

**STRATEGIES TO TURN AROUND DECLINE IN LOCAL CHURCHES: A CASE OF  
AN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) LOCAL CHURCH**

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work, all the sources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference; and the work has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

.....

M.A Mahloko

.....

Date

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to reveal that local churches are in a declining state. It further proves there is a need for strategies to turn around decline in local churches, with an emphasis on a case of Second Bethel, African Methodist Episcopal local church.

To address the possible causes of the decline in local church membership, this study was conducted. The participants provided data indicating the causes of local church membership decline. The participants agreed that as per chapter four report what were the cause for this decline in membership

This study presented several reasons why churches are declining in membership and possible strategies to curb a decline in membership into growing churches.

## **KEY WORDS**

African Methodist Episcopal Church

Annual Conference

Church Membership Decline

Church Growth

Connectional Church

District Conference

Episcopal District

Evangelic Strategies

Evangelism

Lesotho Annual Conference

Local Church

Itinerancy

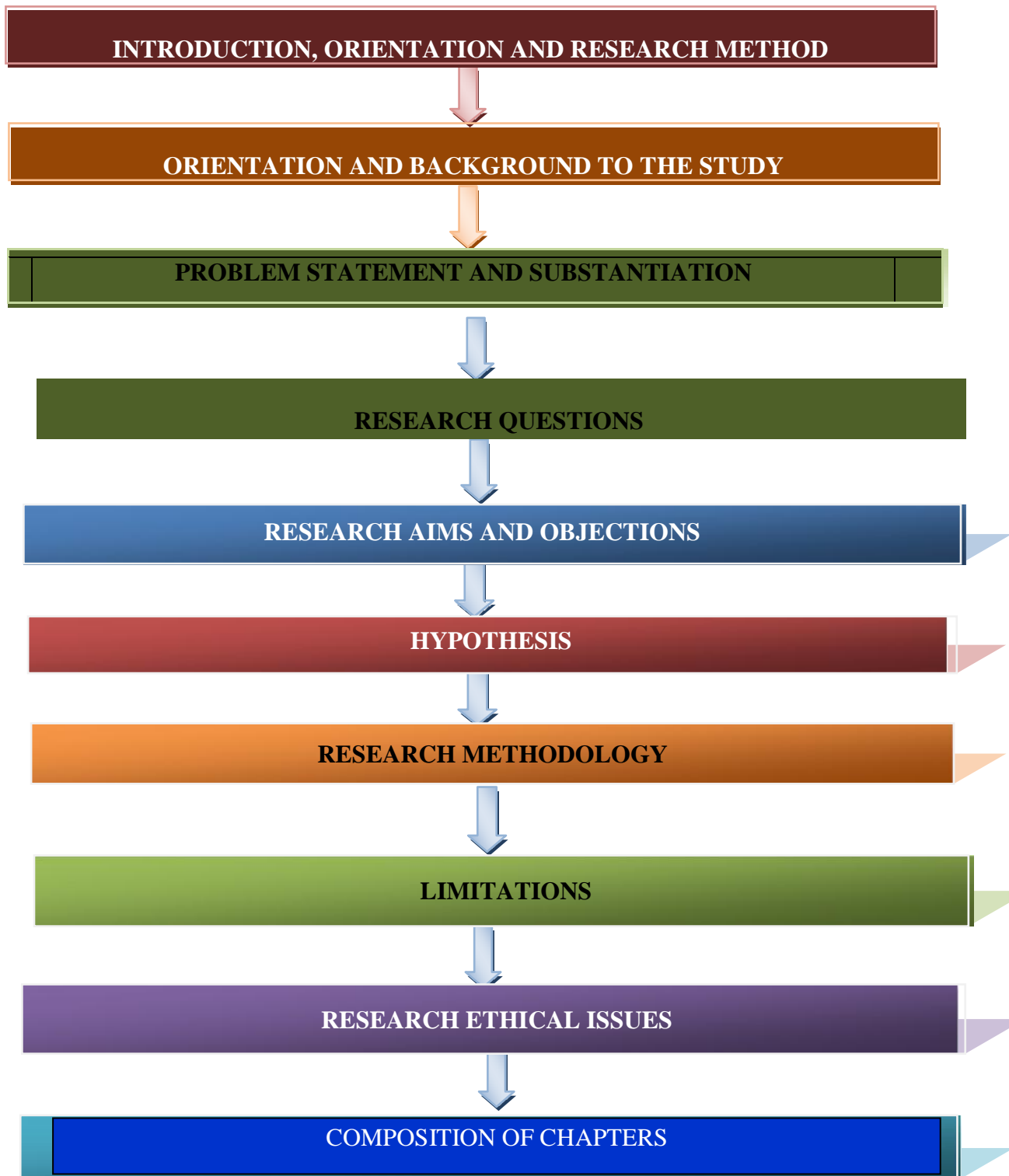
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## CHAPTER 1



**Own Information: Chapter 1 Summary**

## **1. INTRODUCTION, ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH METHOD**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study is a quest for appropriate strategies for growing local missional churches. The term “missional” is used to convey the understanding that the church has a divine commission with respect to the world and as such is called by God to participate with Him in the work that God is doing (Goheen, 2011:5).

This chapter presents the orientation and background of the study as well as the problem statement, and the rationale for the research, the hypothesis, the research questions, and objectives of the study.

### **1.2 ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The researcher’s interest in studying issues pertaining to appropriate strategies for turning around specific local churches experiencing church membership decline was initially prompted by reports presented by the statistician of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church during the East Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the 19th Episcopal District (AME Church, 2011a:1-4). The reports made the conference attendees realize that there is a problem of membership decline and plateauing in many AME Churches.

Literature and reports on church growths suggests that a whole range of factors can lead to such a decline. These factors may range from leadership, weakness in preaching, lack of adequate facilities in some cases, migration of members, finances, schism, the impact of cultural changes and failure to mobilize or involve members amongst others. The church must develop strategies to bring people in at the front door and keep them from going out through the back door (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:9). In this context, the concept of turning around churches refers to the need of changing the general direction of an established local church from that of membership decline to that of membership growth. The church growth movement uses the concept turning around churches also with respect to national

denominations whose general direction has to be changed from that of decline to growth (McGavran, 1988:94).

Second Bethel is a local AME church experiencing a number of problems when coming to change in leadership. The annual conference continued to change its subsequent leaders; only one pastor, Rev. BJ Motaung was able to serve the church for a full quadrennial. The AME Church believes in itinerant ministry that is why after every annual conference there is a leadership change amongst AME Churches. Orange Farm as the area of Second Bethel is a fast developing settlement when compared to most developing formal and informal settlements in the Vaal Triangle.

The community of Orange Farm has over the years not only grown in population but has also been affected by the general changes that took place all over South Africa. One important and relevant insight from church growth literature is that a church in a changing community has also to be dynamic; it must be able to adapt its programs and methods without changing the Gospel (Conn & Ortiz, 2001:268). For example, as the literacy level of a community increase, the type of sermons to be delivered must be of a particular standard. As much as the AME Church is a Methodist church, cultural diversity calls for diversity in the worship service and the leadership style. The more the population increase, the bigger the facilities which are secured must become. The Elders of the AME Church prepared a good soil which is fertile to establish a church in Orange Farm, and started on the right footing by being involved in feeding the hungry, clothing the needy, housing the homeless as Jesus emphasized the need to help and serve the poor and the needy (Minutes, 2006:88). With all of the above, Second Bethel AME Church is declining in membership (Minutes, 2011:113), and there is therefore a need to find the reasons for this as well as establish what can be done to reverse this decline.

Second Bethel AME Church is not the only church experiencing a decline in membership. There are also newspapers reporting declining membership in other churches, thus confirming the need to continue researching the subject. The newspaper Rapport, for instance, indicated that South African Churches (and Churches in other regions in the world) are declining at a rather rapid rate (De Villiers, 2010a:1).

The Dutch Reformed Church had lost 10 588 members in one year (De Villiers, 2010b:8). Goodhew (2000:358) indicated that most mainline churches saw an absolute fall in numbers of adherents and further indicates that for the Dutch Reformed Church this fall was minor, but the Anglican and Methodist churches were substantially affected by the decline.

The need to conduct this research is furthermore necessary in order to evaluate the strategies the particular church has been using with the purpose of determining whether they are biblically and theologically sound and appropriate or relevant to the context in which the church ministers (McGavran, 1988: 40; Sider et al., 2002:70,71). The evaluation of the particular local church's strategies has to take into consideration its denominational traditions. In this context, it is important here to understand what White (1965:49) indicated about the AME Church as a church that has always been instrumental in serving its communities. He continues to say that the church at the beginning was committed to a life of practical service in the interest of the growth and development of its people (1965:50), which was in line with the mission of the AME Church to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people (AME Church, 2012: 13).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND SUBSTANTIATION**

This section on the research problem statement aims to provide a rationale or need for studying a particular issue or problem (Creswell, 2013:130).

There is a visible decline of membership in many churches throughout Gauteng. Second Bethel AME Church is just one of these churches. To that end, this study seeks to establish and determine the reasons for this decline, with an intention of developing strategies to halt this decline and enhance the growth of the Church at large and Second Bethel as a case study.

Given the above information, it is important to indicate the position of Second Bethel in the AME Church and why it was chosen as a case study in this investigation to substantiate the reason for the study. The information presented regarding the statistics of the church is

based on those of the statistician of the AME Church East Annual Conference at the East Annual Conference 2011 (AME Church, 2011a:1-3).

These statistics were presented for the whole quadrennial (four years) which made it easy for everyone who attended this conference to realize which churches are experiencing a decline and those experiencing a growth in membership and how severe the membership decline problem is. The saddest thing is that in this quadrennial, according to the same report, every year the baptismal statistics were increasing and the death rate declined, marriages were performed, while very few transfers, if any, are registered (AME Church, 2011a:3).

In line with the statistician's report, amongst the churches with a declining membership, Second Bethel drew a lot of attention since it is viewed as a church located in an area with a continuous growing population. The rate and extent of the decline was unexpected and never anticipated (AME Church, 2011a:4). According to Fletcher (2006:113), churches that are not growing may be focusing on non-growth issues.

Second Bethel AME Church is one of twelve churches that fall within the jurisdiction of the Wilberforce District in the East Annual Conference. Of particular interest is that Second Bethel was at some stage the only charge in the Wilberforce District (Vaal Triangle) with five mission stations affiliating to it (Minutes, 2006:26).

Therefore Second Bethel is supposed to be a mother church to a number of AME Churches in Orange Farm and surrounding areas falling within the Wilberforce district. The AME Church uses the itinerant ministry system which has a positive and negative impact on the congregations.

These will be discussed in detail later in this study (but in essence it means that ministers are changed at regular intervals). The stations that used to affiliate to Second Bethel Church apparently disappeared with change in leadership and no one is following up on what happened to those members, the land they used to worship on, as well as the furniture used by the five stations.

This church has been under the leadership of various powerful senior pastors in the district, seniority in this case referring to experience in pastoral service. One of the pastors who served in that church is now the Presiding Elder of Springs District, within the Gauteng Province.

The Second Bethel Church, having a majority of members, being adult and elderly, used to be led by senior pastors. It is the only church within the district which had a senior pastor and an assistant pastor appointed by the annual conference to serve at the same time due to the size of the congregation, its location and potential to grow (Minutes, 2006:47).

Currently the membership is declining to the extent that it is not easy to say how many members it has, and the community projects that the church used to undertake are suffering because of the dwindling membership and lost stations income. The challenges that Second Bethel AME Church faced when declining include how to meet the needs of the communities it serves and to reduce membership loss as well as retaining current membership. The following problems have been identified during the East Annual Conference (Minutes, 2011b: 6):

Second Bethel cannot continue to provide services to its church community in its current form without resorting to a system change or changing its current strategy if they have one; and Second Bethel needs to provide community development.

Lack or scarcity of skilled lay members to evangelize impact negatively on church growth. Congregational satisfaction/social needs should also be concern of the leadership of the church at the moment. The leadership has to follow-up on the movement of members affiliating to other churches, those going away with or without transfer, those relocating, and those going to tertiary institutions, etc.

The foregoing presents reasons why there was a need for the study that specifically investigates an appropriate strategy for turning around the decline in membership in the specific AME Church. This study sought to accomplish its objective through studying Second Bethel AME Church in Orange Farm and its findings may be appropriate to other churches as well.

The study's problem statement can accordingly be formulated as: How can the decline of membership in churches such as Second Bethel AME Church be accounted for and which strategies can be implemented to foster growth?

This study was done with the assumption that the church acknowledges that there is a decline in membership and that there is a need to develop a strategy that will result in the growth of church membership. The researcher also undertook the study with the hope of being able to make recommendations to Second Bethel AME Church regarding issues related to church growth.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

A close analysis of an appropriate strategy for church growth at Second Bethel AME Church is essential and will form part of the research issues of this study.

This study attempted to provide information regarding the following research questions:

- 1.4.1 What does the bible teach about the causes of church membership decline and the growth of a local church?
- 1.4.2 How is local church growth approached in the AME Church?
- 1.4.3 Which of the general causes of local church decline are relevant for Second Bethel AME Church, and which strategies, structures, processes, systems, methods and tools did Second Bethel AME Church use to ensure continuous church growth?
- 1.4.4 What progress has been made by Second Bethel AME Church towards being a missional growing church within the context of AME Church parameters?
- 1.4.5 What strategies would be appropriate to turn around churches like Second Bethel AME Church from decline in membership to growth?

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Flowing from the above research questions, the objectives of the study were formulated as follows:

- 1.5.1 To give a biblical analysis of the concepts church decline and church growth.

- 1.5.2 To give a theoretical analysis of concept Church Growth in the context of the AME Church.
- 1.5.3 Explore the causes for church decline at Second Bethel AME Church as well as the strategies, structures, processes, systems, methods and tools which the Second Bethel AME Church have in place for continuous church growth.
- 1.5.4 Investigate progress made by Second Bethel AME Church towards being a missional growing church within the context of the teaching of the Bible and of the AME Church.
- 1.5.5 Make recommendations on strategies that can be considered in an effort to turn around churches like Second Bethel AME Church from decline in membership to growth.

## **1.6 HYPOTHESIS**

The background analysis also led to the following hypothesis to undergird the study:

The painful church membership decline at established local churches such as Second Bethel AME Church in Orange Farm is the result of many causes which result in churches becoming weak in their commitment to follow basic principles of biblical evangelism, and strategies that aim to turn around such decline have to incorporate processes that transform such churches into being local communities that are not ashamed of the Gospel.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The following methods were used for the collection of information during the research process:

### **1.7.1 Literature Review**

Literature review, according to Fink (2005:16), is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of complete and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners. Literature review is

aimed at contributing towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the identified problem (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:123).

According to Fox and Bayat (2008:35), in research the literature review serves many purposes, including a broadening of horizons, preventing the researcher from repeating research, placing work already done into context, providing a framework for further research and establishing the need for research. It assists the researcher in finding the material related to the conceptual focus of the research problem (Du Plooy, 2009:60). Through the literature studied for this research, the researcher hopes to broaden her horizons as well as being enabled to place existing literature into the particular context of the local church.

The theoretical part of this research consists of systematically identifying, locating, synthesizing and analyzing the available literature of books, journals, newspapers articles, achieves, AME Church Annual Conference Minutes, The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, the AME Church book of worship and electronic database on existing approaches and techniques of Evangelism related to church growth, both nationally and internationally pertaining to the research problem. The synthesis of secondary data also consists of historical analysis of Evangelism processes at Second Bethel AME Church.

## **1.7.2 Empirical Study**

According to Hennig, *et al.* (2012:34) empirically, a problem can only be solved using data collected over a period of time which enables the identification of the temporal order between cause and consequences. The scope of this empirical investigation is limited to a sample of members in good and regular standing at Second Bethel AME church. The research instruments will be a self/individually administered questionnaire, group administered questionnaire and Participant Observation.

### ***1.7.2.1 Self/Individually Administered/Individually Administered Questionnaire***

According to de Vos *et al* (20011:188), self-administered/individually administered questionnaire is a process where questionnaires are handed to respondents, who complete them on their own, but the researcher is available in case they experience any problem. In

this instance the researcher limits her/his contribution to the completion of the questionnaire to the absolute minimum. The researcher remains mainly in the background.

For the purpose of this research self-administered questionnaires were used as follows:

The senior management team at Second Bethel AME Church (Clergy, Stewards, Trustees and Class Leaders) who are in good and regular standing as per the list submitted by the church secretary were invited to draw on their experience and knowledge of the matter, particularly relating to the growth of the church and their observation regarding the decline, strategies and measures to ensure growth. A questionnaire was distributed to them during the quarterly conference.

### ***1.7.2.2 Group Administered Questionnaire***

There was also a group administered questionnaire wherein the respondents provided information as a group. In this case each participant completed a questionnaire on their own. Each respondent received the same questionnaire and completed it without discussing it with other members of the group (de Vos *et al*, 2011:189). Later a group discussion took place to solicit the group view.

This group consisted of the president and secretary from each auxiliary of the Church and the lay organization (nine auxiliaries and one organization) and twenty randomly selected (from the list received from the church secretary) church members in good and regular standing not belonging to any auxiliary (of different age groups). The group was asked on the efficiency of the Second Bethel AME Church and the efficient ways to improve church growth for the benefit of the whole congregation. The group completed the questionnaire, during the presiding elder's quarterly conference where the local pastor, all officers as well as other members of the church were in attendance.

