary society of African cities (Kim 2009:67). Nairobi, as the UN city in Africa, a regional and continental hub, as well as “a key hub for (Christian) ministry in Africa and beyond” (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:383), deserves the first benefit of such a model.

In this chapter, such a model is proposed for Nairobi city.

The main research question of this study asked what the perceived growth factors for turnaround churches in Nairobi are, and what possible revitalization model will be feasible to revitalize a stagnant church in the city. Common critical growth factors were identified through an evaluation of findings from interviews conducted and questionnaires administered within six growing churches selected for this study. The conclusions drawn from the perceptions of church leaders and members in all six churches form the basis for

the proposed model for revitalization of stagnant churches in the urban context of Nairobi proposed in this chapter.

Considering the variety of church traditions, the research indicated that the need for a model that enumerates critical elements is more applicable to stagnant churches in the urban context of Nairobi than formulating strategies of limited applications. The approach is well assimilated within scholarly definitions of what a model is.

6.2 THE NOTION OF MODEL

In defining a model, Bhola (cf. 1990) posits that it is a notion that has to do with designs, descriptions or analogies that are used to help visualize something or make complex ideas more understandable. Garbers (1996:16) in his view postulate that scientific knowledge is an outcome of scientific research that can be defined as a body of propositions that are acceptable by the scientific community at a given time. Models, laws and theories are elements of such propositions and engender the building of further models, which consequently helps to explain particular phenomena (Mouton 2001:176, 177). Wisniewski (2002:7) agrees, claiming that models do not have to rigidly come in fixed forms and may not necessarily be quantitative; rather, a model, in whatever forms it comes and for whatever purpose it serves, should meet the goal of representing the situation that it addresses in its simplest form.

The proposed model below is therefore not a rigid, methodological model of steps to follow in a revitalization process. It is rather a broad revitalization model comprising eight critical elements that any church strategy should have for revitalization to take place within the Nairobi context. The model also proposes some supplementary elements that each stagnant church can consider, depending on the strategy a church adopts. On the whole, the choice of strategy is left to each church and it depends on that church's context.

6.3 FROM STAGNATION TO REVITALIZATION: A PROPOSED MODEL

6.3.1 Critical elements of revitalization: the 8 cardinal points

A comparative analysis of the common perceptions of leaders and members from each of the six churches on revitalization factors shows eight common critical elements of revitalization. These factors are separately reflected in Tables 7 (for AIC), 10 (for ANGC), 13 (for DC), 16 (for GRCC), 19 (for PAG), 22 (for UPC) and are comparatively illustrated below in Table 25.

Table 25: Grid of common critical elements of revitalization in the six churches

FACTORS	AIC	ANGC	DC	GRCC	PAG	UPC
1. Model and effective pastoral leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Biblical, expository preaching	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Congregational prayerfulness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Evangelism and diversified outreaches	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Cell/Care group ministries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Mobilization and empowerment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Family atmosphere of unity and love	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Dynamic youth and ministry structures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

These eight critical elements will be called the cardinal points (using the mathematical compass analogy) of the revitalization process of stagnant churches in the urban context of Nairobi, Kenya. While other supplementary factors may or may not be present for revitalization to take place in churches, research shows that these eight cardinal points are non-negotiable in the context of urban Nairobi.

The centrality of each factor to revitalization is the subject of the analysis below.

- A model, effective leader

Primacy of leadership, as the research findings indicate, is the central factor in achieving revitalization of any stagnant church. Churches plateau or decline in Nairobi as a consequence of pastoral leadership that has been described as poor in credibility, distracted by wrangling, unstable with regard to duties or simply lacking in focus on what the mission of God and of the church is in the city (see Fig.4). It is only expected that in such circumstances, the pivot around which changes will rotate will be pastoral leadership that models the life of Christ. This impacts on the vision for mission, equips the membership and encourages team members towards set goals. The importance of leadership as a factor of revitalization is reflected in the fact that 5 of the 6 churches researched experienced a change in senior pastoral leadership before experiencing a turnaround. The reasons are clear, and will be discussed shortly.

Pastors that evoke revitalization are sacrificial. They give time and talents to the work of the ministry. They are single-eyed servants, heeding the warning of Jesus that a servant “cannot serve God and mammon (Luke 16:13). This is more so because as the urban vision carrier, communicator and lead evaluator, the functioning, speed and relationship of all other components of revitalization orbit around the pastor’s life and labour analogously as the planets rotate around the sun, as illustrated in Fig.23 below:

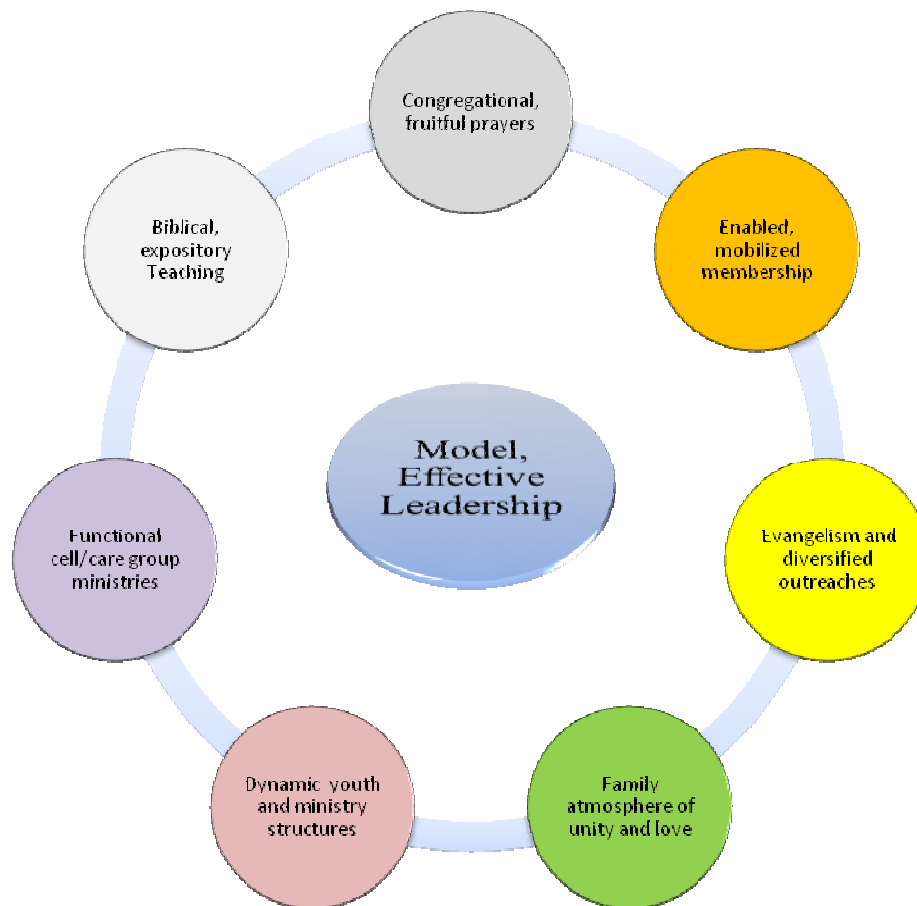


Figure 23: Solar system analogy of orbit of model of revitalization factors

In the solar system analogy alluded to above, the central place of the sun represents a “model, effective leadership”. As the planets orbit around the sun, the eight factors of revitalization rotate round the centre of gravity, which is leadership. The question is: what keeps the planets in orbit in the solar system? Science is quick to illustrate how the gravity from the sun keeps the other planets in their orbit around it, just like planet Earth keeps the moon, satellites and space shuttles in orbit around itself. Interestingly, all the planets are fast enough to keep themselves in orbit so that none are as slow in velocity as to fall away from orbit or as fast as to escape from it²².

What the sun is to the solar system, leadership is to revitalization. The light of leadership beams on other growth factors; its vision keeps them active and its managerial and supervisory ability keeps the velocity of each factor in constant momentum within a team

²² What keeps the planets in orbit? By Dr. Eric Christian. January 2002. Internet sources at cosmicopia@cosmicra.gsfc.nasa.gov. Accessed on 1 June 2010.

spirit that ensures that the chain of growth is unbroken. No wonder then that Jesus warns that the blind cannot lead the blind, lest both fall into the ditch (Luke 6:39). Jesus spent most of his three-and-a-half years of ministry raising the twelve apostles who would become the church leaders rather than accepting to be made king by the multitudes that seek only food that perishes (John 6:15, 26, 27). From the church in Jerusalem under Peter to that of Ephesus under Paul, the commitment and vision of one leader is capable of turning around the slow growth tide of a congregation (Dubose 1978:156). Leaders make churches grow.