### ***1.7.2.3 Participant's Observation***

Participant's observation is a typical qualitative approach to data which implies that data cannot really be reduced to figures (De Vos *et al*, 2011:329).

The researcher has gained extensive knowledge in missiology through her educational background as she possesses a BA Honors degree in theology from North West University and within the church setting as she has been a church school superintendent at local level (2000-2011), Church School Superintendent at District level (2004-2011), a class leader at local church (2000-2008), a local preacher (2004-2009).

She was presented to the official board for recommendation to be presented to the district Conference for admission into the ministry of the AME Church, which will in turn on approval by the conference present her to the Annual Conference for admission (Minutes, 2011c:9).

She was admitted by the annual conference and was a licentiate from 2008-2011, ordained an itinerant deacon year in 2011 (Minutes 2011b:28) and now ordained an itinerant elder in the AME Church, the 19th Episcopal District.

The researcher has gained an in-depth understanding of the challenges relating to the subject of the research, as she is from time to time responsible for the church growth and evangelism. Currently she is the associate pastor at Trinity AME Church in Evaton, when the senior pastor is not in the church she takes charge of the church. Based on the above, she will also give insight on the matter.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS**

As the statement of the problem implies, this study had be limits such as the following in terms of its scope:

1.8.1 East Annual Conference of the AME Church has 52 Churches and ten mission stations divided into six Districts. This study will be limited to Second Bethel AME Church, Wilberforce District in the East Annual Conference within the 19th Episcopal District of the AME Church. The use of Second Bethel in this study is not in any way intended to bring this church to shame or any other church for that matter. It is to present a tangible problem and come up with a proposed solution that will ensure church growth.

- 1.8.2 The study did not consider all the aspects and the processes associated with Second Bethel AME Church, but focused on matters about strategies for turning around churches declining in membership.
- 1.8.3 The strategies that the study recommends to turn around churches declining in membership were made on the basis of the circumstances at Second Bethel AME Church. Some of them may therefore not be applicable to all churches in the world.
- 1.8.4 The study does use the bible extensively but is not exhaustive. The investigation focuses primarily on biblical texts which the literature survey that was done indicated as most relevant to the issues that are raised in the research questions.

## **1.9 RESEARCH ETHICS ISSUES**

According to Barbie (2013:46), research ethics deals mostly with methods employed; political issues central to the substance and use of research. Research ethics makes provision for the planning of research, the responsibility for the project, institutional approval, informed consent by the participants, collection, analysis, and utilizing of data, honoring commitments and reporting of data without plagiarizing work of others (Creswell, 2013:65-66).

Ethics is defined as a set of widely accepted moral principles that offer rules for, and behavioral expectation of, the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:129).

The following ethical issues will be adhered to:

- 1.9.1 No persons will be forced to participate against their will.
- 1.9.2 The name and inputs of participants will be kept confidential.
- 1.9.3 All participants will be protected from any physical, emotional and spiritual discomfort by ensuring that their responses remain confidential and unanimous.
- 1.9.4 Letters will be written to participants requesting their written consent to participate in the project.

1.9.5 A letter will be written to the Bishop to give written consent for the study to be undertaken in the AME Church, and

1.9.6 All sources will be acknowledged in this study.

## **1.10 GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY**

Against this background, the organization of the research consists of the following chapters:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction, Orientation and Research Method**

This section was the skeleton of this study; it provided the research problem beginning with the discussion of the study orientation and background, problem statement, the hypothesis, and the objective of the study. It further explored the subsequent research methodology and the organization of the research project to complete the study.

### **Chapter 2: A theoretical overview of strategies to turn around decline in local churches: A case of an African Methodist (AME) local Church**

This section of the study was a foundation for the rest of the project; it started by defining relevant concepts in the light of biblical teaching; and explored the phenomenon of churches that are declining in membership and the causes thereof. It also identified what the relevant literature suggests as strategies used by churches that overcame the tendency of membership decline.

### **Chapter 3: Historical exposition for turning around decline in local churches: a case of an African Methodist (AME) local Church**

This section of the study provided a general historical understanding of the AME Church, background of Second Bethel AME Church in Orange Farm as well as the resources the church has in order to grow. The fundamental theme explored in this section of the study was to critically evaluate the processes and support available for Second Bethel AME Church to overcome membership decline.

#### **Chapter 4: Empirical study on turning around decline in local churches: a case of an African Methodist (AME) local Church**

This section of the study focuses on the empirical research design for this study. It provides an overview of the methodology used to empirically study and critically evaluate the strategies developed for turning around membership decline at this AME local Church.

This was done in four sections; firstly discussed the research methods available and chose the method appropriate for this study, then highlight the research design within the focus of the study, for example the underlying philosophical assumption, the selection of respondents, and the data collection technique.

Secondly it described the questionnaire, discussed the aspects used in ensuring the validity and reliability.

Thirdly it discussed the ethical standard used in data collection.

Lastly, it presented responses and data collected was analyzed.

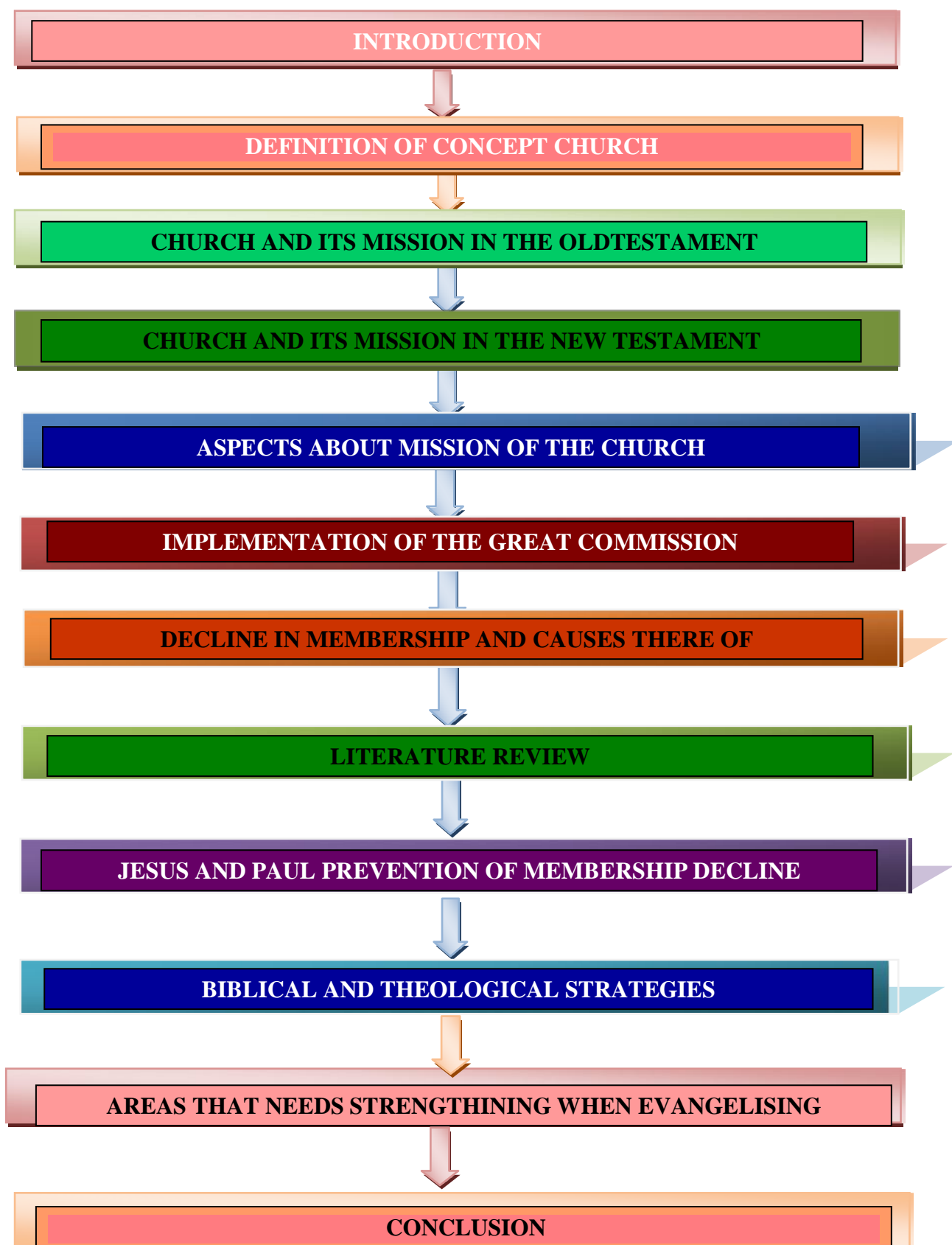
#### **Chapter 5: Summary.**

This section of the study presented the findings in terms of the research questionnaire, participation observation and the research questions; it also presented the summary of the study.

#### **Chapter 6: Recommendations and Conclusions**

The study will be concluded by presenting recommendations for implementation in order to turn around churches in membership decline.

## CHAPTER 2



Own Information: Chapter 2 Summary

## **2. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF TURNING AROUND CHURCHES DECLINING IN MEMBERSHIP AS IN A CASE AT SECOND BETHEL AME CHURCH**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter created the basis of the research by presenting the research problem. The objectives and the scope of the study were also discussed. It also provided the structure of the study.

This section of the study provides a foundation for the rest of the project; it will start by defining the concepts church and its mission, present further aspects about the mission of the church and the plan for successful implementation of the great commission. Explore the phenomenon of churches that are declining in membership, the causes thereof and literature review on reasons for churches to decline in membership with suggestions on how to curb such membership. The chapter also therefore intends to identify what the bible teaches about preventing possible membership decline in churches and accordingly includes a discussion of relevant strategies or plans used by churches that overcome the tendency to decline in membership.

### **2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPT “CHURCH”**

Malphurs (2007:115) indicates that having a definition of a church that is in line with bible teaching is important not only for clear communication but also to assist pastors to evaluate their understanding of what is meant by a “church”. This section of the chapter accordingly explores descriptions of the church and its mission on the hand of some literature.

### 2.2.1 Some Remarks about the Concept “Church”

The word „church“ occurs rarely in the gospels. According to Ericson (2003:1036), the church is a misunderstood topic. What we mean today as the church appears a lot in the bible under terms such as “Kingdom, “way” “Followers” and “word” (Dwyer, 1988:18).

In his book “the church”, Binnie (1882:3) asserted that the Greek word translated “church” in the New Testament is Ecclesia and signifies a meeting, an assembly, or congregation of people. Binnie (1882:1) indicated that the Greeks used the word to denote the assembly of the citizens summoned for public matters or meetings.

The term „church“ can refer to the universal body of Christ, which is sometimes called the invisible church. The invisible church includes all believers in Christ for all times including the past, the present and the future, irrespective of their geographical location, race, sex, or even their social status (Mims, 2003:66).

The term „church“ can also be used to refer to a place where people meet and grow in several areas including “their ability to seek and Know God; their union with God through worship, meditation and study and; their skills of witnessing to others so that they too, may find God and His purpose for their lives” (Burkhart, 1947:5).

According to White (1965: 23) the AME Church believes that the church is a community of people who believe in God and who have accepted Jesus Christ as the Guide and Master of their lives. White (1965:23) also suggests that the members of the AME Church as that of a Christian Church believe that God, through Jesus Christ can transform individuals in such a way as to cause them to want to be like him, think like, and act like Jesus in every area of their daily lives.

The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible (Gehman, 1969:175) agrees with the essence of White’s views about the church when it defines the church as “the communion of saints” i.e. of those who truly believe on Christ, in which the Gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments properly administered.

The church of New Testament is presented as a priesthood of every believer. God spoke his words not only to but through His body, the church. It was written that through His body, the church that the Word was confirmed and established. Without question, the scriptures were looked upon by the early Christians as God's active revelation of himself to the world. At the same time, the church was understood as the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a Holy Temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:20-21).

Each of the above definitions has an element of truth and uniqueness, although we realize that the New Testament talks of the church of God as the church in Corinth (I Corinthians, 1:2). Ericson (2003:1036) indicated above that the word church is a misunderstood topic and Binnie (1882:1), does not say anything about the building in his definition of the church but makes the point that it is a meeting, an assembly, or congregation of people. Burkhart (1947:5) is the one who brings the element of the building based on today's experience. We also realize that the Bible brings up an element of reading the scriptures and Gehman (1969:175) brings up the element of sacraments and preaching of the gospel in his definition.

For the purpose of this study, the above mentioned descriptions of the concept „church“ are put together and summarized into one definition with most of the elements found in each definition. The summary here allows for a common understanding of the word “church” to guide this research project. We accordingly provide the following description of the „church“: a church is a group of Christians gathered for the purpose of Christian worship in which the scriptures are read, the gospel is preached and the sacraments are properly administered.

The next section will focus on identifying the mission of the church in the light of both the Old and New Testaments.

## 2.3 THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Greek word often translated "church" in the English Bible is *ekklesia*. This word is made up by the Greek words *kaleo* (to call), with the prefix *ek* (out). Thus, the word means "the called out ones" (McCallum and Lowery, 2006:258). However, the English word "church" does not come from *ekklesia* but from the word *kuriakon*, which means "dedicated to the Lord." This word was commonly used to refer to a holy place or temple. According to McCallum and Lowery, (2006:259), by the time of Jerome's translation of the New Testament from Greek to Latin, it was customary to use a derivative of *kuriakon* to translate *ekklesia*. Therefore, the word church is a poor translation of the word *ekklesia* since it implies a sacred building, or temple.

As already pointed out the Greek term often used for the word „church“ is *ekklesia*, which Carson (1984:369) also confirms as being derived from the Greek verb *ekkaleo* (called out) and refers to those who are called out. The sense in which the word was used generally therefore had to do with the calling out of the citizens from their homes and gathering them together in a public place for some specific purpose. The Bible uses this same term to define those who gathered together for the sole purpose of Worship of God (Keener, 1993:823). The existence of the Israelites as a covenant community, called out for the purpose of worshipping and making God known is visible in the Old Testament; even though the word “Church” is not mentioned or used in the Old Testament (Olatoyan 2011:96). From the above a more accurate translation would be "assembly" because the term *ekklesia* was used to refer to a group of people who had been called out to a meeting. It is accordingly in this sense that Israel can be described as the church in the Old Testament times. The Israelites were formed into a people by God’s calling in terms of God’s redemptive plans to reach all nations; they were therefore His instruments and object of special love (Chow, 1986:21).

Scholars believe that in the Hebrew Scriptures there are two nouns that are helpful in establishing the argument for Israel as a covenant community. The nouns are *qahal* usually translated assembly and *edah* usually translated congregation (Coleson, 1984: 5). *Edah* was first used in Exodus 12:3, when the congregation of Israel was instructed to celebrate the Passover in preparation for leaving Egypt (Brown, 1971:1042). The Israelites assembled many times for the purpose of worshipping God like they did in

Deuteronomy 4:10; because of this, the New Testament authors referred to the Israelites as a church (Grudem, 1994:853). Grudem (1994:853), supports these claims by referring to Acts 7:38 and Hebrews 2:12, where the words “assembly and congregation” are used to translate the common Greek word „eklesia“, which is often translated „church“. From the above it is conclusive that the term „church“ does appear in the Old Testament because God set Israel apart to worship God as the only true living God and to influence other nations of the world to accept God as the only living God.

## **2.4 THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Jesus Christ was the first person to use the word church in the New Testament. In the Gospels Jesus uses the word “church” three times in the Gospel according to Matthew (Scholz, 2009:93) the first time is when Peter was able to confess the true identify of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus responded by saying “Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in Heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not overcome it” (Mathew 16:17-18). Matthew introduces the church as the structure that Jesus begins to build in His ministry (Scholz, 2009:94)

It is clear from Matthew 16: 17-18 that Jesus teaches that He will build the church. The institution He is building is His church. Jesus Christ used Peter here as the example of the role which His disciples or the church should play when people ask who Jesus is. Those who call themselves by His name must be able to confess and proclaim Him in the same way that Peter did (Keener, 1993:90).

The second and third time the term church was used in Matthew is found when Jesus was teaching on conflict management, when he was saying “If your brother sins against you then go show him his fault between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. If he will not listen, take one or two brothers along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two to three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen to the church treat him as you would treat a pagan or a tax collector (Matthew 18:5-7). Here Jesus emphasizes the saving of the lost sheep as more important than the mere nurture of safe sheep (Carson *et al*, 1992:65).

In His church Jesus expects that there could be conflicts, and where a conflict arises He further give a step by step way of solving a conflict; and sins must therefore not be tolerated in the church, but rooted out. Jesus here teaches that greatness is measured by smallness, the community as a whole must show concern for little ones. They are to be received and not scandalized or despised, but searched out and be saved (Johnson, 1999:207)

The Gospels indicates clearly that Jesus Christ came to proclaim during His earthly ministry. In order to achieve His mission, Jesus Christ indicates that He will build His church. The church became His representative with the responsibility of bringing the light into the dark. The New Testament church is linked with the Gospel message that Jesus Christ came to proclaim, namely “Christ as the head of the body of the church (Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 5:23) and all fullness dwells in Christ (Carson *et al*, 1992:336). The church is comprised of persons who were called out as the Greek word implies; “Called out” of the world, purified and cleansed by the shed blood of Christ, and to be His own. Many New Testament passages therefore teach that, after receiving Christ as Lord and Savior, a person is added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). The term church also means the household of God, the pillar and support of the truth (McManis, 2013:93).