However, the leadership style for revitalizing churches is not a “one-style-fits-all approach” (Clinton 2005, 192), but a model of effectiveness and ethics that embraces the various leadership dynamics needed to guide God’s people to growth (cf. Hybels 1989:84-89, Osei-Mensah 1990:8-21, Ford 1991:25-35, and Preston 2009). Six such models and their interactions in overlapping relationships as demonstrated by revitalized churches, are illustrated below in Fig.24.

Findings show that urban churches will experience revitalization when the leadership corps in the church visibly demonstrates before the members the combined qualities of the following styles of shepherding God’s flock:

Visionary leadership: this serves as the carrier of the vision of where the church is going. Revitalized leaders know what they want to see happen and so cast the vision with all the energy and enthusiasm they could muster. David the king was an example in the building of the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem (1 Chronicle 29:1-9).

Strategic leadership: this breaks up a big vision into smaller, achievable units that are well distributed among mobilized members for easy and faster achievement. An example is Nehemiah who built the Jerusalem temple in 52 days through an Adam Smith’s model of division of labour (Neh.6:15).



Figure 24: Overlapping relationships of leadership styles in revitalized churches

Motivational leadership: this provides inspiration and encouragement in the process of achieving the mission of God and of the church. Leaders of revitalized churches are sensitive and quick to note what may distract or attract kingdom labourers away from set objectives. They swiftly offer solutions to such challenges. Jesus demonstrated this to his disciples in his offer of earthly and eternal rewards for their followership (Mark 10:28-30); and also in his post-resurrection ministry to assuage their fears and discouragement (John 21:1-13).

Shepherding leadership: this models the way for the sheep to follow, like Moses did before the Jews in the wilderness (Exodus 18:13; 24:18). Leaders of turn-around churches give quality time to listen to the flock, nurture and support them in their hours of tribulation. They gently carry the wounded and lovingly correct the straying; eventually the team spirit is strong and the team work gets done.

Team-building leadership: this makes the complex simple by placing the right person in the right place for the right purpose. Pastors and elders of revitalized churches do not seek the glory of an accomplished mission. They sustain the power of effective communication to team members and seem to maintain the three key elements of influential communication, namely credibility, objectivity and knowledge (D’Souza 2008:131).

Managing leadership, which with godliness and effectiveness manages kingdom people, processes and resources towards accomplishing desired objectives like Joseph did in Egypt at the time of famine (Gen.41:33-41). Members of revitalized churches adore their leaders especially for this quality when it is manifested in prudent and accountable management of the church fund from tithes, offering and sundry incomes of the congregation.

However, as already indicated earlier, the leadership factor is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for revitalization of stagnant churches. The other seven critical elements are absolutely important, even if they owe their effectiveness to a central force of gravity, which is the leadership of the church. One such critical revitalization factor is the emphasis on Scripture on the pulpit of turnaround congregations.

- Biblical, expository preaching and teaching

Pre-eminence of Scripture in the preaching and teaching ministry is a factor that turns a stagnant congregation into a revitalized church, as findings show. Pastors and elders of churches that showed revitalization lay claim to an uncompromising stand on scriptural presentation of the will and ways of God at the Sunday worships and other weekly meetings of the church where the word of God is declared to the people. Such statements as “I do not compromise on the Bible”, “When it comes to preaching, we give one full hour to it every Sunday in our church” and “Here, we declare the word of God without fear or favour” are sentiments expressing two sides of a bible growing church: firstly, the centrality of preaching and teaching in Sunday worship services and secondly, the emphasis on Scripture in sermon delivery. Both are different but necessary conditions to ending stagnation and ensuring church growth, because God’s people need God’s word to grow in grace and be renewed in the inner man (2 Pet.3:18; Eph.4:23).

Preachers that entertain from the pulpit may gather a crowd, but would not build a church. When Jesus declares: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18), he views ‘church’ to be a people saved from sin and Satan and growing in the grace of the Saviour and gifts of the Holy Spirit. To achieve that goal, he told Peter (and by implication the rest of the pastoral fold): “Feed my lambs”, “Tend my sheep”, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Paul called such feeding of the church of God, the declaration of “all the counsel of God” in personal lifestyle as well as in public and private preaching of the word (Acts 20: 20, 27-28).

- Congregational, fruitful prayers

The findings of this research indicate that both church members and leaders noted the strategic place of prayer in promoting the turnaround of the church from a state of stagnation. Many reasons account for this view. Prayer is understood to be a spiritual warfare to counter the attack of evil spirits and evil occurrences in the house of God (Eph.6:12). Even Jesus admitted that one of the churches in Asia Minor was planted where Satan had his throne (Rev.2:13). It takes spiritual warfare to cast down principalities and powers in the wicked, spiritual world who exalt themselves against the knowledge of God (2 Cor.10:4, 5).

Events such as accidents, death, curses and poverty are believed to have origins beyond the visible. Causes have effects, and in the African worldview these are mostly associated with the evil world of wicked people and spirits. Jesus declares that the devil invades his captives with the intent “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). Consequently, believers who will not succumb to occultism place their hope and redemption in God through fervent, continuous prayers.

The more the victory of prayers is experienced, the greater the faith of the recipients of grace, and the more contagious the enthusiasm of all in the church to bring more needy people to church services.

Also, prayer is understood by most evangelicals as having potent power to melt the hearts of men for the Gospel and procure needed miracles, signs and wonders (Sanders 1994:87-90). This is why most of the churches engage their members in fasting along with prayers

to reinforce and speed up divine intervention in human affairs. Some of the congregations would combine all-night prayer meetings with seven-day, twenty-one day or even 40-day fasting to ensure that desires are granted with visible results, some of which are testified in the open church when they do manifest. Findings show that spiritual community strongholds have been broken in such instances, leading to greater reception for the Gospel and the local church in otherwise hostile neighbourhoods. Paul and Silas were jailed in the Philippi city of the Macedonians, but prayed until there was “a great earthquake” and the jailor’s entire family was converted. This is a vivid example of the power of prayer (Acts 16:25-34).

The findings from this research indicate that churches that do not pray do not grow, and vice-versa. Revitalization prayers are not the silent, sluggish prayers that are offered in a hurry by men and women who keep alternate means of solutions to requests made in prayers. On the contrary, churches grow with agonizing prayers pouring out of hearts full of “vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ”, a factor that was scored very highly by church members. The intensity explains why fasting of many days is added to prayers, a common action out of pleasure rather than pain by revitalized churches in Nairobi city. (The practice of fasting for long may be too pragmatic to be questioned; and in any way amongst Pentecostals and charismatic groups, what works is worthwhile within the understood and non-contradictory limits of Scripture).

- Evangelism and diversified outreaches

The church of the 21st century needs leaders with large hearts and skilful minds to try different approaches to growing the church and eradicating stagnancy. The rapid rate of urbanization of Nairobi can no longer tolerate the training pastors for a 150 people congregation using a “one-style-fits-all approach” (Clinton 2005, 192). The crunch of stagnation demands leadership that will evolve a strategy to reach different categories of people in the city. This is central to the mission strategies of turnaround congregations.

Intention evangelistic efforts aimed at reaching out to people in and around the community where the church is planted is a very likely means of promoting church growth and revitalization. Growing churches teach, train and send out their members to communicate their faith in Christ to friends and neighbours. Different approaches are used by different

churches, with the best result coming from a combination of many approaches. One approach is evangelism days, set apart for members to deliberately give some hours to speak to people on a one-on-one basis. Weekly cell group meetings offer opportunity for informal friendship evangelism, mostly among fellow residents in the same house and vicinity. A lifestyle evangelism method entails that some members keep Gospel tracts and flyers with which they initiate Gospel communication with casual contacts and co-workers.

Revitalized congregations use a number of evangelistic strategies to get people interested in the Gospel and the church, including special seminars on areas of community and life needs, film shows, musical nights and concerts, outdoor retreats, and other context appropriate methods. Such strategies are often backed up with fervent prayer and sometimes fasting to invoke the might of the Holy Spirit to draw the target souls to Christ.

- Functional Cell/Care group ministries

Informal fellowship in cells or care groups has become a kind of neighbourhood ambassador or public relation ministry of revitalized churches in the community. Some local churches have as many as 30 to 50 of them scattered in the form of saturated planted churches covering the entire community of the church. Others have as few as 15, depending on the size of the church or of the available manpower to effectively operate the cells. Findings show that cell or care groups lead to revitalization of stagnant churches. Some congregations have experienced almost a 500% growth in a time span of five years due to the impact of the house fellowship or cell group system (see chapter 5).

Functional cell groups have the unique role of increasing church membership and discipling church visitors. First time visitors are easily integrated into the cells by neighbours who invite them, and par consequence into the church. They are introduced into the different ministry groups of the church, from where their gifts are discovered and made to flourish through use. This in turn contributes to both numerical and spiritual growth of the church.

Cell groups as centres of the trio of care, evangelism and discipleship serve as catalysts for church revitalization, as illustrated in the experience of the world's largest congregation,

the Yoido Full Gospel Church of Seoul, Korea (Cho 1981:53). Whatever the appellation a denomination may call this micro-care unit of small group, informal gatherings in the residents of members, the results in the six churches studied show that congregations that establish and train personnel and mobilize its membership continually for such an outreach outfit stands to experience a turnaround from stagnation to revitalization.

- Enabled, mobilized membership

When church members are made disciples through systematic training programmes and are mobilized by church leadership to serve in various aspects of the ministry of the church, there is every possibility that the congregation will witness a turnaround in growth. The likelihood of the continuation of a ministry beyond the founder, as well as the viability of the church far into the future depend on the extent to which training, raising and mobilizing members occupy a central place in the work of the church (Wright 2007:288). That is why the mobilization and empowerment of the entire church membership are secret keys of researched revitalized churches in Nairobi city.

Church leadership needs to harness the initial fire and zeal of the new converts and should transform it into soul winning from the very point of conversion in order to revitalize. Jesus' ministry is a good example of this (Luke 4:19; 9:1, 2; 10:1). He spent the greater part of his three and half years of ministry training the twelve so that they could follow in his steps. Paul trained and instructed the appointment of elders in every church under his parish (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5; Eph. 4:11-13).

Such training must go beyond the conventional approach of increasing scriptural knowledge to sharpness and effectiveness in ministry skills in order for it to be effective. It must be tailored to the needs of the church and its community, and avoid the pitfall of stagnant churches attending church growth conferences that address the culture of urban mega-churches and apply such principles to congregations that are yet to break the 100 or 200 barrier with regard to growth.

Training and discipleship usually takes two forms in revitalized churches. There is the central training that is domesticated in the sanctuary. Usually a day in the week is set aside for new converts to come separately for basic exposure to scriptural teachings on biblical

doctrines, Christian living and evangelism. Such meetings of about one hour per week also include some forms of seminars and workshops; and it is concluded after a period of about two to three months, with weeks of practical outdoor evangelism. Some churches include cell group training as part of the workshop sessions in the program package. An associate pastor in each of the churches researched mostly anchors the training program, with assistance from elders.

Some other churches operate a decentralized discipleship and mobilization program. Each major department in the church trains its members and commissions them for service in the department and in the church. Central to such arrangements are the women's department, men's department, youth department and children's department. Others, like the music and worship groups, ushering unit and utilities outlets are more specialized and give more work-oriented training than the afore-mentioned main departments. When using this option, the question to ask is: What happens to centralized evangelism training and practice? Each main department teaches and mobilizes its members to reach out to its target audience. For example, the youths seek their peers and women carry out the women's ministry with soul winning objective. However, the real centre of evangelism is the cell groups in the neighbourhoods. Every member belongs to a cell group where his spiritual growth is monitored and developed. As he grows and becomes a responsible church member, he is tasked with showing compassion to other neighbours through friendship evangelism and holistic care of the converts within an African *ubuntu* family atmosphere.

However, there is a new dimension to equipping and mobilizing members in the revitalized churches. Partnership with other churches is giving way to 'sole proprietorship' in doing God's business. Members are regularly brought together across denominations for joint seminars, workshops and even evangelistic campaigns featuring ministers of different levels of giftedness and skills. There is an urban realization that to win the city for Christ, congregations need to move away from the old self-struggle to a "big-picture thinking and cooperation" in the "multi-tasking challenge of training for church leadership" (Corwin 2007: 144).

- Family atmosphere of unity and love

Churches that experience a turnaround cultivate a family environment of unity and love among all members irrespective of tribe or political affiliations, the two dominant dividing elements in the face of Christianity in Kenya and Nairobi. Family environment brings a sense of belonging to those who join the church, as the feeling of being a stranger quickly gives way to a homely feeling. Members see themselves as spiritual brothers and sisters, a people with whom each could share fellowship and discuss intimate heart concerns. The pastor takes on the father figure, as one rightly claims: “I am aware that I am a father. The people depend on me, and it does not matter whether they have messed up, are dirty, good or bad, God has brought them to me so I could be a father to them”. What a great fatherly heart! On their own part, older church members present a family picture that nourishes and provides for needs of newcomers and converts.

In churches where the family atmosphere is supreme, church members long for Sundays to meet fellow believers, associate with a caring people, relax in the spirit in worship sessions and shed the cloak of a week that might have been filled with worldly worries and life tribulations (John 16:33). Findings show that members of revitalized churches are often not in a hurry to go home after services; they feel at home in the church environment among joyful saints of God, some who may not even have as much as three meals per day. What this holds for growth is obvious.

Urban dwellers suffer from emotional distress (Castillo 1982:81) and do search for a remedy in care centres. Revitalized churches provide the enabling environment to have such needs met through the spirit *ubuntu* (communalism) that pervade the environment. This keeps newcomers coming and serves as impetus to inviting more unbelievers who abhor the city’s individualistic and isolating tendencies. Not too many normal humans and weary urbanites can resist the attraction of genuine Christian “agape” love.

One indispensable indication of family atmosphere that promotes revitalization is team spirit among church workers and leaders in the planning and execution of the mission of the church. Constructive criticism and complementary partnership of gifts make for improvement and better service offered in the marketing of the Gospel. With a harmonious

spirit in the work relationship, effectiveness is enhanced in the team work of the various church ministries, leading to more fruitfulness in all aspects of church growth.

Apart from the main duty of scriptural teaching on sanctification and unity of believers as spoken of by Jesus in the high priestly prayers of chapter seventeen of John's Gospel, the family environment is induced and sustained by creating environments that bring people together. Examples include, but are not limited to special retreats, workshops and seminars for both the entire church and for primary church departments like men, women, teens, youths and children's groups. This helps to improve bonding and to engender effective outreach to a wider variety of groups in the community. Furthermore, revitalization will come easy when choice of elders and departmental leaders reflect the diversity of the memberships in the congregation.

- Dynamic Youth and ministry structures

From the findings of this research, no church in Nairobi can experience a turnaround until the youth ministry of the church is made dynamic and given greater involvement in the work of the ministry. More than 50 percent of Kenyans are under 15 years of age, and there are over 50,000 young adults in the nation's university, of which the majority are in Nairobi city (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:382). By nature, youths are agile and restless, especially the urban teens and adolescents. What revitalized churches do is to realize these peculiarities, to adopt contextual outreach programmes for them and mobilize youth believers in the church to go after their unbelieving peers in the schools, slums and streets of Nairobi with the youth-friendly Gospel. The more Christian students and youths are integrated into the affairs of the local churches, the more youth evangelism and mission bear fruits and catapult the growth of the church. Perhaps next to women, the youth occupy the largest membership of many revitalized churches.

Youths will remain a major harvesting field for churches that seek a time turnaround in the 21st century. With youths constituting an estimated eight billion out of the ten billion projected world population for 2050 (Clinton 2005:192), leaders with hearts for ministries to the youths will most likely bring a turnaround to urban stagnant congregations in Nairobi. Moreover, youths, biblically, have a unique role in *missio Dei*. When trained and enabled, they could be more receptive and aggressive in spreading the Gospel on home

and foreign mission fronts as illustrated by the likes of biblical Timothy and Titus, two youth addressees of the only pastoral letters in the Bible. The researcher holds that churches that do not leave the youth on the periphery, but allow them take central stage in the mission of the church, stand to become turnaround congregations.

However, the youth ministry of a church will only be dynamic to the extent to which all teens and youths are permitted to hold regular, independent fellowships, meet in weekly youth cells, carry out customized seminars, workshops, weekend retreats, musical events, conferences, rallies, holiday outreaches, Christian film shows and such evangelistic and edifying Christian outings as would nourish their spirit, strengthen their capacities and put them on a Gospel trail in search of fellow souls for the kingdom of God and relevance in society.

Other ministry structures like Sunday school, campus fellowship, and music and worship teams are areas of involvement where youths and adults contribute significantly to growth when mobilized by church leaders and sustained through an encouraging, equipping leadership.