## **2.5 FURTHER ASPECTS ABOUT THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

The literature explored in section 2.2 above makes clear that the Church belongs to Christ; it also made apparent that part of the mission of the church is to carry out God’s mission which Christ was also tasked with when on earth (Piper, 1993: 11-12). The Church is an agent and exists for the extension of Christ’s ministry; and it is as such obliged to follow the example of Christ (Schnabel, 2004:320). In the Synagogue, in Nazareth after Jesus was given the scrolls to read He evangelized for the first time before the church elders of the time quoting Isaiah 61:1-3 and thereby indicated that His mission included encouraging the poor, to help the broken hearted, to decree the release of captives, and the freeing of prisoners, to console all who mourn and remind the people that the day will come when God will seek vengeance. He declared that His mission was to accomplish God’s Redemptive plan for mankind as it was written in the scroll (Luke 4:18-19). The

same ministry of reconciliation is given to the church. The church is called out of the world to engage in a mission of the same nature as Jesus Christ did to the world (Criswell, 1981:55). The church on its own does not have any power, its authority and mission is from Jesus Christ who is the head of the church (Volf, 1961:75). The Purpose of the church is clearly stated in the Great Commission which advocates the need for a church to grow numerically by referring to the task of making disciples for Christ. The Great Commission not only calls the church of Christ to a missionary vision, it also provides the paradigm for the ministry of the local church (Tripp, 1998:2). One way of getting clarity about aspects pertaining to the mission of the church on earth is by considering the Great Commission. This study will accordingly pay attention to some of the matters that are raised in the literature on the Great commission.

### **2.5.1 The Great Commission**

The Great Commission challenges the church to cross over the social, cultural, ethical, racial, spiritual, geographical and political boundaries of the world, to enter new contexts and engage in the hard work of discipleship (Hertig, 2001: 351). The Great Commission dismantles the dividing wall between the Jews and Gentile and expands the mission of God for all people. It makes clear why Jesus confined His ministry to His disciples in preparing them to be a base for world-wide mission (Hedlund, 1991:188). The Great Commission will be discussed in this sub-section from both the perspectives of the Old and New Testaments as Christ also was able to refer to it by means of quoting the Old Testament. This approach to the Great commission is also in line with what Barth (1961:57) pointed to when describing the Great Commission text as an anticipation of the history of Jesus' reign in the church and the whole world.

#### ***2.5.1.1 The Old Testament Great Commission***

God said to Abram, "leave your country, your people and your father's house and go to the land I will show you. I will make you a Great Nation and I will bless you, whoever curses you I will curse; and all people on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:1-3). The last part of this commandment makes it clear that God's mission is to bless all people through Abraham (Bartholomew & Beldman, 2012:196). It can therefore be inferred from

this scripture that those of Abraham's descendants (the Israelites) that accepted what this passage teaches about their role would understand that they were to become God's missionaries to take the message of God's saving Grace to all nations. Israelites are made the mediators between God and the nations (Peters, 1972:94). The source of world Christian mission is rooted in God's call to Abram and His descendants and in the Old Testament wherein God gave the Israelites this responsibility in His redemptive plan (Kaiser, 2000:9). Israel was set apart for the purpose of influencing people from the other nations to have faith in God (Bartholomew & Beldman, 2012:197). This is also clear from Isaiah 42:6, where God says "I the Lord have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hands. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and the light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness". Secondly it is also apparent from the message that God gave to Jonah as He sent him to Nineveh in Jonah 1:1-2 and Jonah 3:1-10, that God set Israel apart as His instrument for proclaiming His universal love for humanity.

Even though the word Mission or Great Commission was not used in the Old Testament, the work that God gave the Israelites to do is missionary work when it is compared with what is considered to be Missionary work or required by the Great Commission in the New Testament. God's mission has always been redemption (Bartholomew & Beldman, 2012:199-200). That is why God revealed Himself to man as a missionary God throughout the Old Testament. God finally revealed His redemptive plan in the person of Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Filbeck, 1994:46). Paul's ministry also affirms the missionary motif began in the Old Testament because Paul constantly emphasizes that the Old Testament is the basis for the mission that God was sending him to accomplish, especially to the Gentiles (Kaiser, 2000:75). This is evident in how Paul uses Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47 and Isaiah 6:9-10 in Acts 28:26-28 to establish that the rejection of the gospel by some Jews resulted in the gentile's reception of God's redemptive message through Christ (Bartholomew & Beldman, 2012:203).

One can also see the roots of the missionary task also in what Genesis 3 points to when it describes how God reached out to Adam and Eve in the Garden. Since the fall, God continued His mission to redeem man until the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God Called Abraham and set him apart to be a blessing to the nations (Bartholomew & Beldman,

2012:183). Through the covenant relationship, Abraham's descendants were also set apart as the light to the nations. That is why the account of the fall and the call of Abraham form the basis for the Great Commission (Betts, 2005:18)

### ***2.5.1.2 The New Testament Great Commission***

The central message of the New Testament is about the love of God to the nations through Jesus Christ (Montgomery, 2009:5). The Great Commission refers to the mandate to evangelize, which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave to His disciples according to the gospel of Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24: 46-49, John 20:21 and the Act 1:18. The fact that the Great Commission appears in each of the gospels and the book of Acts demonstrates how central the Great Commission is to the Gospels. According to Peters (1996:178), the Great Commission is Jesus' command to Christians to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations; it's an appointment to proclaim the gospel to every creature.

The first part of the great commission sets the direction for the missionary life of the people of God, the second half defines and directs the life and ministry of the local church for the pastor, brothers and sisters in Christ committed to biblical mutual ministry (Tripp, 1998:2).

The Great Commission has four action verbs namely: 1. Go. This verb can be interpreted as the technical term for mission (Wagner, 1983:108). 2. Make Disciples of all nations, 3. Baptize, and 4. Teach obedience of God's word. These activities pave the strategy the church needs to follow in order to grow. Moreover it concludes with the assurance that Jesus is with his disciples always to the very end of age (Matthew 28:18-20). These action verbs will be discussed below.

#### **2.5.1.2.1 The work of going.**

The first step to fulfill the Great Commission is to pursue the lost sheep. As Jesus was sent by His father, Jesus is now sending out His disciples and the church to win the lost and convert none-believers to the Christian faith (John 20: 21, 31). As Jesus was traveling

with His disciples He continued to teach how to seek the lost using the parables and his own examples as recorded in Luke 15 and Luke 19:1-10.

According to Cole (1961:261), the post-resurrection ministry of the disciples was not only focusing to the Jews, but to all human beings without segregation. In the same breath, a missional church does not only focus within the four walls of the church, but goes beyond the walls of the church. It takes care of itself, but also reaches out for the sake of the gospel (Stetzer and Dodson, 2007:5); Jesus commissioned the disciples and His church to go to all nations not only within the wall or those we know. The words “All Nations” shows that the gospel must be preached without restrictions. It goes back to God’s Old Testament promise to Abraham that all families on earth will be blessed through him (Genesis 12:1-3). This promise of blessing to all families implies that the blessing of Abraham would unite the divided families and change the curses, pronounced upon the earth on account of sin, into a blessing for the whole human race (Keil & Dilitzch, 1981:13). The earliest Christian Church was ethnically Jewish. The Jewish Christians had trouble accepting people of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds as spiritual brothers and sisters. Locally (Canaan) born Jews had difficulty in accepting Jews from abroad (Acts 6:1, Acts 2:5a). In Acts 10:9-48, Peter struggled with the Holy Spirit over associating those of his race with Cornelius and other gentiles. But in obeying the Holy Spirit he witnessed the outpouring of God’s presence (Todd, 2008:239-240).

#### 2.5.1.2.2 Make Disciples of all Nations

This verb is the heart of the commission, according to Werster (1986:123) it is the only imperative verb in the passage. This verb is not found anywhere else in the New Testament except in a mission commandment (Matthey, 1980:167). It occurs four times in the New Testament and three times in Matthew and nowhere else in the other gospels (Bosch, 1991:73). It replaces the pre-resurrection action command “proclaim or preach” in Matthew 10:17, Thus the resurrection of Jesus led to the final mission mandate which involves more than one to proclaim, but also demanded the surrender to Jesus’ Lordship through the making of disciples (Bosch, 1983:232). Heritage (2001: 3460) also agrees that the mandate to make disciples is the heart of Jesus’ mission mandate. The term „disciple” means the follower of Christ. Bosch (1991: 76) draws attention to the fact that the disciples were a rather bewildered band of simple folk on the slopes of a mountain in

Galilee, and that Matthew wants his community to know that mission never takes place in self-confidence but in the knowledge of our own weakness, at a point of crisis, where danger and opportunity comes together. Disciples are not just church goers, but disciples are urged to understand Jesus' words and apply them without compromise (Matthew 7:24-27). According to Balz and Schneider (1981:372), a disciple is one who stands in relation to another as pupil and is taught by that person. The primary way that Christ taught them to pursue when seeking to make people His disciples is through preaching and teaching.

The primary mission presented as the strategy of the church is to preach the gospel. The single word evangelism is used for the phrase "preaching the gospel"; they both have the same meaning. Evangelism involves spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus said go to all nations and make disciples (Matthew 28:19), disciples cannot be made by just looking at people and say let's go, one needs to preach the living Christ for people to can follow Christ. The goal of preaching is to build bridges of understanding from God's promises and commands to the complex realities of life (Tripp, 1998:3). Such bridges enables those who listen not to be ruled by the passions and desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:13-26), but to understand God's Word and desire to live obediently. If the churches proclaim the word of God, it will grow, that is why the church has to develop preachers who will continue to preach the word of God. The Bible teaches that the church in Antioch used to ordain preachers and send them out to preach the word of God, "and when they had fasted, prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:1-3). Proclaiming the word of God will ensure that the church is doing what God planned, which shows that the church is mission centered. According to Coleman (2010:113), Jesus' life teaches us that finding and training people to reach people must have priority, the mission must attract the multitudes. Multitudes won't know the truth of the gospel unless they have a living witness of our Lord (Coleman, 2010:113).

Jesus preached repentance and good news of the kingdom of God. According to Alfred Loisy, in Dwyer (1988:18), Jesus preached the kingdom, and established the church. Alfred further indicated that when people heard Jesus preaching, they took His preaching serious and began to look at the problems that need to be dealt with if that preaching was to continue (Dwyer, 1988:18). Jerusalem was the earliest center from which the Christian faith radiated. Christians at Antioch remained loyal to the Jerusalem leadership and were able to organize the church (Dwyer, 1988:34).

Christ trained his disciples to do what He did, gave them a chance to practice this while he was with them, and corrected them when the need arose. For three years Jesus taught His disciples how to minister from hearts of compassion and mercy and to obey the Father (Wimber & Springer, 2009:78). The same methods that Jesus employed are the methods that the church is to employ (Criswell, 1981:59). When He was to depart, He left His disciples the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21 and Acts 1:8) which the church today should use as a strategy for church growth. Jesus commissioned his disciples to bring people fully under His reign or into the kingdom of God. The process of conversion or being “born again” entails a change of citizenship, namely, leaving the kingdom of Satan and entering the kingdom of God as per 11 Corinthians 5:16-17 (Wimber & Springer, 2009:78). This may also be used as a strategy for turning around churches declining in membership.

#### 2.5.1.2.3 Baptizing them

Baptism is the union with Christ in His death and resurrection, cleansing, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and New Birth (Brownson, 2007:45). It signifies both to infants and adults the conferring of a new identity that is united to Christ. This identity is what people spent the rest of their lives living into (Brownson, 2007:52). The Baptized are to think of themselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:12). Baptism points out to the cleansing because it points to the union with Jesus Christ. It is only by virtue of this union with Christ that one is accepted by God and forgiven, as God treats such people the same way God treats such Jesus (Brownson, 2007:52).

Baptism is taught in the bible and has been practiced for many years. The central command of the great commission is to make disciples and that is accomplished by baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore the church need to preach, when people accept the gospel, the church has to observe some ordinances like Baptism. Baptism explains the manner the given action (make disciples) was performed (Green, 1907:332). Therefore, one formally becomes a Christian when baptized into a relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Taking part in baptism, expresses the commitment to and trust in the truth of the gospel (Brownson, 2007:23). Baptism is an important way which shows that the disciple preached the gospel to the world under

authority of the triune God and somebody heard the word and accepted (Bruner, 1990:1102). It is the rite that marks the beginning of membership in the church of God. It is the seal whereby God takes general promise of the gospel and applies it to the participants in particular (Brownson, 2007:25). This is because baptism is God's mark of ownership upon us, as indicated; it is the seal that God has entered into the covenant with those baptized.

The early church continued to baptize its new converts (Acts 2:41). Even the church today must do the same. Baptism is linked in scripture to the giving of the spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). It does not express turning from old life to the new one, but present people to the new life towards which they must continually uphold (Brownson, 2007:27). When baptized, God has generously cleansed you, renewing His grace poured out upon you. God cleans people when they repent and have faith that shows the grateful response to that grace in faith and allegiance (Brownson, 2007:27). Therefore disciples in terms of the great commission are to baptize the new converts in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

#### 2.5.1.2.4 Teach them obedience of God's word

Christ's command "to teach them to obey" encourages that the Word of God be taught in a way that clarifies and encourages practical obedience. In God's Word we have all we need to live Godly lives (II Peter 1:3-4). The teaching of the King is a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway (Psalm 119:105). Therefore the primary methodology of the church is to bring the Words of the King to His people so that they can obey Him (Tripp, 1998:3). Bosch (1984:18) indicated that the learning taking place in discipleship does not take place in a formal learning environment like a class room, not even in what we call a church, but in the world. This task of teaching is not a once-off event or an informative exercise, but it is a lifelong learning commitment where believers are taught and grow in their faith. They are also taught to obey and keep Jesus' commandments and how to become disciple-makers. Therefore disciples are those who understand, and live according to the commandment of Jesus Christ, and further teach others to do the same (Carson, 1984:597). Discipleship takes place in the context of a relationship with Christ, and not in the mere following of rule and principles (Matthew 23:3). Towards the end of the great commission the following words are found "teaching them to observe all things" whatsoever Jesus has

commanded the disciples Teaching is the way in which the church communicates what is commanded by the scriptures so that they are observed at all times. The other mission of the church is to produce Christians who are Christ like, that is why Paul commanded the Philippians that the thoughts of their mind be like those which were in Christ (Philippians 2:5), when he said “you should have the same attitude towards one another that Christ Jesus had”. Allow their behavior and actions to be biblically acceptable or Godly. A commitment to such a way of life becomes the foundation for Christ to be visible in the Christians and for the Christians to demonstrate that they belong to Christ (I Peter: 14-16). That is why it is important that the qualities associated with the life of Christ must be visible in every mature Christian (II Peter 1: 5-8). Missional churches begin and end with a solid foundation of accurate biblical theology (Stetzer and Dodson, 2007:9).

The church has a responsibility to ensure that the mission of the church to teach new converts makes it possible for such believers to “add to their faith excellence and to excellence knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness brotherly affection and to brotherly affection love. These should be done in order to become effective and productive in whatever is pursued for knowing the Lord Jesus Christ more intimately” (II Peter 1:5-8). The church must have people responsible for teaching and preaching the word of God. Even Paul told Timothy to take this matter seriously when he commanded him to “entrust what you heard me say in the presence of many others as witnesses to faithful people, who will be competent to teach others as well” (II Timothy 2:2).

In observing all teaching, converts must also be taught that when Jesus Christ had the last supper with His disciples He gave instruction that they must continue to have the sacrament in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19). They must therefore continue to minister the same in remembrance of him. The word „Sacrament“ is a Latin word which is a translation of the Greek word Holy mysterion which means secret or that which transcends human understanding. It refers to the oath or promise (Brownson, 2007:22). The church in Jerusalem continued to the commitment of breaking the bread (Acts 2:42). Even Paul in I Corinthians 11 encouraged the church to observe the Lord’s Supper because of its significance to the church. The Lord’s supper is the instrument of grace, channels through which God’s grace is brought in a special way to those who partake (Brownson, 2007:30). Jesus Christ celebrated the last supper as His last will and testament. Therefore

the celebration of the Lord's Supper refers to the response of grateful allegiance and to God's gracious action. This rite refers to beyond mysterious and transcendent work of God and is an expression of promise or commitment (Brownson, 2007:23). In all things Jesus continued to teach His disciples the importance of prayer. When the disciples were failing to heal the boy with evil spirit, Christ reminded them that by their own power they cannot achieve anything, but in consultation with the Father (God) through prayer and to Him all things are possible (Luke 9:51-56).