All churches that want to experience a turnaround from stagnation to revitalization within the urban context of Nairobi need to incorporate the eight elements analysed in this model in the revitalization strategy of the church. They are the critical elements of a broad model that could be applied across the board rather than a step-by-step methodological model.

However, depending on the context of each church within the political division of Nairobi metropolis, as well as its denominational tradition, there are supplementary elements that provide contextual relevance to the critical factors mentioned above in revitalizing a stagnant church. Two groups of elements are identified in this research and are discussed below. The first group are the common supplementary factors. They deal more with strategy and consequently do not qualify to be grouped among the normative, common and critical elements. They are nevertheless common descriptive elements of revitalization in the church growth method that a church would adopt. The second group are the non-common supplementary elements. A church may sift through these factors to find the necessary ones based on its context.

6.3.2 Common, supplementary factors of revitalization

The common, supplementary factors of revitalization are elements relating to the central concern over the spiritual welfare of members of revitalized churches before and after they have joined the congregation. Revitalization is the product of a deliberate, strategic plan on the entry points that mostly attract prospective converts to the church. It also touches on maintaining growth via paying attention to the spiritual state of members, members' regularity in Sunday service attendance, members' ministry involvement, and the recognition and fulfilment of prospective members' expectation from the other stakeholders in the church.

The following recommendations on all the above stated points are borne out of analyzing findings from questionnaire items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 (Appendix 3).

- New converts' entry points

Figure 25 below indicates five major ways by which prospective converts gain entry into revitalized churches in Nairobi city. The findings show that churches that promote friendship evangelism coupled with an atmosphere of love, unity and friendliness will gain 40% of its expected members from such an approach. With an increase in the number of couples resulting from specialized outreaches targeting families, constant marriage seminars to encourage singles to get wedded and scriptural teachings on sanctity of marriage and the raising of godly children, the next 16% of the growth of the church will be biological as parents positively influence their children to adhere to the religious faith and denominational allegiance of their parents.

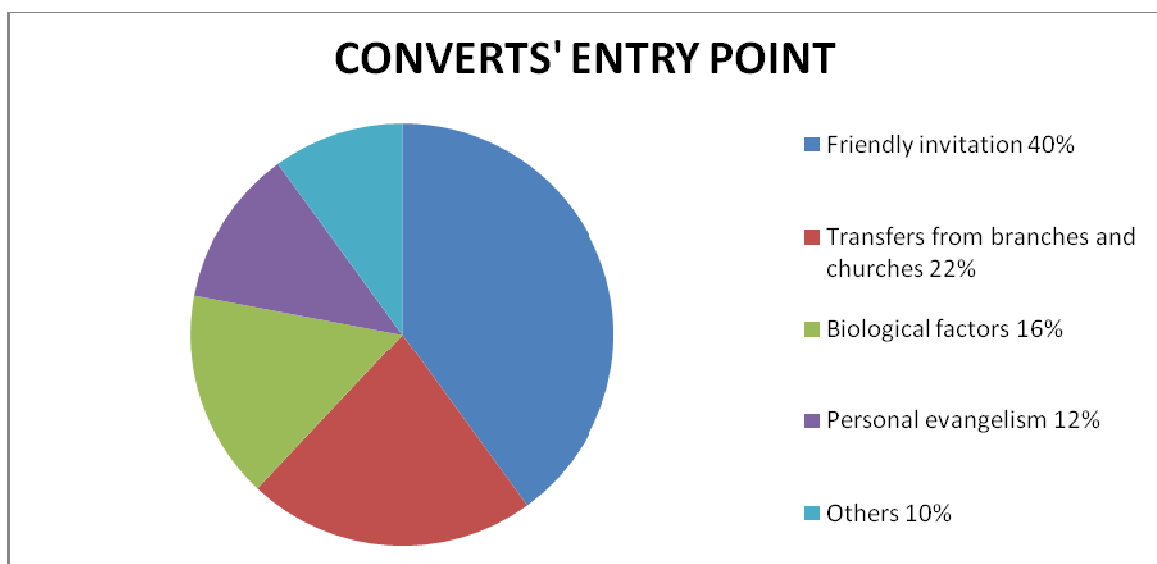


Figure 25: Converts' entry points into the revitalized churches of Nairobi city

Churches that encourage deliberately planned personal evangelism ministry and that give adequate training for this stand the chance of gaining a further 12% of its members from the church community, while 22% may come in from the urban mobility factor of transfers and an ecclesiastical search for a home church. In the group of “others” are such minimally contributing factors as open air campaigns and media publicity, among others. The implication is that while some churches commit a lot of funds to open air campaigns and religious broadcasts on the radio and television, the newcomers and converts from such efforts are hardly beyond 3% memberships of the church. Also, the individualistic and busy nature of the city cause organised personal evangelism to fall behind in fruitfulness compared to friendship evangelism where the life and influence of neighbours, co-tenants and co-workers influence colleagues and acquaintances towards the Gospel and church attendance.

Transfer growth, where believers change local churches or denominations, is not evangelistic growth as it does not add to the universal body of Christ. Churches whose memberships swell through this channel could not be said to be fulfilling the Great Commission. They equally risk remaining stagnant due to a constant turnover of members, a peculiar feature in Nairobi Christianity where the Uhuru Park city centre is constantly filled with the same crowd responding to evangelistic campaigns or night prayers (Keisha) organised from time to time. It is a culture introduced to the Kenya Christendom by

politicians who gather the same multitudes for patronage of different political party rallies during electioneering campaigns at the same park.

- Members' spiritual state

As indicated in Fig. 26 below, pastors and leaders of revitalized churches in the Nairobi metropolis maintain an overwhelming majority of their members at the born again spiritual status (91% of combined membership of 600 researched congregants of selected six churches). These are members who are evangelically converted, having repented, confessed and forsaken their sins and are maintaining a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour (Matt. 4:17; Acts 3:19, 20; Ephesians 2:8, 9; 1 John 1:9).

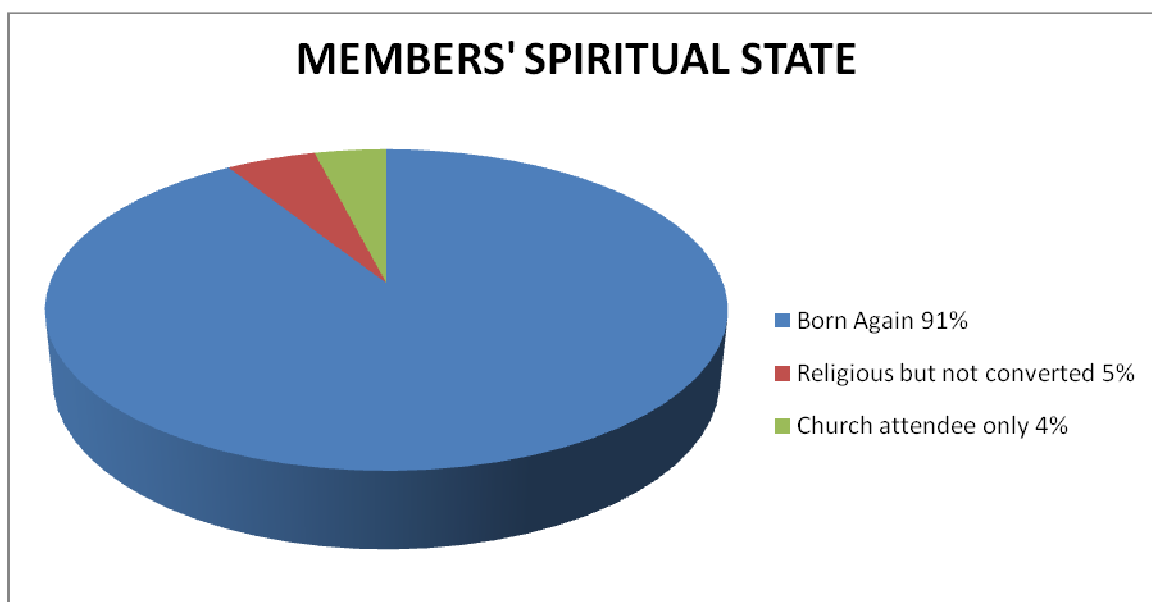


Figure 26: Spiritual state of members of Nairobi revitalized congregations

A church that achieves such a rare target of saved souls in the city congregation by necessity focuses its preaching and teaching on Jesus as presented by the Bible and practically demonstrates his life and labour of three-fold ministry of preaching, teaching and healing (Acts 8:5-8; Matt.9:35; 1 Pet.2:21). The goal would be to fulfil the Great Commission and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20).

Findings show that pastors of revitalized churches teach the word of God so clearly and effectively that no single member is unsure of his/her spiritual state, even when it is on the negative side. The implication is that there cannot be much hope of revitalization in a congregation where the blind leads the blind (Matt. 15:14); or in a gathering of spiritual vipers and serpents who are themselves on the broad way to hell (Matt.23:33). For the church to be revitalized the ministers must be born again, have their vessels sanctified and be endued with the Spirit of God and not of the world (Matt. 5:13-16; 1 Pet.1:14-16; 1John 2:15-17; Eph.5:18). They must necessarily know how to lead the congregants to the same experience. Beyond numbers, pastors of such congregations do not covet the silver or gold of congregants but will rather seek the eternal qualification and the new birth experience for the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers (Acts 20:28, 33).

- Members' regularity in Sunday service attendance

As reflected in Fig. 27 below, an average of 90% memberships of revitalized churches attend Sunday services of their congregations on a weekly basis. Only a marginal 4% of members attend twice per month and occasional attendees are minimally kept at 5% of the church membership.

To achieve revitalization, a stagnant church in the Nairobi metropolis needs to strive towards this phenomenal level of attendance in members that are incorporated into the church. Abiding members will evangelize and encourage others to do so. Members who enjoy the Sunday worship of the church and are loyally involved in it will likely persuade others to want to come. The opposite is true for non-committed members who only identify with the congregation either by card or in celebrating annual festivities. Moreover, to have evangelicals who do not attend church is to compound the growth of nominalism in Nairobi city, where less than 20% of its approximate 5 million inhabitants are church goers.

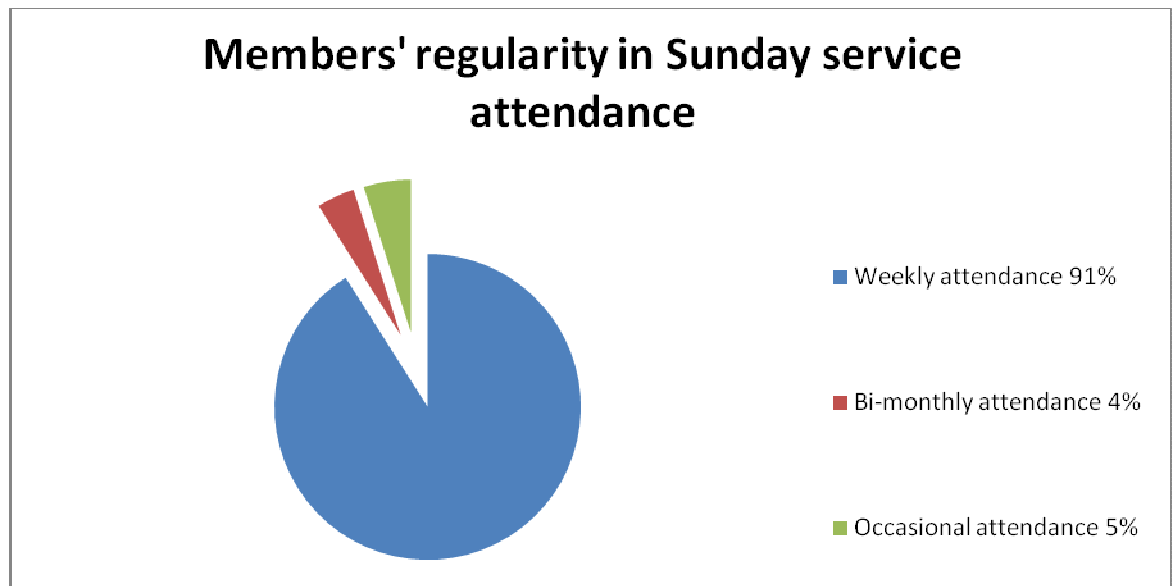


Figure 27: Regularity of members of revitalized churches in Sunday service attendance

- Members' ministry involvement

As indicated below in Fig.28, an overwhelming majority of members in revitalized churches find a place to serve in the various internal ministries of the church. These are mostly in the praise and worship teams, children's department, youth outreach and ushering work. Responsibilities engender accountability, and members would more likely continue and propagate the course of a church where they could identify and use their gifts compared to a closed opportunity for ministry usefulness.

Though the likelihood is that members who are involved in external ministries of specialized outreaches to prisons, hospitals, and in cell groups and personal evangelism will equally be in one internal ministry or the other, there are about 17% of members of revitalized churches who see their calling in the day to day encounter with needy souls outside the confines of the church. When the opportunities to offer such services are created by the church, the people abide in the congregation, reach out to those units, and the church grows. However, if such opportunities do not exist, the people seek other congregations where they can find ministry fulfilment, leading the church to decline or stagnate.

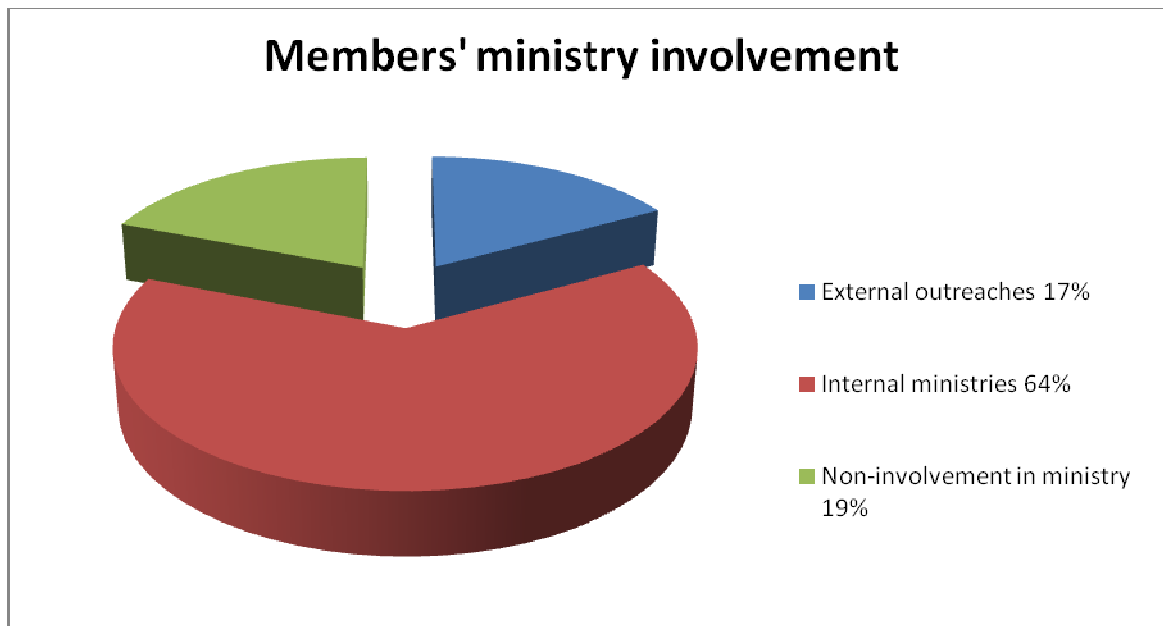


Figure 28: Involvement of members of Nairobi revitalized churches in the mission of the church

A good number of saved and unsaved people in the revitalized churches do not get involved in overt kingdom service. While the sinners in the church would need to be saved before rendering an acceptable divine service (Matt.3: 5-9; John 6:28, 29), believers need to be taught and challenged on biblical consecration and be corrected on the unbiblical notion of separating the secular from the spiritual in daily Christian living.

- Prospective members' expectations from church leaders

The degree of abiding of newcomers in the church and the extent to which they will market the congregation to other prospective members depend on the degree to which the members' expectations on joining church are met. As shown in Fig. 29 below, 43% of adherents of revitalized churches are committed congregants because their expectations of possibilities for personal spiritual growth are met. Another 22% are faithful in membership and involvement because they expect to be given opportunities to do ministry, an expectation that was not disappointed. 14% of the members are satisfied to find the declaration of the total Gospel without fear or favour as hoped. An atmosphere of unity, worship and fellowship make 12% of the congregants abide; while 9% remain in the church because they came for prayers and life blessings, which they found.