### 2.5.2 Conclusion

This section was looking at the mission of the church from the entire bible. It looked at the aspects about the mission of the church. These aspects included the great commission looked at from both Old and New Testament. Based on these aspects we realized that the Great Commission is made of the concepts of the entire bible. God had always advocated for a call to the kingdom for all nations. The Old Testament had a promised Messiah. That is why Kane, (1981: 16-17) argued that to base the world mission of the Christian church solely on the Great Commission is to miss the entire thrust of the revelation in the bible. The New Testament is concerned with Christ's mission to the world. The entire Old Testament present Jehovah as the missionary God and the Jesus of the New Testament is Jehovah of the Old Testament (Kane, 1981:17). As the church participates in the mission of Jesus Christ, it participates in God's mission in God's world through the Holy Spirit (Van Engen, 1996:19). When Jesus said, "As the father has sent me, I am sending you, He commissioned His disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Great Commission paints a picture that all disciples of Jesus Christ are called by Jesus Christ Himself and He is the one who gave them authority to go out and preach the Gospel, baptize and teach them to live life that is acceptable in God's sight. Christians are called to make disciples of man for the kingdom of God. Even today, the disciples of Christ must go out and fulfill the Great Commission. The great commission with its four action verbs we realize that the first verbs "go" is a missionary assignment; the second "make disciples" appears once in the New Testament as a missionary command. The last two verbs "baptizing and teaching them" describe how making disciples should happen with emphasis being on the fact that the content of what is to be taught is what Jesus commanded.

To successfully implement the great commission and to take care of the church that Jesus has promised the church needs to plan. This plan must also be Christ centered. The next section will present the plan for successful implementation of the Great Commission.

## **2.6 THE PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GREAT COMMISSION**

A plan is the organizing principle around which the aim of life is carried out (Coleman, 2010:111). Jesus gave the disciples a step by step process which is to be followed when carrying out the great commission. He also gave the church the promise that he will be with them as they execute the mission. God expects us to work out details according to the needs at hand and resources available. Coleman (2010:112) indicates that everyone should seek ways to incorporate the wisdom of Jesus' strategy into our own evangelism strategy. This we cannot do without a plan. The plan must be realistic and achievable.

### **2.6.1 Jesus' Strategy For Successfully Implementing The Great Commission.**

The following is the strategy that Jesus employed

#### **2.6.1.1 *Despise not days of small beginnings***

We need not have to start with a huge crowd. When Jesus started his ministry he called His disciples. He was with Andrew and John who used to follow John the Baptist (John 1:37-38), followed by Simon, Andrew's brother whom Jesus changed his name to Cephas (John 1:42). John was the fourth one who came on the same day with Simon Peter (John 1:41). The number increased with time, firstly to twelve and Jesus made them His apostles (Mathew 10:1-4), and the multitudes followed with time. This teaches us that the victory is never won by multitudes (Coleman, 2010:32). Coleman (2010:113) accordingly insists that we need not despise the days of small beginnings, it should not matter how small or inauspicious the beginning may be. What counts is that those to whom the church gives training priority learn not to keep the learned traits for themselves, but be prepared to train others.

As much as the church impacts positively on the lives of those it gathers, they must also be given the opportunity to impact on other people's lives. This does not mean that when the church impacts positively on their lives they are ready to impact positively on others immediately. They must be taught and mentored like Jesus did to His disciples. According to Coleman (2010:37), Jesus having called his men, he made a practice of being with them. This was an in-service training. In Luke 9:51-56, we realize that there were mistakes done by disciples in the presence of Jesus Christ. He was able to redirect them, e.g. Jesus saw His disciples wanting to call fire upon villagers who refused to welcome Jesus, but He rebuked them, reminded them that the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them and gave them a better way of dealing with the same situation in future. This we need to do with respect to new converts.

### ***2.6.1.2 Mentorship***

Jesus in His Great Commission gave assurance saying "I will be with you always (Matthew 28:20). The church leaders must lead by example, that way those looking at them will be influenced by the way they live. When mentoring the new converts, the church leaders must be able to advise them on perceived obstacles so that they can be ready and be given the opportunity to practice what they have learnt in the mentor's presence (Coleman, 2010:114). Knowledge must be gained by association before it is understood by explanation (Coleman, 2010:38). In this way Christians are better in understanding, part of John 14:6 puts it better by stating Jesus saying "I am the truth and life". This is very clear, if people fix their eyes on Jesus they will never go astray. With time they must be allowed to work on their own. It is important that before withdrawing the close supervision one explains to the learner explicitly what has been the plan from start, to ensure they understand what is expected of them. They must thoroughly be established in the faith that overcomes the world, since the devil and his cabinet will seek to defeat them (Coleman, 2010:119-120). They must be aware that in making disciples some might fall away, they need to celebrate those who come through (Luke 15:17). Jesus taught by example, assignments and constant checkups to bring out the best out of those He taught. Even today we need to teach and be prepared to mentor others in order for them to be strengthened and encouraged. Those trained in evangelism must constantly be supervised until they are matured to carry the load on their own. Jesus reminded His disciples that He will send forth laborers into His harvest (Matthew 9:37-38 and Luke 10:2).

Jesus Christ did not just leave the evangelism subject to human impression or convenience or as an optional accessory. It is the heart beat of all that we are called to be and do. It is the commission of the church that gives meaning to everything else undertaken in the Name of Jesus Christ (Coleman, 2010:89). Therefore, when new converts go out to make disciples they must come back to discuss the obstacles and be redirected or strengthened depending on the feed-back; and be corrected whenever it is necessary.

### **2.6.1.3 Feedback.**

Jesus made it His responsibility to meet His disciples when they come back from their tour of service to hear His disciples reports/feedback and share with them the blessedness of His ministry in doing the same things he taught them (Coleman, 2010:91). As we read Mark 6:30 and Luke 9:10, we realize that re-grouping and discussing what occurred while away is very important during mentorship. Even the 70 disciples that Jesus sent out had to come back to give feedback of what transpired while they were out on service. Jesus was happy because of the good news they were bearing (Luke 10:17-22). Even today, good mentorship results will bring joy and happiness in both the mentor and learner's heart and mind. During these feedback sessions, Jesus would always bring some practical application to real life for them to understand for example why they failed to heal the boy possessed by the unclean spirit. After Jesus' intervention, he did not let the occasion pass without giving the disciples a lesson on how they, through humble prayer could have managed to cast the unclean spirit (Mark 9:17-29).

### **2.6.2 The Disciples' Strategy For Successfully Implementing The Great Commission.**

The disciples of Jesus Christ are the original recipients of the great commission. They laid the foundation upon which the ministers would build Christ's end-time sanctuary (I Corinthians 3:11). The apostles stood in the Lord's council as members of the cabinet with Christ being the president of the cabinet. They received everything from the Lord directly, the church today receive everything from the Lord through them (Horton, 2011:90).

Every mission statement needs a good strategic plan. The one whom all authority is given not only entrusted his apostles with the message and the mission but also instituted the

methods (Horton, 2011:161). Jesus did not only give the great commission, but he included the strategic plan on how to fulfill the commission (Horton, 2011:162). Jesus called the meeting with His disciples (Matthew 28:6); in this meeting only disciples were invited. This meeting was a most important gathering of Jesus with His Disciples since His resurrection. In this meeting Jesus reveals His strategy for the disciples to carry on the missionary work. He placed in their hearts the mission, ministry, passion and dynamic of the Great Commission. This was also Jesus' last meeting with the disciples before returning to the Father in heaven (Wheeler and Whaley, 2009:31).

The strategy the Disciples of Christ employed will be presented following the strategy that Wagner (1974:77-78) presented in his book entitled, "Stop the World, I want to get on". This strategy is composed of the following four areas for consideration: the right goal, the right place and right time, the right method and the right people.

#### ***2.6.2.1 The right goal***

For any activity or strategy to be counted successful it must have an achievable goal. The same with the great commission, its goal is to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). The strategy included the knowledge that these people who are sent are the men who were already sent ones. For them to reach the goal of making disciples they had to continually be on the move towards all nations. They were to baptizing and teaching the new converts to obey all that Jesus has commanded (Wagner, 1974:77).

#### ***2.6.2.2 The right place at the right time***

In order for one to achieve the right goal, one needs to plan activities so as to be at the right place at the right time (Wagner, 1974:77). The disciples knew that the seed of the word must be concentrated on fertile soil. They knew that they had to "pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38). In their strategy they knew that laborers are not needed while the harvest is still green, or even after the harvest period (Wagner, 1974:77-78). This they learned when Jesus instructed them not to go to the Gentiles and Samaritans in Matthew 10:5; only the Jews were then ripe at that time. Therefore they knew that all disciple-making must take place at the right place at the right time.

### ***2.6.2.3 The right method***

The disciples knew that it is very important to use the appropriate methods for making disciples. According to Wagner (1974:78), if there is much work and little or no fruits, something is wrong. Around the world there will always be people who would gladly receive the gospel and become Jesus' disciples. The only thing is that the method must be right, Wagner indicated the following as an example of a wrong method of making disciples: Using the wrong (trade) language, mixing people, etc., the method must be selected on largely pragmatic factors (Wagner, 1974:78).

### ***2.6.2.4 The right people***

The disciples also ensured that they use only the Spirit filled workers and those who abide in Jesus. Jesus ensured that His disciples do not start missionary work until they were endowed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). The disciples know that the right people are those willing to go out to baptize and teach with a clear goal of making disciples of all nations (Wagner, 1974:78).

## **2.6.3 Paul's Strategy For Successfully Implementing The Great Commission.**

The basic strategy of Paul was to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to Jews and Gentiles in obedience to a divine Commission in areas where it had not been proclaimed before (Galatians 2:7, Romans 15:14-21). Paul travelled on the major Roman roads and on smaller local roads preaching from city to city the message of Jesus the Messiah and savior. He gathered new converts into local Christian communities (Sills, 2010:100). Paul trained teachers, and educators this is clear on II Timothy 2:2. He understood that he would not live forever and the church needs teachers of the truth to continue proclaiming and teaching the gospel. Therefore he did not only train pastors but trainers and he instilled in the young disciples whom the Holy Spirit was calling the awareness of the need to train more and continue the work (Sills, 2010:100).

#### 2.6.4 Conclusion

We have learned that Jesus was comfortable starting small so that those who started with him will understand and have enough time for individual grooming. In his teaching Jesus ensured that He used appropriate examples so that the disciples could learn quicker and be able to execute when a need arose. He also taught them the need to regroup and discuss their failure and success so that they can learn from each other's success or failure.

The disciples had to develop the strategy to ensure that they also succeed in the mission implementation and they were able to identify their goal, use the talent of the right time and place. Develop appropriate method to make disciples and finally were able to have the right people for the job of disciple making.

Paul is the biblical model for crossing cultural boundaries to reach, teach and preach. It is through Paul's activities that the church today can learn that the great commission is achievable. Paul was able to go out and make disciples then without the mode of fast transport we have today. He emphasized on sound teaching, ethical instructions and culturally appropriate application for sound theology amongst churches. Even today the church can do better by just learning from Paul as the churches' greatest missionary. The following section will look at the churches declining in membership and the cause thereof.

#### 2.7 CHURCHES THAT DECLINE IN MEMBERSHIP AND THE CAUSE THERE OF.

This section will focus on what the literature say about churches that are declining in membership. In the 1950's people used to join a church for life. Today this has changed; people are graduating to bigger churches after a two to three year stay in a small church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:119). During the 1950's there was a social pressure to attend church; today there is a social competition to keep people from church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:119). According to Kelly (1995:1), in the 1960's some major church groups stopped growing and began to shrink. Kelly further indicated that at least ten of the largest Christian Denominations in the country (United States) whose membership totaled to 77 666 223 in 1967 had a rapid decline in membership annually. This is when compared to the colonial times; currently some are failing to keep pace with the increase in the national

population. Instead they are diminishing. With this information it is clear there is a need for strategies to be put in place to stop the decline in membership, and work on membership growth. Before the strategy can be developed, we need to acknowledge that different churches have different causes of membership decline, some of these churches and the relevant causes of membership decline will be discussed below. Statistics South Africa 2001(2004:24), indicates that between 1998 and 2001, the un-churched increased from 11.7% to 15.1%, the main line Christian churches declined from 36.5% to 32.6%, while the other Christian groups increased from 5.4% to 9.5%.

The decline in membership in South African churches is to some extent linked to the fact that churches lost control of their schools. This loss affected the whole nation generally, but was felt by African people and their institutions in particular. Political factors and socio-economic conditions also played a role in the decline. Other factors linked to church decline include the theology, liturgy, and competence of various religious bodies (Goodhew, 2000: 362).

One of the churches in South Africa which experienced a decline in membership is the Dutch Reformed Church. The writer of the article in Rapport Newspaper dated 06 November 2012 indicated that “unless the church can truly touch more people with Christ’s love it will continue to decline or the average age of the congregations will get older until they die as it happened in large parts of Europe (de Villiers, 2010:1-2). In his article de Villiers (2010:2) indicates that the NG Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) has lost 10 588 members in the last year, he also indicates that his friend suggested that the majority of Methodist churches in England have only one generation of membership left.

Gibbs and Coffey (2005:20), indicated that churches have failed to address the nagging anxieties and deep-seated fears of the people, instead they are focusing on outdated or secondary issues or proposals without zeal to evoke interest, and that some of the results of these developments is church membership decline rather than growth. They (Gibbs & Coffey, 2005: 20) further indicate that other researchers predicts that unless some drastic steps are taken to change the focus on the out dated issues at least 60% of American Churches will die out by 2050 .

The Methodist Church in Africa also experienced a decline in membership recently when the church split. The split affected this church more than once between 2002 and 2012. In 2002, the decline took place when Rev. Mgoduka, one of the pastors decided to take the Benoni circuit out of the Eastern Transvaal, Swaziland and Zimbabwe District to a cosmopolitan (Gauteng) District. This decision was supported by the Presiding Bishop, Rev. PJ Jafta, who further endorsed it (Annual Conference Minutes, Methodist Church, 2002:47). This decision was opposed by the Eastern Transvaal, Swaziland and Zimbabwe District, and other Districts in 2004 at the Annual Conference held in Potchefstroom. In this conference a re-union committee led by Brother MD Meloa was appointed to work on re-uniting all Methodist churches in Africa, to establish one Methodist Church in Africa (Annual Conference Minutes, Methodist Church, 2004).

The Anglican Church newspaper on the 08 May 2008 indicated that the Anglican Church experienced a decline in membership (Gledhill, 2008:2). It is also clear from the CP Church Ministries newspaper in the US that the United Methodist Church has continued to decline in membership. It has lost close to 72 000 members with 18 conferences reporting membership loss of 2 percent or more (Gryboski, 2012:1).

In comparing membership, between 1968 and 1995, Schaller (1996:65) painted a general picture that there was a general decline with regard to the number of congregations that made up the denominations as well as in the number of total membership (both adult as well as children from different congregations) in the following five church denominations in the USA: Chr. Church (Disciples), Episcopal Church, Reformed Church in America, United Methodist Church, and United Church of Christ. This is also clear on the table below:

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>1968</b>		<b>1995</b>	
	<b>No. of Congregations</b>	<b>Total membership</b>	<b>No. of Congregations</b>	<b>Total membership</b>
Chr. Church (Disciples)	5 862	1 592 609	4 036	929 725
Episcopal Church	7 137	3 373 890	7 415	2 536 550
Reformed Church in America	939	383 166	903	306 312
United Church of Christ.	6 866	2 032 648	6 145	1 472 213
United Methodist Church	41 901	10 990 720	36 361	8 538 662

Numerical decline in a sample of mainline denominations (yearbook of American Churches, 1970 and 1997)

The reduction in the number of congregations can be as a result of struggling churches that end up closing or amalgamating with others so that they can be able to maintain the daily needs of the church, and members are often lost in the process (Gibbs and Coffey, 2005:20). Decline in membership has a negative impact on remaining members. It reduces their worship into spectatorship leading to boredom. It is also common knowledge that some churches run out of ideas, and their performance level does not appeal to their audience. In this case a very creative strategy must be employed or the few that are left may also leave. (Gibbs and Coffey, 2005:151).

### 2.7.1 Conclusion

We have noted that there is a need for change in doing things in order to curb membership. There are churches that are affected by a split like the Methodist church; the current social environment does not put pressure to people to belong to a particular church or to go to church every Sunday like during the 1950's. Some churches used to own some schools which were one of the ways in which they reached many people that ended up as faithful adherents, now the government took over many of those schools and this led to a decline in church membership in some cases. The issues of culture can, to a certain extent also impact on membership decline, the church must engage in a dynamic interaction with the culture in which it is immersed, many immigrants do not find themselves comfortable in church structures (Gibbs and Coffey, 2005:214).

There is therefore a need to deal with the phenomenon of church membership decline and their cause. In dealing with the causes of church membership decline such as the ones that were referred to in this section, it is also important to remember that one goes through such an exercise with the intention to suggest strategies that could help in ensuring church membership growth. Before identifying the strategies, we will discuss how the churches we learn about in the New Testament dealt with decline in membership.

## 2.8 LITERATURE REVIEW ON REASONS FOR CHURCHES TO DECLINE IN MEMBERSHIP AND STRATEGIES USED TO CURB MEMBERSHIP

According to McIntosh (2009:66), churches in decline often forget the churches mission and vision. Most leaders focus on up keeping the current mission. The pastor is satisfied

with past achievements not overseeing the decline. Church leaders must know they cannot do ministry as usual to turn around a declining church. They have to work as if the church does not exist at all and have to start afresh (McIntosh, 2004:112).