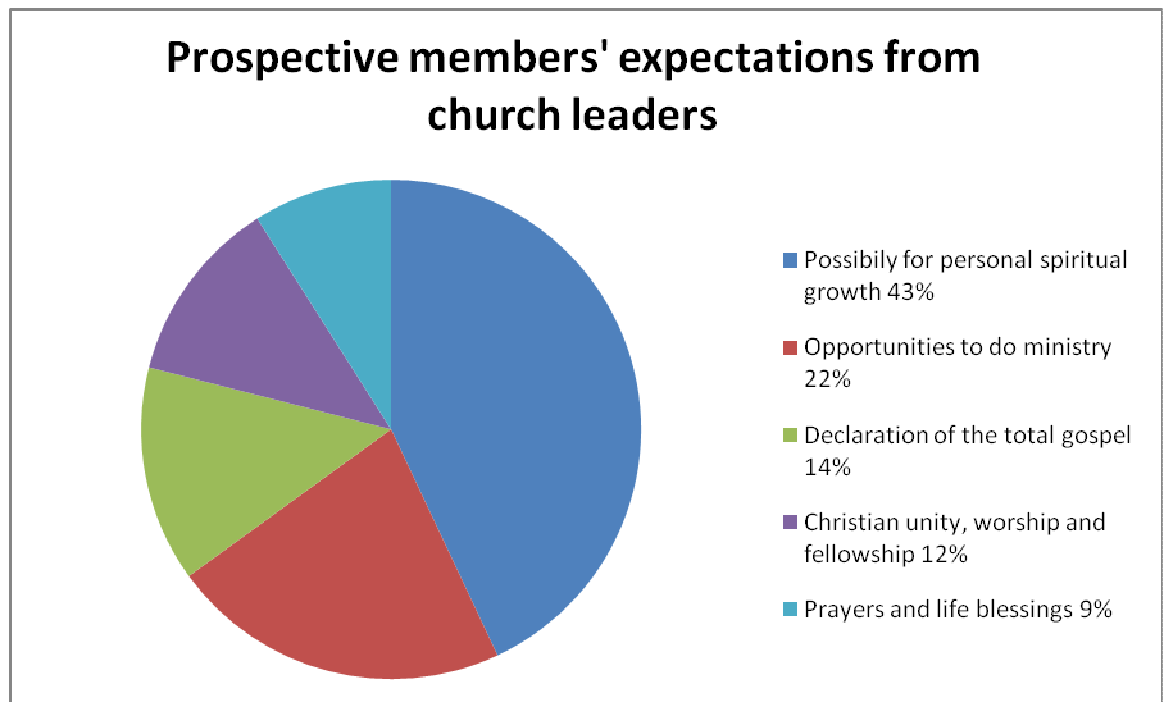


Figure 29: Expectations of members of Nairobi revitalized churches from church leaders

Churches that desire a turnaround will need to meet the five expectations that serve as push and pull factors to prospective congregants in urban settings. In the pursuit of spiritual growth, interested church goers seek salvation for their souls from sin and Satan, holiness of life in the midst of a corrupt and polluted urban lifestyle and hope of heaven in a hopeless, make-believe technological world. Again the tool for this is in unadulterated declaration of the Word of God, backed by a non-disappointing life on the pulpit and in the pews. Creation of different ministry groups with diversified outreaches will provide enough avenues for utilization of gifts and talents in doing ministry. The consequence of all these will be a growing, praying church filled with the nature of Christ and rejoicing in the fullness of God's endowed blessings as promised in Psalms 133.

6.3.3 Supplementary, non-common elements of revitalization

The following six supplementary factors shown in Fig. 30 below are not uniform to all revitalized churches, but are relevant to attaining a turnaround from a stagnant congregation depending on the context of the church community. They may not be applied to the growth strategy of the church wholesale; they nevertheless make unique contributions to revitalization of a stagnant church, depending on the context.

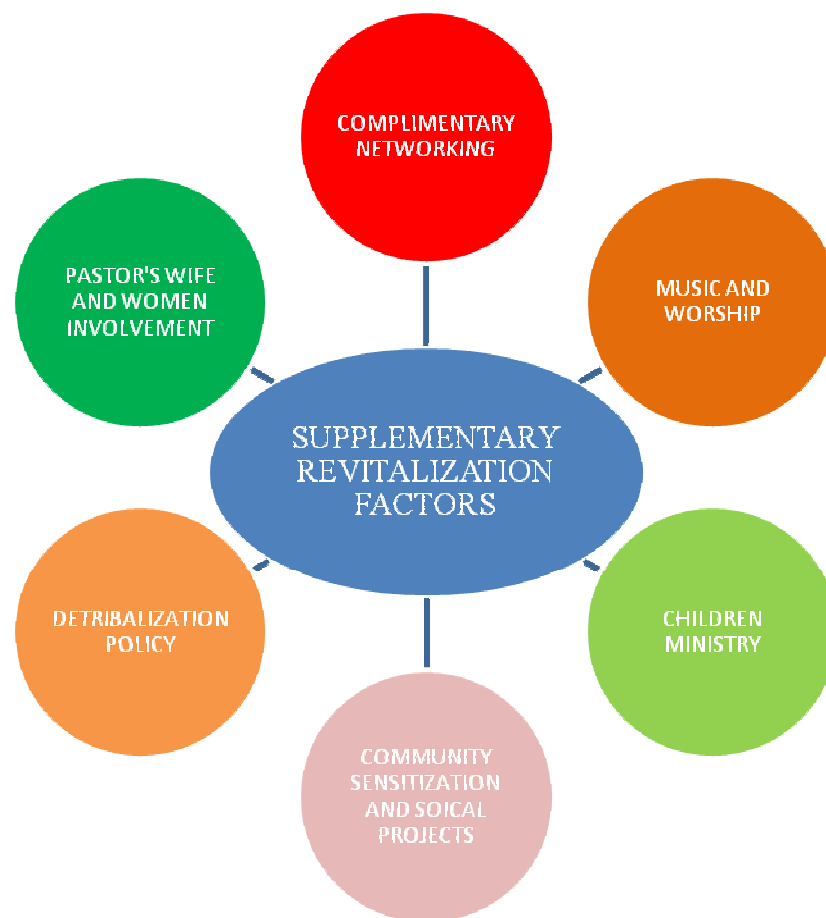


Figure 30: Supplementary, contextual revitalization factors in turnaround churches

- Music and worship style

Findings show that the music of over 80% of revitalized congregations is more modern than traditional, with a good mix of many high sounding musical instruments. The music seem to appeal more to the youths and young adults than to old-fashioned adult

worshippers who are more at home with solemn music and the worship style of missionary, mainline denominations.

Without exception, revitalized churches allow for personal expressions in worship. This includes clapping of hands, body movements, audible prayers and other acts of outward manifestations that are usually attributed to the move or influence of the Holy Ghost in the congregation. It appears that worshippers in revitalized churches perceive churches of grave, methodical silence and worship to be lacking in the presence of the Spirit. Incidentally, such acts, which were previously identified only with Pentecostal and charismatic groups, are now the vogue of revitalized churches of many evangelical traditions in Nairobi city.

- Children's ministry

Church members rank the children's department next to leadership as a leading ministry group that contributes to the growth of turnaround churches in Nairobi. Surprisingly, church leaders omit this strategic department in their ranking of factors of revitalization. The reason for the difference in perception may not be far-fetched. Church leaders often treat the children's church as an appendage to adult church. The children's church halls are considered last in budget approvals, and even then it is often to prevent them from disturbing the adults who are considered to be in need of paying attention to the Gospel. It is not unlikely that the children's inability to make a significant financial contribution to the church may be working to their disadvantage in some congregations.

However, the scenario is different in revitalized churches. Members value children, understand their spiritual needs and carry out evangelistic outreaches and special retreats to win and grow them in the faith. Parents become adherents to churches that their children appreciate and love to attend. The findings of this research indicate that churches that give priority to the children's ministry will grow numerically and experience revitalization from stagnation. Those children will not only invite their peers and excite their parents; they will grow in the congregation to become stable church workers and growth pillars.

- Community sensitization and social projects

Contemporary urban ministry takes place in the context of mass poverty, class discrimination and institutional breakdowns. Revitalized churches seize this opportunity to present social goods and poverty alleviation gospels to target communities. The most common projects are low-cost, affordable educational institutions, especially at the primary school and vocational levels. Many parents of the pupils eventually become members of the church along with their families. The children boost the membership of the children's church, and grow up to join the youth ministry and finally the adult congregation and ministry groups.

Micro-economic projects for subsistence living are means of sensitizing low income settlements that litter the urban centres of Nairobi. Churches have attracted to the faith of Jesus Christ widows, single mothers, gangsters and miscreants who will not normally attend church programmes by establishing computer literacy programs, local dress making factories, transportation businesses and other community-appropriate means of skills development.