Pastors need to involve the laity in the church work. The secular work must be divided from sacred work and general work to be delegated to the laity, in that way pastors are empowering themselves. McIntosh (2012:17-18) also believe that many local churches start with good intentions that are lost amidst the fray. This can lead to early advantages slipping within the fingers and patterns of complacency and compromise emerging and the church dying slowly. He gives three reasons that make him believe that dying churches can be revived. Firstly he indicates that it is God's intention that the church must grow (Matthew 16:18). Secondly God wants His people to be fruitful and multiply (Acts 12:24), which imply that God is not expecting stagnant churches. Lastly, he indicated that God is revitalizing churches right now. God is in the practice of restoring, reviewing and revitalizing people and churches if they are willing to follow him and pay the price to see to it that it happens (McIntosh, 2012: 21-24).

Most churches do not acknowledge that they have problems; according to them all is well and they thus are unable to identify the correct time to initiate transformation (Burril, 2004:43-44). Such churches may therefore end up declining in membership. Pastors and leaders in the churches are too relaxed. Pastors and church leaders must put more effort in encouraging people to trust in the Lord, as well as refocusing attention on the mission of the church. McIntosh (2009: 70-71) also points out the need to realign available resources to important tasks. People can also be re-assigned where they will be able to produce more results and ensure that the budget of the church is streamlined to avoid fruitless and wasteful expenditure. Leaders must maintain trust among the congregants. And restore a sense of mission and vision for future congregants (McIntosh, 2009: 70-71).

Malphurs (2007:164) realized that the problem facing many churches is that their pastors pasturing small churches are not motivated especially when looking at big churches continuing to grow. They start visiting them to try and copy their strategies and start implementing these strategies in their churches. After sometime when they do not see results they get devastated because they assumed that what worked at that church can work in their church. They forget that what works in another church might not work in the

other, because they are not situated in the same area. The skills and ability of the pastor who copied the strategy is different from the pastor whom the strategy is copied from. Secondly the needs and expertise of the congregation in which this new strategy is to be implemented are different from needs and expertise of this small congregation. Therefore implementation might be different and yield different results. The advice is to develop biblically based models which are suitable for the community wherein the church is based, complementing the pastor's leadership skills and ability (Malphurs, 2007:165).

Stetzer and Dodson (2007:2-4), indicate that churches must be biblical. There is a need to acknowledge the authority of the scripture just like the apostles did; the church must have leaders who are well established in their faith, there must be preachers in worship services and avoid a situation where singing supersedes the preaching and teaching, the church needs to continue observing or celebrating the Lord's Supper as Jesus commanded, a church must be comprised of the covenant community not the mixture of non-believers and believers, and churches are called to a mission of propagating the gospel. Therefore the church must continue the world wide evangelism, meet human needs, and many other activities as Jesus Christ commanded the disciples. The church must be prepared to meet the needs of those that are within and without it in its location. Churches must change in order to reach their communities, and denominations needs to help them. Most churches function like institutions, which makes them focus on forms and programs of ministry forgetting the purpose of the church, they are more concerned with numerical growth (Stetzer and Dodson 2007:18). According to Stetzer and Dodson (2007:24), in more recent years evangelical churches are also declining or stagnating and the un-churched are increasing in numbers. They indicate that in order to grow, the church needs to acknowledge that their church is experiencing a decline in membership, and be prepared to accept change for growth (Stetzer and Dodson 2007:23).

The churches need to continuously evaluate their condition, and growth patterns (Stetzer and Dodson 2007:28). The congregation must be involved in curbing membership decline to ensure that it is a growing church (Stetzer and Dodson 2007:30). Since everything rise and fall with leadership, the leadership of the church must be in a position to recognize the problems; and leadership in this instance is both the clergy and the laity leaders of the church. Jesus Christ as a leader developed other leaders and the pastor. The church must

strive to do the same, the church has to train and involve others for growth (Stetzer and Doodson 2007:34-38).

Lack of formidable socio-political as well as the lack of economic-cultural system assisting the process of evangelism results in inconsistent evangelism work by churches. Evangelism has a positive impact on the growth of the church (Enegho, 2004:6). The growth of a church must not be equated only to membership growth, but is something that should allow Christians to rise to Christian responsibility of giving hope to people in despair (Enegho, 2004:6).

According to Engel & Norton (1975:14), there is little or no harvest because the harvest equipment of the church lost its cutting blade. As much as pastors are evangelizing, the churches are not growing because the strategy they use is either not appropriate or spiritually led. Church professionals only represent 2% of church membership, 18 % of the membership is needed to assist in running the church, this is in order to provide resources enough for the remaining 80% (Gibbs and Coffey, 2001:89). They strongly believe that in order to invite non-believers effectively into the presence of God for worship, the strategy used must have a sense of God's presence, it must be Christ Centered and there must be participation in a relationship with God and others (Gibbs and Coffey, 2001:177).

### **2.8.1 Conclusion**

From the above we have learned that the churches that decline are those that often have forgotten their purpose; churches that have moved from being bible based and accepting the authority of the bible. The pastors need to acknowledge their pastoral calling and preach the word of God while delegating administrative issues to lay people.

We have also learned that evangelism has a positive impact for membership and spiritual growth; churches must evaluate their growth level from time to time in order to know when it is time to change the strategy or look at weaknesses of the current strategy. The strategy before implemented should be assessed to ensure its relevance to the intended congregation; even copied strategies must not be used in the copy and paste manner, but have to be refined to meet specific circumstances of the particular congregation.

## **2.9 HOW THE DID JESUS AND PAUL PREVENT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DECLINE**

This section will provide insights from literature to show it can be possible to turn around churches declining in membership to be growing churches. Every organization has a strategy or strategies, a way of approaching a problem or achieving a goal (Dayton and Fraser, 1990:13-14). This section will paint a picture of how Paul was able to ensure membership increase even during hard times, secondly how Jesus can be trusted during church stagnation.

### **2.9.1 Paul's Strategy for Preventing Membership Decline In Churches**

In this section we will discuss the six strategies that Paul used to prevent membership decline namely: Follow-up Ministry, Preaching the Gospel, Co-Workers Ministry, Letters Ministry, Appointment of Leadership and Prayer Ministry

#### **2.9.1.1 Follow-up ministry**

When Paul embarked on his second Missionary Journey, he and Barnabas had already planted some churches during his first missionary journey (Acts 15:39-18:22). According to Hewitt (1964:222), "No one was more aware of the folly of gaining converts and leaving them to their own immature beliefs and practices than Paul. There is some indication that some of the churches that were planted earlier were struggling and needed to be assisted to continue growing and not lose their membership. Paul therefore used various strategies to support the existing churches while going further with the establishment of new ones. Acts 15: 41 accordingly indicates some of Paul's strategies by stating: "Paul went through the provinces of Syria and Cilicia and strengthened the churches", and before they left Antioch Paul indicated that they are going to visit every city where they spread the Lord's word. They were visiting the believers to see how they are doing (Act 15:36). This is like follow-up on ministry or rejuvenating the church, because the Bible further teaches that the churches were as a result of these visits strengthened in faith and grew in numbers everyday (Acts 16:5). Paul even went to places where people had previously resisted the gospel. Detwiller (1995:36) indicates that it took courage to return to the very places that had resisted the gospel and mistreated the

messengers; yet the decision to return was not dictated by bravado but by the practical necessity of shepherding the converts.

Paul suggested to Barnabas that they must visit the cities where they previously preached the word of the Lord to see how new believers are doing (Acts 15:36). Therefore the first part of Paul's second missionary journey was spent visiting churches planted during the first missionary journey. That is why the churches were strengthened and continued to grow in numbers (Acts 16:5).

Follow up was an important part of Paul's work. The purpose of revisiting the churches he had planted included amongst others a visit to the Thessalonians to supply for their deficiencies (1 Thessalonian 3:10), a visit to the Corinthians for bringing benefits and encouraging the exercise of discipline and support for His missionary Journey (II Corinthians 1:15-24, II Corinthians 13:2 II Corinthians 1:16 respectively). He also embarked on the third missionary journey where he travelled though the region of Galatia and Phrygia strengthening all disciples and visiting churches he planted during the first missionary journey (Acts 18:23-23:35). Paul emphasized the need for fellowship, togetherness, Christians worship, and actions (Bruce, 1977:458).

### ***2.9.1.2 Preaching the gospel***

When Paul went to these churches he was embarking on the mission of the church as discussed in 1.6.1.1 above; namely, preaching the gospel (evangelizing), teaching about the living Christ, multiplying the church or making disciples, and ensuring a loving environment for fellow Christians. In Acts 17:2, we realize that each time Paul visited the city he went to the synagogue where he preached about Christ to the people. That is the method Paul used to strengthen the church. These visits by Paul ensured that the church keep faith and become spiritually strong.

### ***2.9.1.3 Co-workers ministry***

According to Ellis (1970:437), it was very rare to find Paul walking alone during his missionary journeys. During his Second Missionary Journey, Paul was traveling with Silas and Timothy (Acts 16:16-40). When Paul was teaching he did not keep the teaching

only to himself, he travelled and worked with other Christians (Murray, 1998:199-200). When we read the first and second epistle of Paul to Timothy and the book of Titus we realize that Paul used his co-workers for oversight, and used to send them to young churches.

#### ***2.9.1.4 Letters ministry***

Many times when Paul sent one of his co-workers he would often also write a letter explaining how much he cared for the converts (Acts 9:28-30). Some of the letters that Paul wrote in this way to churches are still read even today in churches. Paul wanted Christians not to keep letters for themselves but once read to be shared with other churches so that they can also read it (Colossians 4:16). In his letters, Paul has greetings, teachings, doctrine and ethics, missionary concern and affection (Galatians 4:19 and I Thessalonians 2:7-11). We also find letters containing his intercession for churches. These letters were substitutes for Paul's personal presence among the churches in his absence (I Corinthians 5:3-5) and also included his personal activity or circumstances as it is clear in I Thessalonians 2:17, 3:1-3 and Romans 15:3.

#### ***2.9.1.5 Appointment of leaders***

After planting a church and having to continue with his missionary journey, Paul never left the church without a leader. According to Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas appointed church elders in each church and with prayers and fasting committing them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust. The same way that Jesus was surrounded by the disciples when he was teaching, we realize that Paul would surround himself with those who would later carry on the work on their own as part of training (Wilkins, 1992:268). Paul found potential leaders as he travelled, and invited them to accompany him, and as they travelled they were learning from him like Timothy. Once ready they were directed to their own ministry (Benjamin, 1952:14).

#### ***2.9.1.6 Prayer ministry***

Paul was a person who from time to time prayed for the churches he planted and prayed for the believers in general. He interceded on their behalf for God to bear witness to his unceasing intercessions (Romans 1:9-10, I Thessalonians 3:10). There are times when

Paul prayed and entrusted his church in hostile conditions into the Lord's hands (I Corinthians 1:4, Philemon 1:4, etc.)

### **2.9.1.7 Conclusion**

Paul deemed it fit to return to those churches and ensure that they do not perish, he had to strengthen them. The second and third missionary journeys were used as strategies/plan to follow up and nurturing the converts. These days it's very rare that we can find the church planters going back to strengthen the churches they planted. The failure of the church to follow-up on new converts lead to converts leaving the church and going back to their old ways. Missionary work must not be done on a hit and run basis (Acts 16:5)

The use of synagogues, houses and open places to preach the gospel and teach about Christ also worked towards strengthening these churches. Churches without appointed leaders turn to chaos and because Paul understood this; he accordingly appointed leaders and never abandon them. He continued to send letters so that the church can also see him in his absence and believe in the leadership. Mentoring other people like Titus and Timothy was a good way of ensuring the church does not perish while he was working elsewhere. Even today, churches need to be strengthened so that they do not decline in membership and spiritually.

## **2.9.2 Jesus' Strategy To Prevent Membership Decline In Churches**

The book of Revelations describes seven churches that were planted in Asia and were initially growing, but most of them started stagnating for various reasons. Jesus evaluated the seven churches of Asia by using a specific pattern and form of evaluation. This pattern can be applied even in churches today (Stetzer and Dodson, 2007:11). Each letter is introduced by a brief characterization of Christ and this characterization is adapted to the situation of a local church (Ladd, 1972, 36). This characterization is followed by words of praise for good qualities found in a church, except for the church in Laodicea, where nothing is found to praise. Then followed criticism for wrong doings found in each church, except the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia, where there was nothing wrong

pointed out. Each letter concludes with a promise to those who conquer and admonition to hear what the prophet writes. (Ladd, 1972:36) These seven letters according to Hendriksen (1967:75) are divided into two parts, one of three and one of four. When evaluating these churches, we realized that in the first three letters, the exhortation is followed by a promise. In the last four the order is reversed. These epistles do not describe what happen in specific ages of church history, but what continues to happen in churches from time to time (Hendriksen, 1967:75).



[http://amazingdiscoveries.org/S-deception-Revelation\\_letter\\_seven-churches](http://amazingdiscoveries.org/S-deception-Revelation_letter_seven-churches) (18.02.2013)

### **2.9.2.1 Ephesus**

The church in Ephesus is situated about 8 miles from the gulf of Ephesus in a swampy plain, but in the first century it was the most important sea port of Asian Minor. It was a religious center (Ladd, 1972:37). It was also the home of all kinds of superstitious practices and was famous throughout the world for the magic arts (Acts 19:19). This church was founded by Aquila and Pricilla. They came from Corinth with Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:18) and remained in Ephesus after Paul journeyed on to Antioch (Ladd, 1972:40)

The church in Ephesus is praised for its work, toil, intolerance and endurance. Based on this it is viewed as a lamp stand, ensuring the light of the Lord is visible in dark days of the world (Hendriksen, 1967:78). This church is accused of departing from its first love;

therefore they need to remember from what high state they had fallen and repent, go back to do what they did at first. Jesus further made them aware that if they fail, He will remove their lamp stand from its place if they do not repent (Hendriksen, 1967:78). This is like a church member who is in good and regular standing in the church but not as devoted to the Lord as s/he formally was.

This church profited from the ministry of Paul, Timothy and John but it is also rebuked by Jesus. This is an indication that the church can easily fall from reverence and the love for God and love of neighbor. The church should rebuke false prophets and teachers of evil practices and love its neighbor (Mathew 22:37-40). The first love that it use to have is the same love Matthew is talking about. The words of Jesus in Revelation 2:6, shows that it is possible to hate the deeds of evil doers and love God and neighbor. Therefore the church has the power to hate the actions of the evil doers and continue preaching the living Christ with the intention to lead them to repentance.

The church is urged to reflect on its fall, to come to a change of mind so that it may again perform the first works. The thread “or else I will come to thee, and will move thy lamp-stand out of its place” was fulfilled. There is today no church in Ephesus; the place is ruined (Hendriksen, 1967:78).

### **2.9.2.2 Smyrna**

The church was situated 35 Miles North of Ephesus. It was a prosperous sea port town. Its wealth and prosperity led it to contend with Ephesus for the honor of being the foremost city of Asia (Ladd, 1972:42). Smyrna supported Rome before Rome became a world power. This church was founded by Paul during his third missionary journey (Hendriksen, 1967:79). This letter reflects the fact that Smyrna contained a substantial colony of the Jews who were aggressively hostile to Christianity and exercised considerable influence with the civil authority (Ladd, 1972:42).

The spiritual condition of the church in Smyrna stands in a sharp contrast to their economic condition. Spiritually they are rich even though they suffer economic poverty (Ladd, 1972:44). The church was strong but experienced some sort of persecutions; and it needed to be encouraged or strengthened from time to time. They were about to undergo

strong persecution, this was something of a problem from outside the church (Revelation 2:9-10). But Jesus wanted the church to be strong, especially because Paul had earlier indicated to Timothy that those who believe in Christ will be persecuted (II Timothy 13:2). In Revelations 2:10-11, Jesus tells this church that it will go through more suffering, imprisonment, trials and tribulations. With all that, he promised them a crown of life, and that as overcomers they will never be hurt by the second death (Ladd, 1972:45). Christians must remember Jesus gave assurance that he will not leave not forsake them (Matthew 10:28). Even though they may be put to the first death, the Lord promised that they are not going to be hurt by the second death (Hendriksen, 1967:82), meaning they will not be cast, body and soul into the lake of fire at Christ second coming (Revelations 20:14). Even today Jesus wants the church to be strong in times of trial and not decline in membership.

### ***2.9.2.3 Pergamum***

This church was situated on the rocky hill which plants its foot on the great surrounding valley. The Romans made it the capital province of Asia (Hendriksen, 1967:82). This church consists of two types of people holding different doctrines. There were people holding the doctrine of Baal, propagating false teachings comparable to those that caused many Israelites to stumble during the times of king Ahab when many became unfaithful to the Lord (Revelation. 2:14-15). The Pergamum Christians allowed pagan morals to influence them (Ladd, 1972:47). The use of the word “repent” in Revelation 2:16 indicates that there was laxity towards the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore the whole church is summoned to repent for a sin of which only a few were actually guilty (Ladd, 1972:48). The sin of the Ephesians was departing from their first love, while the sin of the Pergamum church was toleration and laxity of the Nicolaitans practices (Ladd, 1972:47).