- Pastor's wife and women's involvement

While many stagnant churches are struggling to grapple with the theological appropriateness of women in ministry, revitalized churches simply put them to church use. The women's department is one of the most growing arms of the ministries of revitalized congregations. The growth potential of the women's ministry is demonstrated by the phenomenal majority of women in most African Institutional Churches (AICs). No AICs will contemplate growth outside women's involvement in ministry. They lead, teach, train, counsel and mobilize fellow women and carry out unique outreaches that draw multitudes of women folk to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In pastoral ability, women seem to be more moral and less scandalous than their male counterparts. That singular factor may explain why congregations led by women in Nairobi, even among Pentecostals, run into thousands of members.

Top of the list of growth-propelling women in the church is the pastor's wife. Revitalized congregants in Nairobi are proud of the pastor's wife when she serves in the ministry with

the husband. Members see the close relationship as reducing moral tension, inducing confidentiality during visitations and counselling sessions, setting a family example to the flock and protecting credibility in times of baseless accusations. Pastors whose wives are sidelined in ministry, either by default or design, are often doubted and suspected and are not much spoken of to prospective church members. The African culture and its strong family ethos make a strong pastoral family that is visible to church members an attraction for other couples, thus encouraging church growth and revitalization.

- Complimentary networking

As already alluded to in this chapter, a stagnant church will more than likely experience revitalization by opting out of their own struggle in ministry by recognizing the gifts and assistance of other churches and ministers. This allows for the church to make up for areas of lack resulting from the limitations of the pastor and his associates to be made up for through the ministry of visiting ministers. In most cases this leads to the growth of the church as beneficiaries of such miracles, revelations or experiences go around telling others about the church. It also provokes the confidence of members in their pastor, who is seen as being more concern with meeting people's needs than wanting to build and protect a personal empire out of a fear of fellow, gifted ministers.

Allowing congregations and church departments to mix with fellow believers of like-minded biblical conviction sharpens both the pastor and the members. New ways of doing ministry are learned, scriptural understandings are awakened in a deeper way and improved methods are injected into the different organs of church work. The multiplier effect lies in a more edified congregation, bringing in more fruits into the kingdom of God, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

- Detribalization policy

A peculiarity of Christianity in Kenya and Nairobi is church tribes and political schisms in the religious climate. Most revitalized congregations find ways out of this because it disturbs the atmosphere of peace, love and unity that is indispensable for the growth of the church. A detribalization policy that begins with a change of attitude from ethnocentric tendencies to seeing and accepting all tribes as fellow brothers and sisters in the nation and

church will lead to church revitalization. Leaders of revitalized churches demonstrate this first, and it then flows down to the entire membership.

Formulating and implementing a detribalization policy to promote church revitalization becomes easy if church leaders inculcate the attributes of the heavenly father as portrayed by Jesus Christ in chapter five of Matthew, where he says:

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:45-48).

In order to experience a turnaround and move from stagnation to revitalization, a church congregation needs a balanced combination of the eight critical elements and any or all of the common and uncommon supplementary elements, depending on the urban growth strategy it adopts within its context of operation in the Nairobi metropolis.

6.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research investigated the perceived growth factors in the turnaround churches in the urban context of Nairobi, Kenya and proposed a possible revitalization model feasible to revitalize a stagnant church in the city. The findings, analysis and interpretations from each chapter of the study are summarized in this section, together with the conclusions.

Chapter one gives the background to the problem statement of the research: the paradox of the co-existence of few phenomenally growing churches alongside multiple cramping congregations. Also, the research methods that provide the framework for investigating the

perceived factors of stagnation and revitalization in the select churches are identified. A qualitative research study that used the case study approach as mode of enquiry was adopted to investigate the various research questions. These questioned were designed to investigate the perceptions of church leaders and members in six select churches that have experienced a turnaround from stagnation to revitalization. The objective was to arrive at growth factors that could be proposed as a revitalization model for the urban stagnant churches in Nairobi.

In chapter two, biblical perspectives and relevant literature are examined in an attempt to shed light on the place of urbanization, urban mission, church planting, church growth and revitalization. The convergent point of Scripture and literature is that the city is God's mission field for works of mercy and redemption. Within this ambit of *missio Dei*, the mission of the church becomes relevant both in planting and growing quantitative and qualitative congregations. This is seen in both the Old and New Testaments in how God deals with Jews and Gentiles. A plateau or declining congregation is not contextually relevant to a contemporary urban population explosion. God needs growing revitalized churches to bring his vision of the New Jerusalem of all nations, tribes and languages to fruition (Rev. 7: 9, 10).

In chapter three, we noted that though Kenya is a professed Christian nation (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001:380), the face of its Christianity and that of the capital city of Nairobi is defaced by ethnic conflicts, political and class discrimination and socio-economic deprivations that create the low income settlements and the poverty that plague most churches. Even if the nation is secular, the church remains a subset within the universal set of the State so that national idiosyncrasies constantly becloud the church and stain its image as the bride of Christ. Political polarization, tribal schism, class subjugation, and the culture of donor-dependency have all combined to taint the church in Nairobi and Kenya so much that the body of Christ in many of the stagnant congregations is too feeble and fragmented to fulfil its divinely ordained mission or squarely face the furrows of the gates of hell and prevail. Gifford (2009:251) is right to conclude that "the future of Kenya's Christianities depends greatly on the future of Kenya, since all its varieties are closely related to the context". However, revitalized churches have worked through this context to achieve "excellent", "outstanding" and "incredible" decadal church growth. This is usually by a combination of vertical and horizontal mission distinctives and an effective

adaptation of denominational organogram and ministry structures to the needs of the community of church.

In chapter four, we enumerated the factors of church stagnation in Nairobi city and concluded that churches stagnate in the metropolis because of several factors ranging from a weak or failing leadership who will neither stay on the job in church nor stay on the Word on pulpit. Such leaders are either too busy seeking alternate means of improved income or too preoccupied with tribal-politico matters to give enough time to studying and preaching the totality of God's word. Famished and neglected to hurt and rot, the sheep find other folds to feed in and the congregation declines and stagnates.

The congregants share in the dilemma of the stagnant churches. Many do not pray and are resistant to change. Members' commitment to giving to kingdom projects and evangelizing the community is as weak as the pastors' half-hearted allegiance to their full-time paid service. This is besides the dividing lines of tribe and politics that blur the vision of Christ's church as children in the same family of God, "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16, 17).

In chapter five, the factors that made the revitalized churches experience a turnaround are enumerated from the perspective of church leaders and church members. The leaders identified thirteen factors, eight of which received prominence. These include but are not limited to the centrality of leadership and the pulpit ministry of expository and systematic preaching and teaching of the bible without compromising the truth. An atmosphere of unity that enables mass mobilization of members in prayers and in different ways of outreach are cited as important as dynamic involvement of youths and the various ministry groups in the church mission. Leaders equally noted the increasing relevance of the pastor's wife and other 'outside' ministers in complementing the gifting of the pastor in order to grow the church. While the members equally perceive the contribution of most of these factors, they hold the view that tribal allegiances of church members as well as the church's physical facilities are impetuses to bringing in newcomers that swell the membership of some revitalized congregations.

The conclusion drawn in this chapter is that there is hope for stagnant urban churches. Within the urban context of Nairobi, the stagnant churches cramping around the

phenomenally growing congregations can experience a turnaround and be revitalized. The proposed model that will ensure the revitalization will involve momentums that are essentially generated internally in each congregation. While the socio-political and economic environments of Nairobi, together with ecclesiastical order of denominational traditions, as well as other externally-induced factors may play some part, the contribution is not found to be significant.

Whether a church will be stagnant or be revitalized is determined by the pastoral leadership that is placed in the congregation and the key elements of factors of revitalization that he/she allows to orbit around his/her shepherding role. Church growth or decline will always be traced to the leadership factor. Leaders with positive influence will induce church growth while leaders with negative influence will cause church decline, stagnancy and death (Verster and Hancke 2004:110). Besides the life and labour of the superintending pastor, seven other critical elements and few supplementary factors are suggested as a broad model to initiate a turnaround.

The move from stagnation to revitalization requires a good mix of supplementary elements that are context appropriate, especially the factors of praise and worship, the strategic inclusion of the pastor's wife in ministry, women's involvement in general and partnership of complementary ministries and ministers, among others. These are growth factors supporting the identified eight critical elements of a turnaround church.