### ***2.9.2.4 Thyatira***

Thyatira was situated in a valley. Thyatira was not a religious or political center, but owed its importance to trade. It had few temples, but was not a strong seat of emperor worship and the state cult. There were few Jews in Thyatira to trouble the church (Ladd, 1972:50). Thyatira became a trading city with two trade guilds. These trade guilds were associated with the worship of tutelary-deities; each guild had its guardian god which people had to

worship (Hendriksen, 1967:88). In this situation, the prophets Jezebel pretended to know the way in which Christians can follow in order not to belong to these guilds. This prophetess encouraged Christians to attend the guild worships and feasts, commit fornication and to learn their ways so that they can conquer without abandoning their Christian beliefs (Hendriksen, 1967:88). Some Christians did fall into this trap, others remained faithful. In Revelation 2:19, we read the following “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance” probably the four words of probation are an explanation of good works of this church. Possibly „service“ is the manifestation of love and patience endurance of faith. Here is a church which has much to commend it. Its love has not gone cold as Ephesus, and the vast majority of the church allowed their faith to lead them to patience endurance in the face of the problems the church faced in a pagan environment (Ladd, 1972:50). The church was known for its charity service, faith, patience and its works but it also had its weaknesses which entailed the threat of false teachers that encouraged general unfaithfulness to the Lord (Revelations 2:19-22).

The church had manifested admirable growth in the Christian virtues, its love and faith had steadily increased. The problem in this church was that there had risen in a church a woman of whom Jezebel was a prototype, with her pernicious teaching leading some away from faith (Ladd, 1972:51). The other problem was an unhealthy tolerance. As much as they refused the presence of the false prophet and the evil character of her teaching, they tolerantly refused to deal with her. Those in Ephesus had tested and rejected pseudo-apostles (Ladd, 1972:52). Jesus warned them and he also gave them a chance to repent (Revelations 2:25).

#### **2.9.2.5 Sardis**

Sardis was the capital city of the king of Lydia and later became the center of the Persian government. In the New Testament times Sardis was sinking into spiritual stupor, that why Christ described Himself as “the one who has the seven life giving spirit” (Hendriksen, 1967:90). Sardis provided the meeting place of several major Roman roads and was an important industrial center; it was home of woolen and dyed goods (Ladd, 1972:55). Sardis was also zealous in promoting emperor worship and the people of the city were known for a luxurious, loose way of life. The problem is that of deep spiritual apathy, which may have resulted from the softness and luxury which characterized the

secular society (Ladd, 1972:55). The church was spiritually dead and Christ is the possessor of the Holy Spirit and only Him can give life. With all this sad spiritual complacency the church in Sardis was still the object of Christ care (Ladd, 1972:55).

The spiritual decay of the church in Sardis was not obvious; it was something that was difficult to see or observe. It was known for good works, alive with outstanding reputation for life and vitality, but in the sight of God it was dead (Ladd, 1972:56). This is the picture of a normal Christian, outwardly prosperous, busy with the externals of religious activity, but devoid of spiritual life and power. To this church, Jesus indicated that He knows its works; He warns this church to be watchful and we realize that Jesus Himself is reminding them to strengthen the remaining things because they were at the brink of dying out. Jesus also indicates that there is nothing of them found perfect before God, though He once more gave them a chance to repent (Revelations 3:1-3). This shows that even a church whose condition was as bad as the one of the church at Sardis was not yet beyond hope; it was not late to wake from spiritual lethargy. There still remained a residuum of life which could be revived. Unless such revival occurs, this small remainder was in danger of also being affected by the spiritual death (Ladd, 1972:56).

This church was not distressed by Jewish opposition; it was not disturbed by heresy. It was well known as an active, vigorous Christian congregation, characterized by good works and charitable activities. But in the sight of God, all these religious activities were a failure because they were formal externals and not infused with the life giving Holy Spirit. In this church there were also people who remained and retained their loyalty to Christ, suggesting that the spiritual lethargy of the Christians in Sardis was due to the pernicious influence of the pagan environment (Ladd, 1972:57). The good thing about all this is that there is a promise for those who remain faithful in a pagan and corrupt society (Revelations 7:9). They will experience the consummation of fellowship with the Lord. Such faithful believers will walk with Christ in white (Hendriksen, 1967:91). This promise is an assurance of salvation in the consummated kingdom of God (Ladd, 1972:57).

#### **2.9.2.6 Philadelphia**

This was the youngest of the seven cities of Asia. It supported the pagan cult of Dionysus. The main problem faced by this church was from the Jews rather than from the pagans.

The church was healthy; their letter includes no words of censure or criticism (Ladd, 1972:58). This church was weak, possessing little but remained faithful to the Gospel and never denied the name of the Lord (Hendriksen, 1967:92).

This church like the church in Smyrna, it experienced the false teaching that was being propagated by the Jewish people. They were also experiencing persecutions. Jesus did not rebuke this church. Jesus will protect them if they have ears (Revelations 3:7-12). That is Why Christ said “Behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which no one can shut (Hendriksen, 1967:92).

In this letter we realized that this church will be kept safe through the hour of trial; those who conquer will be made the pillar in God’s temple, and Christ will write upon him the name of His God and the name of the city of His God, the New Jerusalem and His own name (Hendriksen, 1967:93).

### ***2.9.2.7 Laodicea***

This church was situated in the neighborhood of hot springs. The city of Laodicea was located at the three great highways, growing rapidly into commercial and financial center (Hendriksen, 1967:93). In Laodicea grew a famous school of medicine which produced a remedy for weak eyes. Laodicea was wealthy, known as home of millionaires. It did not have a proper stand; they are referred to as lukewarm, not cold nor hot. Jesus also gave them a chance to be zealous and repent (Revelations 3:14-22)

The citizens of this place were unreliable, and even the church people manifested the same proud, defiant, conceited attitude. It’s possible that they imagined their wealth as the sign of God’s favor unto them (Hendriksen, 1967:94). They boasted of their spiritual riches and never cared about their spiritual sin. According to their own way of thinking they did not need any admonition and they could afford to be lukewarm with respect to exhortation (Hendriksen, 1967:94). As much as the Lord is not happy with their lukewarm standing, and because of His love, grace, and admonition, Christ does not say I will, but give them the second chance by not saying I am about to spew you out of my mouth. The intention of this letter is for them to take a stand, move out of being lukewarm (Hendriksen, 1967:95).

### **2.9.2.8 Summary**

The reason for these seven letters to these churches demonstrate that Christ speaks through John the prophet in spirit and that Christ knows the situation of each church. We also realize that John in these letters employed the form of royal edicts as part of his strategy to emphasize the fact that Christ is the true king in contrast with the Roman Emperor. We also realize that each of the seven letters concludes with admonition to hear what the prophet writes. This exhortation is not only to the local church but to all Christians (Ladd, 1972:40). These letters were to be heard since they were read in public worship. All these letters conclude with the promise to those who conquer.

In these letters we realized that the Jews hated the church and were persecuting the church (Ladd, 1972: 61). So with these letters Jesus worked towards getting the church to change and overcome so that even the Jews would acknowledge that the church is indeed the true people of God (Ladd, 1972:61). We also realized in terms of Revelations 9:20 and 16:9-11 that God will pour out His wrath upon the followers of the beast to try to drive them to repentance before it is too late (Ladd, 1972:62). In this way we learn that God wants His church to grow.

When we look at all these churches they had some afflictions. According to Hendricksen (1967:34), the church needs the afflictions/trials in order that it may be purged, cleaned, purified, in order that true believers may be brought closer to God. This is because the Christ who is now of the Throne and overrules evil for good (Hendricksen, 1967:35)

The above mentioned churches are the churches planted by Paul and had good leadership of Paul, Timothy and Titus. They were also left in good leadership when Paul had to continue with his missionary journey, like the church in Ephesus which was led by Pricilla and Aquila (Hendriksen, 1976:76). When Christ wrote these letters these churches were more than 40 years, therefore the new generation had risen (Hendricks 1967:77). Therefore the church was not as stable as it was during the times of Paul, Timothy, Pricilla, Aquila and John.

### **2.9.2.9 Conclusion**

The seven fold conditions of these churches exist even today. It has always been there even after Christ intervened (Hendriksen, 1967:97). Such churches are not faithful to their charge; they do not hold first the Name of the Lord in the midst of the darkness of this world (Revelations 2:12). These seven churches represent the entire church. In Ephesus the light is still on, but flames are diminishing; in Pergamum and Thyatira, the light is shining but not as light as it should be because of temptations coming from the side of the world. In Smyrna and Philadelphia the true character of the church as light bearer is revealed and there is loyalty to Christ.

It is clear that the church needed Jesus Christ to intervene in order to save these churches from experiencing a decline in membership or from failing to be growing churches. He gave them a chance to repent. At least of the seven churches five were explicitly told to repent. Even today Jesus is standing at the door, knocking and waiting for the church to open for him (Revelations 13:20). The church must repent for it to qualify to be called the church of God.

Christ ensured that the church conquered and survived He evaluated each church. He condemned the actions of the churches in which He found something to be condemned. Christ exhorted the churches and promised the churches which were facing serious challenges. Even today for the church to survive there is a need for someone to evaluate the church, condemn, exhort and challenge the church.

This section has explored what the bible teaches about the importance of prevention of membership decline and ways to be applied to ensure that the church is awake and healthy. The next section will look at what scholars present as the reason for membership decline in churches and what can be implemented as strategies to curb decline in membership.

## **2.10 BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR TURNING AROUND CHURCHES DECLINING IN MEMBERSHIP LIKE SECOND BETHEL AME CHURCH**

Research is essential when one seeks an effective solution for the challenge of church membership decline. This is the case because it will definitely be difficult to develop the appropriate strategy without accurate information. Scholars of church growth often use social scientific methods to research the difference between growing churches and non-growing churches. They have also proposed a number of strategies to deal with churches declining in membership. This section of the study will present a number of strategies often used by other churches to curb membership decline.

### **2.10.1 The First Strategy Is Based On Acts 2:41-47**

This passage describes the life and operations of the church in Jerusalem. It was the first church which the Apostles established after Pentecost. It is clear from Act 2:41-47 that the church in Jerusalem followed a simple strategy which was made up of five elements. Many recognized that the strategy which the Jerusalem church used can help churches to grow numerically. This sub-section will accordingly explore the elements associated with the growth of the church in Jerusalem as these are evident in Acts 2:41-47.

#### **2.10.1.1 *The church must teach the word of God***

In the book of Acts we notice that the apostles were teaching the word of God. The apostles' teaching had authority because it was delivered as the teaching of the Lord (Bruce, 1990:131). These teachings of the Lord were communicated through the apostles in the power of the Spirit (Bruce, 1988:73). Acts 2 indicates that those who had received the word of God on the day of Pentecost were baptized with the result that three thousand individuals were added to the existing disciples. The unchurched were taught the word of God, pursued until they repent and be reconciled to their master (Acts 2:41).

#### **2.10.1.2 *The Church was fellowship and worship Centered***

The members of this new community of Christians lived together and experienced a deep sense of unity in the Spirit. Those that had property or portable belongings sold them and shared the proceeds according to each other's needs (Bruce, 1988:74). The unity of the

church in Jerusalem included their sharing of everything according to their needs (Acts 2:45). The church in Jerusalem also gathered daily with a common consent in the temple to praise God (Acts 2:47). The apostolic worship found expression in a number of practical ways. These ways included the breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2:42). The breaking of bread denotes more than the regular taking of food together because, it is a reference to the regular observance of the Lord's supper (Bruce, 1988:73). The prayer in which they participated has primary reference to an appointed season for united prayer following the Jewish models, though theirs had an enriched content because of the Christ event (Bruce, 1988:73).

In ensuring social justice and meeting the needs of others the church environment must allow today's Christians to speak like David when he said "I was glad when they said unto me; Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates O Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:1). The environment must also allow new converts to be like the Philippian jailor after being baptized into Christ, who rejoiced when believing in God with all his house (Acts 16:34), and the Ethiopian nobleman after baptism who went on rejoicing in the Lord (Act 8:39). Jesus instructed the church to love one another so that all men can know that they are His disciples (John 13:35). Even today the church ought to teach its members to love one another, receive and encourage other believers so that the name of Jesus Christ can be praised and the church can grow. Jesus taught in Matthew 20:20-28 that greatness in his kingdom involves humility, service, and a focus on others (Malphurs, 2007:129). The servant hood environment in which human needs are met can only be felt by new converts when Christians do like Paul in I Corinthians 9: 19, who though he was free in Christ, intentionally and willfully made himself a slave to those without Christ, hoping to win as many as possible to Christ (Malphurs, 2007:131-132).

God gave instructions that the church should continue to do social justice and meet human needs when instructing the church to take care of widows and orphans (James 1:27). While the apostles were proclaiming the word of God, there was a complaint that the widows of the Greek speaking Jews were being neglected and are not fed. The apostles did not abandon the proclamation of the word, but they chose seven men to take care of the poor while they continued preaching the word of God and multitudes continue to follow them (Acts 6:1-7). It is for this reason that the leaders of the church in Ephesus were told to take it upon their shoulders and their followers to feed the church that Christ

had placed in their care; a church which Christ purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). This is also clear in most letters written by the apostles like in Galatians 2:10.

### ***2.10.1.3 The church ministry centered on evangelism.***

This church continued to praise God and had goodwill of all people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were saved (Acts 2:47). The word praise suggests that they were reacting to God's manifestation of salvation in Jesus Christ. This is an indication that disciples were devoted to evangelism.

Both the Old and New Testament decisively teach that mission is part of the plan of God. The Bible must accordingly be read as the missionary book with the missionary message (Vestal & Baker, 1987:9). The scripture proves that the redemption of fallen man is the central theme of God's mission, and should therefore remind us that the missionary movement did not begin with Paul the Apostle or Jesus Christ, but it was started by God Himself (Kane, 1981:15).

From Genesis to Malachi, God is portrayed as a missionary God. Jesus is the God of the Old Testament. Christ is the first great missionary called "Apostle" in Hebrews 3:1; From Matthew to Revelations, the New Testament is concerned with Christ's mission to the world. Bible history is salvation history because God is the God of salvation. The Bible is the story of God's saving Acts (Kane, 1981:16-17). There would not be a New Testament without the Old Testament. Therefore the great commission is the heart of the whole bible and the mission of the whole bible (Betts, 2005:32).

### ***2.10.1.4 Conclusion***

This strategy indicates how growth and development progressively took place through the preaching of the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. The church in Jerusalem devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, fellowship, to breaking of bread, sharing all things, selling their property and all they had just for the kingdom of God. This strategy for growth is an indication of how to make Disciples, Worship the Lord, be in fellowship with other members, and be prepared to minister and evangelize or preach the word of God. These things would be in line with the mission and vision of the AME Church which

is described as being to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed.

### **2.10.2 Peter Wagner's Strategy**

Wagner (2001:87) identified four elements that lead to growing congregation. These elements are Strong Worship, Diversified programs, an effective pastor and Enthusiastic members. He indicated that growing churches are based in a favorable location, it has a number of activities taking place, and members feel good about the activities that they are taking part in. Wagner also cautions pastors to stop focusing on attendance at worship service only; they need to look at other things to measure the size of the congregation (Wagner, 2001:87).

### **2.10.3 McIntosh & Martin Evangelism Strategy For Church Growth**

According to McIntosh & Martin (1992:9), there are two ways to grow a church which will bring the people into the "front door" and be able to keep them from going out by the "back door". The front door defines the way people come to church while the back door defines the way the people leave the church. The people come to church through biological growth, Transfer and conversion and they leave the church because of death, transfer and reversion. The church has a responsibility to keep them in and work on a strategy to avoid reversion or people drifting away from church without uniting with one another (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:10). The following are some of the strategies that McIntosh & Martin (1992:10) suggests for church growth:

#### **2.10.3.1 *Be Present***

When the church is present it is known by its community. The present church takes the words of Christ to heart by ensuring that when the people are hungry they feed them, when thirsty they give them something to drink, when they see strangers they must invite them in, when someone is without clothes they must assist in clothing them, visit the sick and

those in prison (Matthew 25:35-36). The church establishes ministries in its community and has processes to draw the un-churched into Christ and be members of the local church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:22). The church can be present in three ways

#### **2.10.3.1.1 Network of society**

To be present in the normal network of society like the twelve Disciples of Christ who lived and worked in the normal social structures of their time (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:23). Matthew was an example of this because after receiving Christ as His Lord and Savior, he did not leave his work and go to the seminary. Instead there was a great feast in his own house at which, many people (including tax collectors) were in attendance with Jesus and His disciples (Matthew 5:29). In the same way God expects believers to maintain their presence in the natural, social network of society so that they can directly witness to non-believers or the un-churched (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:23).

#### **2.10.3.1.2 Physical needs**

To be present also entails ministering to the physical needs of people (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:23). The present church must be like the disciples in Antioch who when a need arose had to contribute for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. It should be noted that the contribution was sent to the elders of the church in Judea by means of Barnabas and Saul who acted as official delegation of the church in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30). It is this kind of practice (presence caring) which makes an impact on how people perceive the Gospel. The church must develop similar ministries that attract non-believers to church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:24).

#### **2.10.3.1.3 People's souls**

The spiritual battle for the people's souls in which the church is engaged requires that Christians must be present in the world. The church must strive for ministry beyond the walls; there must be an agenda of ministry and service (AME Church, 2004:96). The local Church must strive to do what Paul and Barnabas did when starting with the first missionary journey. They went out to extend their personal presence (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:25).

A local Church growth evangelism strategy through presence evangelism must be viewed as being like a large open end of the funnel where the un-churched are initially contacted through ministering to their needs with the intention to make them warm and accept Christianity. People are in that process often just received so that disciples are made through a process of time (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:25).

### **2.10.3.2 *Proclaim the Gospel***

A local church must have effective ways to communicate the Gospel to non-believers (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:14). Church members meet so many people who are often never invited to church and are willing to attend once invited (Barna, 1998:111). Christians must learn to disciple the lives of non-Christians by proclaiming the word of God. Not everyone will be able to evangelize on a full time basis because God gave different gifts to all (Ephesians 4:11). All Christians must however endeavor to use their gift to enhance the ministry of the church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:32-35).

The churches that are effective in proclaiming the Gospel have three defined ways for doing so. Some use series of musical concerts. The un-churched are introduced to Christ through testimonies during these concerts. Others use effective bible studies offering a place for nonbelievers to hear the Gospel in a nonthreatening manner. While in others the pastor explains the Gospel from the pulpit and or programs of witnessing training. Therefore each church must define ways of proclaiming the word of God (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:35).

### **2.10.3.3 *Persuade people to accept Christ***

The church must be willing to share the word of God with the un-churched and the churched. It must be prepared to persuade people and have effective ways to help people accept Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:14). The church has to stop ministering only to Christians, but be prepared to go to non-Christians as well for kingdom building. That allows people to be persuaded and moved through to the next step of being a hearer. To move from an observer to a hearer takes training people to share their faith, involving the non-believer in a number of programs to win specific persons to

Christ. The church can persuade people to accept Christ by means of at least three strategies to attract them and ensure they are persuaded (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:39- 40).

#### 2.10.3.3.1 Help people progress in the Christian life

The church must see the need for discipleship. It can take a lesser time to lead a soul to Christ, while it takes very long to lead a soul to the road to maturity, victorious over the sins and recurring problems that come along (Trotman, 1986:30). Therefore a local church must develop an effective way to help people continue in their faith (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:14-15). The church members are called to carry one another's burdens and meet each other's needs. The un-churched should see Christ in the Christians as they share Christ with him or her. They must not only see the Gospel in Christians' lives, but must also hear it from their Christian lips. Persuasion Evangelism ensures that obstacles are removed as Christians share their conviction. Once people are persuaded to be believers and not merely hearers or observers; and the church must accordingly help them progress in the Christian life.

Churches with effective progression evangelism win more people to Christ. Each church must have a plan for progression evangelism consisting of three key ministries like a new believer's orientation or introduction to faith, a new member's orientation which is a way of ensuring that members are challenged to commit to their church and a focus on discipleship in which people are motivated to grow in their walk with Christ (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:39- 45-46). Local churches are to develop strategies to address the follow-up needs of new Christians like prayer training for new believers by those entrusted with their care, setting up small groups for the baby Christians, etc. (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:39- 46).

In that way progression in faith will result in responsible church members. They will also have a chance to be taught of the three life priorities for example God, Believers and the work in the world (Ortlund & Ortlund, 2002:4). The ministers and church leaders must share the vision of the church (Dale, 1981:11) because an effective progression evangelism strategy includes discipleship as part of its vision. The church has to develop a one on one progression strategy designed to motivate Christians to sit under the guidance of a more mature Christian. This is in line with II Timothy 2:2 wherein Paul instructed Timothy,

“and the things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust them to faithful men, who will be able to teach others as well”. A Christian must grow from being saved, to being followed up with the intention to support, committing to the Holy Spirit and finally growing in Christ (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:49). The church must not forget to follow up new believers, orientate them to be members of the church and disciple them in their faith (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:50).

#### 2.10.3.3.2 Help people produce new believers

The local church must have an effective way of training members to share their faith so that they also become witnesses for Christ (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:15). A church training its members will have Christians that are capable of moving a non-believer from being an observer to hearer then to a learner and finally to a disciple. Helping people become a disciple includes recognizing the change in them (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:54). Wagner (1976:86) indicated that in the average evangelical church, up to ten percent of the members have a gift of evangelism. Therefore not the whole church can evangelize, others will plant (invite non-believers to Christ), others will water (Evangelize) and God will cause growth (Win Soul) like Paul indicated in I Corinthians 3:6, that He planted while Apollo watered and God was causing the growth . Christians must be willing to be involved in utilizing their gifts in the church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:39- 60 - 62).

The above strategies can only work if there are feasible ministries in the local church. This will assist in ensuring that the weak ministries are strengthened by the strong ministries. It’s possible not to implement all the three ministries within one year because it is better for a church to re-tool existing ministries than beginning a new ministry (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:39- 69-70).

The church has the ability to baptize people, receive them to full membership but has also to strive to incorporate them to friendship structures of the church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:39- 75). Therefore there is a need to socialize members for them not to revert. The following is the strategy to keep them while they are in church

#### 2.10.3.3.3 Help people develop friendship

The local church must have roots that grow deeper/ be well rooted, to ensure that when strong winds come they must be ready to hold on to one another (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:16). Many churches are inclusive in outreach but exclusive in fellowship. The pillars of friendship for the church to remain intact have the following characteristics:

People need to be in a company. The church can provide an environment where people can come together and have fun. It has to be a relational church which is able to provide love that cut through the layers of vulnerability and fear to demonstrate real concern from the heart. No persons are exactly the same and an iron sharpens another (Proverbs 27:17). Every person needs sharpening and friendship invigorates people to desire change in their lives. This is about the ability to encourage one another than to pull one down.

The church needs to ensure that the ministry of nurturing is visible in the church as John 15:13 advises that greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friend. Christians must have Christian friends who will nature them through tough times and steer each other back to spiritual things to which they are devoted (Proverbs 19:4-7), expresses the results of a friendship based on wrong devotion. Therefore Christians must be devoted to Christian works (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:79 - 82). A Christian church is effective in ensuring that the new people are also allocated to different groups where they fit well.

#### 2.10.3.3.4 Help people become involved

The local church must recognize that every person yearns to feel secure and important. While friendship provides security, appropriate responsibility provides a sense of importance. Effective assimilation occurs only when people take a specific position, designated function, or a specific position, designated function or a new responsibility. The church must ensure that people feel good about their contribution for them not to revert (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:16).

The church must awaken and discover the spiritual gifts of its members. When Christians exercise their God given spiritual gifts in the church, there is much potential that they will be assimilated and once the spiritual gifts are discovered and used in the church the

members are edified, have their needs met, and members get satisfied. Such church members will not easily revert or leave the church (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:88 - 89).

#### 2.10.3.3.5 Help people belong

The church must allow small groups to meet for fellowship and large groups for public worship, that way the new members will find a sense of belonging (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:17). When the bible becomes alive in a person, the person becomes transformed. The small bible study group helps because when the study takes place the learner change morally, mentally and motivationally as they become accountable to those they are together in the group. This can easily open doors for members of the group to help others and impact on their lives. The Christian must be consistently portraying an immense joy in living, and be willing to drop anything to help others.

Small groups contribute in overcoming pre-occupation with things and create the desire to build up one another. The early church was filled with Christians that were instructed to contribute to the needs of the saints (Romans 12:13), showing hospitality to strangers (Hebrews 13:2). This was practiced so well that Luke ended up saying “For there was not a needy person amongst them” (Acts 4:34). The small groups create a resource of skills bank that can be tapped into to assist when a need arises (McIntosh & Martin, 1992: 96 - 101).

A church that has an effective assimilation process for its new members often also must have small groups consisting of seven groups for every hundred adult members (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:101). The best discipleship takes place in small groups because it was also the primary approach taken by Jesus Christ when planting His church. It is very rare in the bible where Jesus is found doing one-on-one evangelism, but He was often found in small groups of men. Even when He was surrounded by the multitudes, He was often speaking to His disciples (small group) like in the Sermon on the Mount (Reeder, 2008:177-178).

#### 2.10.3.3.6 Help people work together

The church must encourage group work, in that way they will get more achieved in less time while also being able to draw new people (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:17). There is a

need for people to belong within the church structures like the small group ministries, etc. New members that are not able to identify with the church and sense that they do not belong can easily stop coming to church, and go somewhere else where they can belong (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:110). For the church to be effective it needs to have ministries designed to help people to belong, identify themselves with their purpose, mission and commission (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:115). Young and Old people will go to the church where they identify, where their faith and relationships continue to move and are involved (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:117).

#### 2.10.3.3.7 Help People Grow in Their Faith

The church must recognize that many people in churches are fleeing storms, looking for current grace to lift them up and cause them to move forward again. Therefore the church must have an effective strategy to provide for such needs (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:17-18).

Theological changes and emotional changes can cause a person to be lost from the fellowship and stray from the will of God (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:120). There are four signs for non-growth in faith that also often inhibits spiritual growth namely Isolation – God designed a church to be jointed together (Ephesians 4:16), but Satan’s designs is to ensure that this does not happen. The church must teach its members not to live in isolation or isolate other people because isolation contributes to broken lives making people discouraged and painfully hurt (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:121). Fragmentation - has obliterated the sense of the presence of God’s love in people and faith in the church community. The church must be alert of it and teach its members to work through it once there are indications for this such as the cooling stage, concern stage, meddlesome stage and resistance stage (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:121- 122). Stagnation- A lot of Christians today stopped growing in faith. The church must teach scriptures and ensure that Christians do not remain baby Christians for the rest of their lives. People know too much, that is why they are not bothered to grow personally because of access to books and a lot of material at their disposal (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:126). Confrontation- which will always be there as it is part of the Christian life but it can be a problem because of today’s attitude that considers confrontation as something bad and unhealthy (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:126). Confrontation occurs in three ways namely (i). Undefined expectations of the church, therefore expectations must be defined so that the body can be unified in its vision,

(ii). Unexpected conflicts in the body, this can be in a form where the Holy Spirit confronts a person to repent, corporate confrontation in which the fragmented group is not happy with the direction of the church, authoritative confrontation where one has difficulty with leadership; and (iii) the unannounced proposals from leadership. The main problem with this is communication, people feel excluded when new members occupy positions and old members feel neglected or not needed (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:126-127). Effective churches have a specific ministry designed to help people break down walls of confrontation, Isolation, stagnation, and fragmentation. These ministries make people accountable to one another and urge the people to continue to move forward in their growth (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:132).

The strategy above reminds people that the church exists to win non-believers or the un-churched to Christ, help them grow in their faith and send them out to participate in the mission of winning souls. This process of growing them in their faith and then sending them is called discipleship and it is for every church (Falwell, 2008: 102-103). This strategy intends to redirect the church towards growth and having the ability to retain new members.

## **2.11 AREAS THAT NEED STRENGTHENING WHEN EVANGELIZING FOR CHURCH GROWTH**

This section will discuss the areas that need strengthening when evangelizing for the local church.

### **2.11.1 Pastoral Leadership Strategy**

The church leaders need to be spiritual men and women of wisdom and integrity, having an intimate relationship with God (Acts 6:1-3, I Timothy 3:1-3 and Titus 1:6-9). They need to seek direction from God and willing to take steps of faith through any opportunity (I Corinthians 16:8-9 and Revelation 3:8). They need to be deeply concerned with the needs of the flock, serving unselfishly, leading by example, and not lording over the congregation (I Peter 5:2-3). They must be sensitive to God's direction allowing the congregation to willingly trust their leadership (Getz & Wall, 2000:108). Everything rise and falls on leadership. Without the pastor's vision and guidance, a church may/will lapse

into stagnation and decline (Wood, 2001:35). Leadership is a process whereby an individual (leader) influences others to willingly and enthusiastically direct their effort and abilities towards attaining defined organizational goals (Kroon, 1998:332). The primary catalyst factor for church growth is a pastor (Wagner, 1984:60). It makes sense that when a pastor provides right leadership, the church will grow. Church leaders or pastors may have weaknesses, of which they are aware of, but once they are prepared to deal with such weaknesses biblically, they can be used by God in spite of their weaknesses to achieve the intended results (Wood, 2001:15-16); therefore it is important for the pastor to prepare timeously and allow the Holy Spirit to take control. Therefore the pastor must be prepared to share the Gospel by the grace of the Lord not primarily relying on their education or knowledge (Reeder, 2008:64-65).

It is necessary for the pastors to continuously refine their church view because their ecclesiology determines the direction of their ministries; therefore from time to time pastors must assess whether their views about the church helps to move the church in the right direction (Warren, 1995:77). The leadership of a growing church is a leadership focusing on people, relationships, and on a team ministry. Woods (2001:11) also indicted that the lack of effective leadership leads to unhealthy or dying churches.

The key elements of effective pastoral leadership are the empowering of other leaders in the church. Pastors must not use people as helpers but equip them, support them, motivate them and enable them to become all that God wants them to be. Pastors as leaders ought to invest the majority of their time in discipleship, delegation and multiplication (Getz & Wall, 2000:98). The issue of training and delegating is not a new thing, even Jethro advised Moses to look for men that were trustworthy to whom he could delegate the responsibility of judging Israel (Exodus 18:13-23).

### **2.11.2 Laity Ministry And Training Strategy**

Today's church leaders need a radical method of turning the church into a serious commitment of making Disciples of Christ as per the great commission (Hull, 1990:8). The pastor alone cannot achieve this. When we read Ephesians 4:7, it is clear that God gave each person a gift and sufficient grace for each person to play their role. It is not

only the pastor who has gifts; therefore the congregation must participate in church growth (Stetzer & Dodson, 2007:30). In Ephesians 4:11-12, we recognize that there are different people participating in the ministry of the church. In this scripture it is clear that the leader equips saints for them to be able to serve. In line with this scripture, the pastor equips members for him to oversee the smooth running of processes. Discipleship training is to produce laity leadership and to change the church culture towards that of a well-organized church. Effective laity training can be achieved through small groups (Reeder, 2008:183-184). Avolio (2005:4) accordingly states “I believe that leadership development is by far one of the most complex human processes in that it involves leaders, followers, dynamic context, timing, resources, technology, history, luck and few things we have not thought of yet. However, it is in many ways like other complex phenomena, models, and processes in that once we break it down into its essential parts, or get the code, we can begin to understand how the various pieces fit together into the whole”. That is why the church has to be divided into small groups to achieve the most. The laity must be trained and empowered to discover God’s plan for their lives and what God want to see happening within the church (Falwell, 2008:96).

The pastor must devote time to training laity for leadership by being a teacher, and acts as a parent like Paul did to the church in Thessalonica. “Like a nursing mother caring for her own children with such affection for you we were happy to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives” (I Thessalonians 2:7-8). A church that strengthens the laity’s leadership, in line with their spiritual gifts, will grow. Delegating according to the gifts is not a new thing, even the apostles solved the problem of the church over the distribution of church funds by appointing seven wise, spiritual men to administer the funds (Acts 6:1-6).

### **2.11.3 Making Disciples And Evangelism Strategy**

Disciples are not born but made by discipline (Hendricksen, 1974:5). Someone responsible must be prepared to make disciples through discipline. Disciple making is a process of transforming a normal believer into a soldier for Jesus Christ, this can be achieved if men and women allow the Holy Spirit to use them, they must be prepared to pray and not depend on methods or some machinery to help (Bounds, 1997:13). The ultimate goal of church is disciple making; pursuing people to accept Jesus Christ as their

Lord and Savior, baptizing them and finally teaching them Jesus' ways as per the great commission. The pastor and lay leadership must go out of the four walls of the church to teach the un-churched about the living Christ, once they are saved, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, holding the promise that Jesus will not leave nor forsake disciple makers (Matthew 28 : 19 -20). All these are based on the promise of Jesus Christ who will always be present among Christians.

It must be one of the goals of the church to Evangelize; if the church does not evangelize it is bound to experience a decline in membership and the remaining members will not grow spiritually. The church exists to win people to Christ, help them to grow in their faith and teaching converts to participate in the mission of winning the entire world which is God's will for the church (Falwell, 2008: 102-103).

#### **2.11.4 Prayer Strategy**

The bible is a book of prayer; God invites people into His presence through prayer (Towns, 2006:15). Therefore prayer must be one of the ingredients in the making of a healthy church. It is for this reason that the churches that Paul established in the book of Acts emphasized powerful prayer as part of their core existence and ministry (Polhill, 1992:90). All churches pray, but prayer must be a life style (Wilkinson, 2000:42). When prayer is a lifestyle, all members speak to God and God will bless the church through prayerful members and the church will grow. Jesus emphasized prayer as He taught His disciples on various occasions like they had failed to cast out a demon in Mark 9:29. On that occasion, Jesus said to them "this kind cannot come out by anything but a prayer". This shows the power of prayer to expel a demon. Jesus further introduced the importance of prayer and fasting by saying "it can only come out by prayer and fasting (Matthew 12:21). When the churches strengthen prayer, members will pray for one another and for God's ministry and the praying people and those being prayed for will experience the grace of God and the church will pray in spirit and the Father in heaven will hear. The church must pray for the worship service and the intercession team must intercede for the Sunday service and the pastor's sermon and members should be trained to be prepared for the service.