The researcher deduces from the findings from the select churches studied that the more church leaders and members emphasise the factors of leading as model, promoting church unity, emphasizing the scriptures on the pulpit, praying with results, mobilizing the enabled flock, evangelizing on diversified fronts, involving youths in ministry, and operating functional cell-ministry structures, the more the church will grow and the story of stagnation will give way to one of revitalization in urban settings like Nairobi.

6.5 LIMITATIONS

The research is concentrated on churches within the evangelical tradition, which the researcher considers to best suit the purpose of the study. A more comprehensive coverage of all church traditions stands the chance of revealing and illustrating more of what constitutes the diversity of Kenya's Christianity vis-à-vis the subject of church growth and revitalization. This, however, has not invalidated the observations and conclusions made in this research.

As an urban missiological research, the focus of this study is obviously urban, with emphasis on Kenya's most urbanized city, Nairobi. An all-inclusive research that examines church growth and revitalization in sampled rural and urban settings of the eight provinces of the country may give room for rural-urban comparative analysis and contribute to the richness of the variations of factors hindering and promoting revitalization in the entire nation.

6.6 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research is overwhelmingly urban and has predominantly raised issues that centre on the city church. A similar study that is centred on rural stagnant and revitalized churches and compares the outcome with that of the urban setting is needed to have a national grid of factors of church revitalization in Kenya's turnaround churches.

There is a need for a comprehensive urban church growth study that targets the two main cities with the two foremost and opposing missionary religions in Kenya. Nairobi is a Christian city, while the next and only most populous city, Mombasa, is Islamic. Other growth dimensions than the ones recommended in this research and possible additions and contradictions to factors of stagnation and revitalization may be gleaned by examining

churches in the coastal, Islamic Mombasa city and comparing the findings with that of the hinterland, Christian Nairobi metropolis.

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8 APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

DIVISIONS AND LOCATIONS IN NAIROBI CITY²³

Table 26: Divisions and Locations in Nairobi City

DIVISIONS	LOCATIONS
1. CENTRAL	Huruma, Kariokor , Mathare, Ngara, Starehe
2. DAGORETTI	Kawangware, Kenyatta/Golf Club, Mutuini, Riruta, Uthiru/Ruthmitu, Waithaka
3. EMBAKASI	Dandora, Embakasi, Kariobangi South, Kayole, Mukuru kwa Njenga, Njiru, Ruai, Umoja
4. KASARANI	Githurai, Kahawa, Kariobangi North, Kasarani, Korogocho, Roysambu, Ruaraka
5. KIBERA	Karen, Kibera, Laini Saba, Langata, Mugumoini, Nairobi West, Sera Ngombe
6. MAKADARA	Makadara, Makongeni, Maringo, Mukuru Nyayo, Viwandani
7. PUMWANI	Bahati, Eastleigh North, Eastleigh South, Kamukunji, Pumwani
8. WESTLANDS	Highridge, Kangemi, Kilimani, Kitisuru, Lavington, Parklands

1.1.1 ²³ From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Internet source, accessed March 24, 2010

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW WITH SELECT CHURCH LEADERS, WORKERS AND LONGTIME MEMBERS

Introduction: The aim of this interview is to find out the facts behind the growth of your church, and of other select turnaround churches in Nairobi city, in order to recommend a growth model for stagnant urban churches, particularly in Kenya and generally in Africa as a whole. This is a PhD research work under the supervision of Missiology Department of North-West University in South Africa. Your identity will be treated with confidentiality, though the interview will be voice recorded for purposes of credibility and ease of data analysis.

Let me start by asking you to **please introduce yourself (name, marital status, nationality, tribe, educational level, full-time employment) and your involvement in this church?**

SECTION A: ORIGIN AND EXPANSION OF THIS CHURCH IN NAIROBI CITY

1. When and how did this church begin in Nairobi? (Archive pictures/materials then and now).
2. What are its VISION and MISSION statements? (Can we have a copy?)
3. What is the governance structure of the church, that is, its leadership hierarchy, and their major functions?
4. What are the various ministry departments in the church and their major objectives?
5. What was the attendance of the church when you initially joined it and what is it now?
6. On a periodical basis, how will you describe the numerical growth of the church over the last twenty years? (E.g. between 1980-1989 & 1990-2009).

7. To what extent has the church been involved in church planting in Nairobi since its inception?
8. In which other areas of urban mission work in Nairobi is the church involved?
9. How will you describe the major challenges the church has faced or still facing in Nairobi city? (*political, economic, religious, socio-cultural, etc.*)
10. What will you consider as the enduring distinctive (*the special thing*) by which the church is known, irrespective of changing times and circumstances?

SECTION B: FACTORS OF CHURCH STAGNATION OR DECLINE

11. Within which years did the church stagnate and what was the average membership then?
12. What, in your opinion, were the factors responsible for the stagnation of the church then? (*physical, spiritual, environmental, theological, ecclesiastical*)
13. What were the biggest challenges your church faced in the effort to address the hindering factors and move the congregation from stagnation to revitalization?

SECTION C: FACTORS OF CHURCH REVITALIZATION AND GROWTH

14. What are the factors that changed in bringing your congregation to a “turnaround church” and how did the change come about? (*dimensions that are internally generated, externally provoked, circumstantial issues, etc.*)

15. What do you judge as the crucial factors or “the essential keys” that led to your church being a “turnaround church”?
16. What other general factors and activities are presently promoting the growth of your church? (*roles of stakeholders; ministry groups & structures, supernaturalism, etc.*)

SECTION D: LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP EXPECTATIONS

17. As a church leader/worker/long-time member, what roles do you play in the revitalization of this church?
18. What are the leadership/followership qualities you discover to be helpful in playing your roles?
19. Which leadership/followership traits do you consider unhelpful to revitalizing a stagnant church?
20. For growth to continue, what are the expectations of the church from: a) Pastors, b) Church workers/Staff, and c) Long-time members?

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SELECTED CHURCH MEMBERS.

Introduction: The aim of this questionnaire is to know your opinion on the factors responsible for the on-going revitalization of this church. This will help to construct a model for urban stagnant churches.

1. Gender: Male []; Female [].
2. Age group: Youth: 18-24 []; Young adults: 25-34 []; Middle Life: 35-49 []; Elderly: 50 and over [].
3. Which year did you start attending this church? -----
4. Through which of the following means did you join the church? Tick one:
Personal evangelism by a member []; Friendly invitation by a member [];
Open air campaign []; Media publicity []; Cell group contact [];
Parental influence []; Transfer from another branch []. Others (specify)

5. Which of the following best describes your present spiritual state? Tick one:
(a) Born again []; (b) Religious []; (c) Church attendee [];
(d) Don't know []
6. How regularly do you attend Sunday Services? a) Every Sunday []; (b) Twice per month []; (c) Once per month []; (d) Very rarely []
7. In which area of the church work are you involved? (a) External outreaches []; (b) Internal ministries []; (c) None at all [].
8. What were you expecting from this church before you joined it? -----

9. To what extent have those expectations been met? -----

10. There was a time this church was stagnant (not growing), what do you think were the reasons then?

11. On a scale of 1 to 10, where will you place each of the following factors in terms of its contribution to the growth of this church? Tick one scale for each answer:

[0] [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10]

- a. Care & concern for needy members-----
- b. Cell Group work-----
- c. Children Ministry-----
- d. Church buildings & assets-----
- e. Church doctrines and beliefs-----
- f. Church planting and mission work-----
- g. Dynamic Youth ministry-----
- h. Effective incorporation of new members-----
- i. Evangelism by members-----
- j. Expository Preaching from the Bible-----
- k. Fighting for rights of the oppressed in society--
- l. Friendly atmosphere for new and old members-
- m. Healings, Miracles & Deliverances-----
- n. Holiness and integrity in leadership-----
- o. Mass media & Electronic evangelism -----
- p. Messages of prosperity, health and blessings----
- q. Music & Worship style-----
- r. Prophetic utterances and revelations-----
- s. Publicity and marketing of church activities-----
- t. Prudent and accountable management of resources-
- u. Strategic location of church building in the city----
- v. Strong Pastoral Leadership-----
- w. Team leadership among church workers-----
- x. Tribal influence of church on attendees-----
- y. Training and empowering members to serve-----
- z. Vibrant faith and intensive belief in Jesus Christ—

APPENDIX 4

**HEAD OF MISSIOLOGY DEPARTMENT, NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY,
POTCHEFSTROOM: LETTER TO NAIROBI CHURCH LEADERS**