### 2.11.5 Worship Strategy

Worship is an act aimed at glorifying God in life and to enjoy God forever. The worship service must be inspirational. One of the five purposes of the church is worship (Warren, 1995:107). The church must prepare for an inspirational worship service. The pastor must be prepared for the worship service and the quality of the sermon must prove that. One of the elements of worship is praise songs. That is why Paul emphasized that the music in the church is to be the product of the Spirit's work (Ephesians 5:18-19). The praise songs that are carefully chosen inspire members and God works when people are praising Him through songs. Acts 16:25-27 provides an example of the power of singing and praying. The church worship inspires and the church grows when the Holy Spirit works through the worship service (Schwarz, 1996:30-31). John 4:23-24 indicates that "the time is coming and is now when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship him in spirit and truth". Therefore, the worshippers must be taught to worship the Father, once they have been trained they need to prepare for worship. Strengthening worship will ensure that those in churches experience God and grow strong in their knowledge of the truth of the Word.

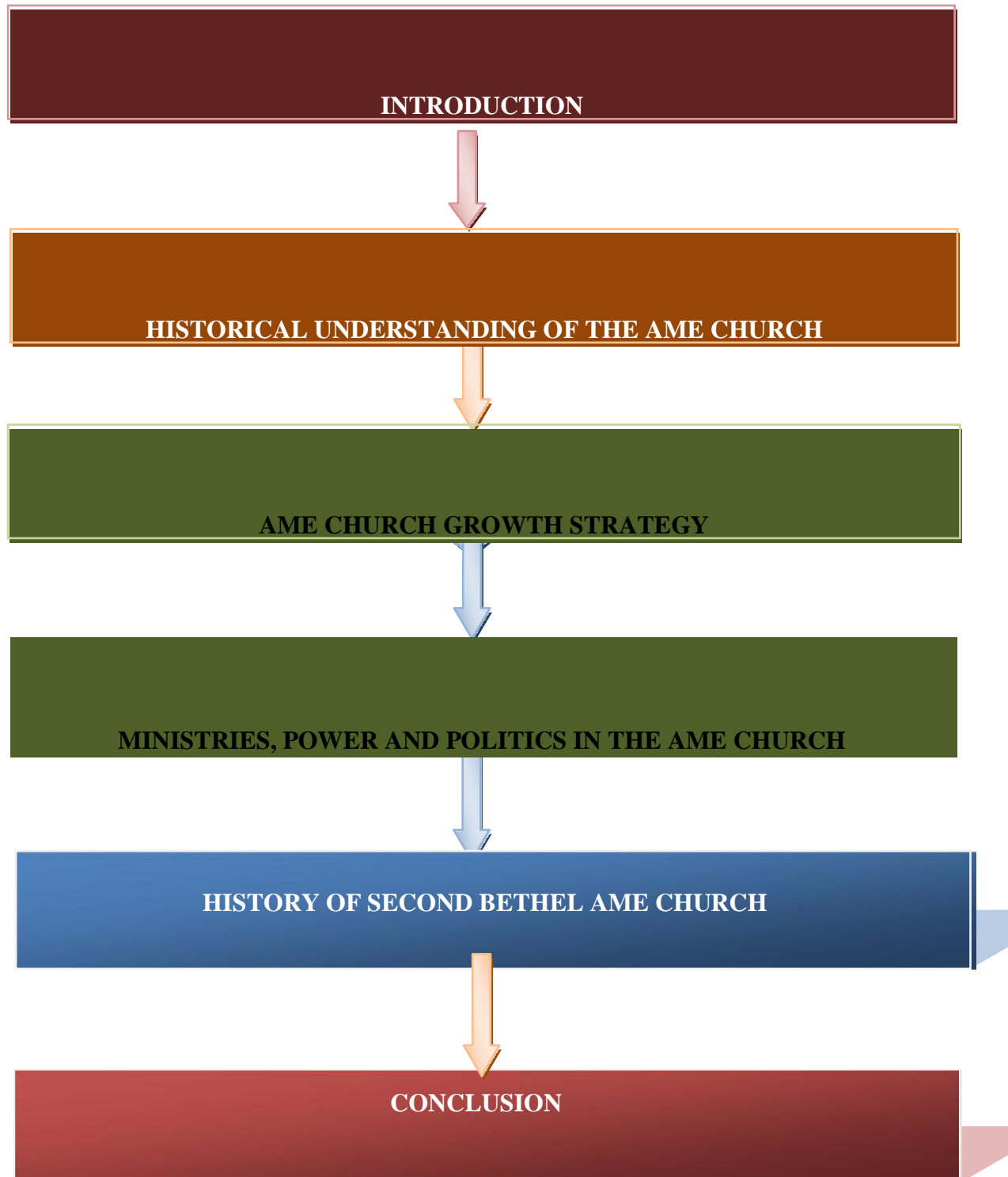
In order to develop an effective strategy for turning around churches declining in membership as is the case with Second Bethel AME Church, there is a need to look at the above strategies with the intention of working out the appropriate strategy to curb membership decline at the particular local church. These research projects seek to do this with a view to proposing a possible solution for the situation at Second Bethel AME Church. The product of the study will however be presented in such a way that other local churches that are grappling with the challenge of arresting their membership decline may learn from this project.

## 2.12 CONCLUSION

The goal of turning around churches that are experiencing membership decline is to ensure that such churches grow numerically and spiritually. The situation at Second Bethel AME church prompted this study as was indicated in the previous chapter. This chapter

therefore explored what relevant literature has to say in order to understand the phenomenon of church growth and church membership decline. It was essential to look at how the ancient churches of the days of the apostles approached the matter. This chapter confirmed that the apostles were always taking proactive step. Paul is a typical example of this as he already started during his second missionary journey to implement strategies to curb church membership decline in the young churches that he had been instrumental in establishing and thereby ensured their continued numerical and spiritual growth. We also observed that Jesus also intervened to help the seven churches in Asia. The views of other scholars about the matter were also taken into consideration together with some strategies that the literature suggests for turning around churches experiencing a decline in membership. It is clear from the literature that the fact that churches must grow is not just a human thought, but Biblically supported and is therefore aligned with the mind of Jesus Christ. The next chapter will present a historical background of the AME Church and how Second Bethel AME church found itself in its current situation. That way the study will be able to establish if Second Bethel AME Church exists to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed.

## CHAPTER 3



**Own Information: Chapter 3 Summary**

### **3. HISTORICAL EXPOSITION AND BACKGROUND OF SECOND BETHEL AME CHURCH AS A CHURCH EXPERIENCING A DECLINE IN MEMBERSHIP**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter of this study dealt with the theoretical overview of turning around churches declining in membership. It has presented the foundation of the research which provides direction the rest for the study.

This chapter of the study provides in general the historical understanding of the AME Church. It will therefore explore the AME Church Growth Strategy, Ministries, Powers and Politics in the AME Church, the History of AME Church in South Africa concluding with Second Bethel AME Church history in Orange farm.

The fundamental theme explored in this chapter of the study is to critically evaluate the processes and support that were available for Second Bethel AME Church throughout the years of its existence and ministry to overcome membership decline.

#### **3.2 HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE AME CHURCH**

This section of the study focuses on the AME Church history, the Spirit of the Original Free African Society, the relevant sections of the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church. This information is important to understand as it should be expected to have impacted upon Second Bethel AME Church in view of the AME Church being a Connectional church.

##### **3.2.1 AME Church History**

According to McKenzie (1996:29), the AME Church came into existence not because of theological differences but largely as a result of the oppression that the black people were

subjected to or racial injustice in the white church during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the USA. I do not agree with Mc Kenzie; there were theological differences that lead to the existence of the AME church, the AME church was established on account of unchristian practices prevailing in the church. These unchristian practices were against the doctrine of creation like dehumanizing people of African descent. The black people were treated as slaves; there was race prejudice and ill treatment in the church (Allen, 1960:6). The segregations in relation to sitting arrangements in the church were prevalent. Blacks in the white churches were not allowed to sit in the pews and around the walls of the main church floors, with time they were to sit in the gallery (Gregg, 1980:16). In 1787, the blacks walked out of St George's Methodist Church due to unbearable treatment, which gave birth to the AME Church (Payne, 1891:79).

Richard Allen and other members started a self-help organization called the Free African Society from which the AME Church was organized (Hill, 2002:38). The AME church was started in 1787 in Philadelphia by a group of disinherited Americans whose forefathers came from Africa. The leader of this group was a 27 years old African, Richard Allen (White, 1965:5).

The Birth of the AME Church extended the arena for black political participation in the USA. This church was founded in protest to a hostile and oppressive environment (Hill, 2002:38). The first AME Church General Conference took place in April 1816 in Philadelphia. There were 16 Delegates to this general conference which adopted the first discipline of the AME Church and Richard Allen was elected and consecrated its first bishop (Mbulawa, 1998:33).

Richard Allen, the first Bishop of the AME Church accepted a call to preach in 1782, and he was ordained an Elder in 1799 (Allen, 1960:6). The AME Church had to take care of itself, had to develop its legislations, be able to take care of its members politically and economically. These are areas in which they were not used to provide leadership or socialized to can serve. The initial context of the AME Church encouraged it to have a ministry that was holistic in thrust. This led to the AME Church developing and adopting the following mission and purpose:

“to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ’s liberating gospel through word and deed” (A.M.E. Church, 2012:15).

The AME Church, because of its history and in order to live out its mission, established a number of educational institutions such as Universities, Theological Seminaries, and Colleges and Schools for example the Wilberforce Community College and RR Wright Theological seminary in Evaton (AME Church, 2012: 614-616).

The Book of Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church accordingly instruct that in every level of the connection and at every local church the AME Church must engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society. That is to seek out and save the lost, serve the needy through a continuing program of:

Preaching the gospel,

Feeding the hungry,

Clothing the naked,

Housing the homeless,

Cheering the fallen,

Providing jobs for the jobless,

Administering to the needs of those in prison, hospitals, nursing homes, asylums and mental institutions, senior citizens homes, caring for the sick, the shut-in, the mental and social disturbed, and

Encouraging thrift and economic advancement (AME Church, 2012: 13).

According to Frazier, in Gregg, in 1816, the AME Church engaged in missionary work and established a number of churches around the globe and there was a significant growth in membership (Gregg, 1980:45). Every Christian institution of the AME Church is charged with the responsibility of caring for the sick, the aged, the homeless, and otherwise needy. The church operates the Douglas Hospital and Primrose Senior Citizens Home in Kansas City (White, 1965:53). The spirit of the original Free African Society will be discussed in detail below.

### **3.2.2 The Spirit Of The Original Free African Society**

Richard Allen and Absalom Jones were involved in an effort to form a religious society for African-Americans in 1787. This society was the first independent group in America with the purpose of doing away with slavery and helping other black people. Due to lack of unanimity of religious sentiments, they ended up forming a society to provide support in sickness, and to benefit the widows and fatherless children. This society was organized in a private house on the 12 April 1787 and was called “The Free African Society”; it was without religious affiliation but with a strong sense of morality, neither drunkards nor disorderly persons were admitted as a member. Aid from the Society could only be received out of necessity which is brought on them by their imprudence (Morgan, 1794:1).

The name „Free African Society“ was changed in 1796 to „African Friendly Society“. Richard Allen realized that the organization of a church was not central to the purpose of the African Friendly Society (Williams, 2010:61-63). He convinced some members of the Free African Society to form a church. This led to him being expelled from the society. In 1789 Richard Allen split from the group along with those who preferred Methodist practices and formed their own congregation in an old blacksmith’s shop they rented until they raised funds to build their own church (William, 2010, 63-64). This church was called the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. In 1874 the first AME Church was dedicated and named Bethel AME Church, in Philadelphia (Wright, 1963:57).

### **3.2.3 Relevant AME Church Doctrine And Beliefs**

The AME Church beliefs are found in the AME Church Book of Doctrine and Discipline (AME Church, 2012:13). The doctrine and beliefs of the AME Church found its footing on the theological conviction held by Charles and John Wesley as well as John Wesley’s biblical and theological beliefs. These theological convictions were learned through the hymns written by Charles, and through the messages and lessons by John Wesley as they developed the Methodist Movement (Harper, 1983:20). Richard Allen realized that the structure of Methodism, rules and regulations, and approach to Christian education was necessary for the AME church (White, 1965:22).

The AME Church was established on account of unchristian practices which limited and dehumanized people of African descent. The two creeds that form the basis of what the

AME Church believes are the Apostles' Creed and the twenty five Articles of Religion (White, 1965:55) Each word in the name of the church has a meaning.

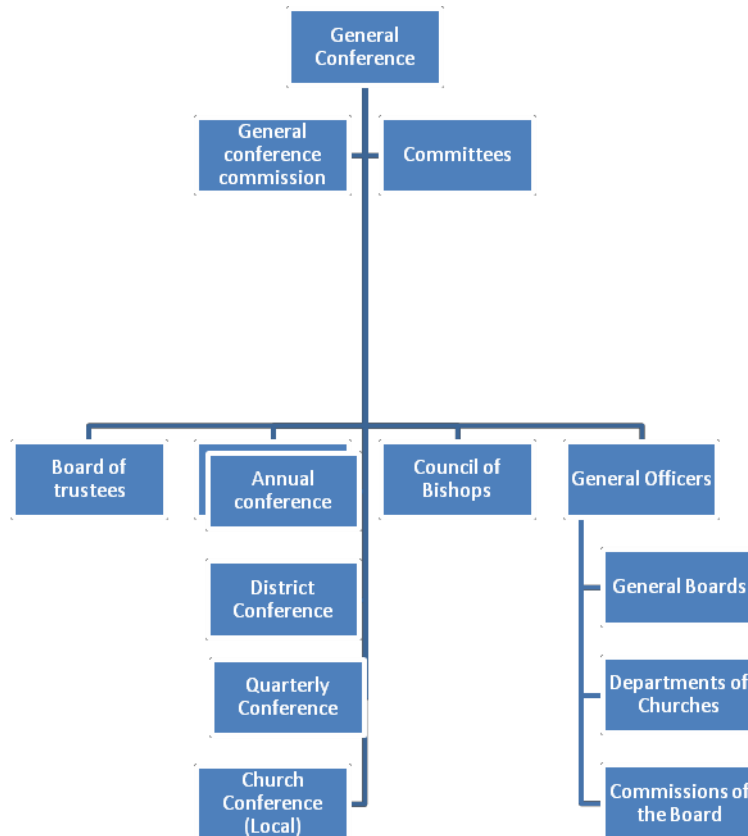
„**African**“ means that it was organized by people of African descent and heritage. These members were once slaves imported from Africa (White, 1965:21). These members moved out of the white church to form one that was predominantly African. Their decision led to some decline in membership in the white church they left behind and increased the membership of black churches.

„**Methodist**“ means that the church is a member of the family of Methodist Churches. Richard Allen felt that no religious group or denomination would suit the capacity of his people as well as did Methodism. He was impressed by its emphasis on plain and simple preaching of the gospel, its ordinary system of rules and regulations (White, 1965:22).

„**Episcopal**“ in the church name refers to the form of government under which the church operates. This form of government means that the chief executive and administrative officers of the denomination are the Bishops. Their authority is given to them by the General Conference (White, 1965:22-23).

The word “**Church**” in the AME Church refers to a community of people who believe in God and who have accepted Jesus Christ as the guide and master of their lives; it also refers to a congregation of faithful men and women in which the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are duly administered (Henderson, 1991:55).

The AME Church uses an Episcopal form of governance, see structure below. The AME Church has a polity known as conventionalism. As a connectional body each local church maintains its own identity, though subjected to central government. No local church is an entity on its own, but rather connected at various levels to other units of the national body (Hill, 2002:38-39) .It consists of 21 Episcopal District forming the denomination (Champion, 2004:6). Second Bethel AME Church as a branch of the main church in the 19<sup>th</sup> Episcopal district and was formed under the same doctrine and beliefs.



The Present Structure of the AME Church (AME Church, 2012:116)

The Local Churches are the cornerstones of The A.M.E. Church Connection. The Pastor is ordained and appointed by the Bishop to a Local Church. Pastors are to preach/teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ from both the Old and New Testaments and continue in Kingdom Building. Pastors are to also pursue education and be trained in administration. They are chairpersons of all boards of the local church; they are assessed quarterly by the quarterly conference chaired by the Presiding Elder who is also the chairperson of the district conference sitting once a year and the pastors are accountable to the annual conference chaired by the Bishop for all activities of the local church (White, 1965:61).

The local church of the AME Church is composed of very closely organized individual parts of the church which are tied together in a way that provides for unified and co-ordinated action (White, 1965:27). It consists of Clergy, the Constituent Boards, Workers, Organizations and Auxiliaries. These organizations have different activities in the church (AME Church, 2012:61-74). These auxiliaries have a role to keep members active in the local church. Each auxiliary in the AME Church has a different role. According to chapter

one, the leaders of auxiliaries are participants in the study, the empirical study will have to indicate how effective these auxiliaries are towards curbing membership decline.

### **3.2.3.1 Conferences:**

#### **3.2.3.1.1 Quarterly Conferences**

Quarterly Conferences meet four times a year. This Conference is unique in that it is a local barometer reflecting the conditions existing in the local church. Members of this conference, which meets every three months, consist of traveling ministers, Local Elders, Deacons, Preachers, Exhorters, Class Leaders, Trustees, Stewards, Stewardess, Deaconess, all Missionary Departments, Superintendents of Church School, presidents of clubs/auxiliaries, Secretary and Treasurer of Christian Endeavour. All General Officers and ministers are amenable to the Quarterly Conference within whose bounds they reside. The Presiding Elder is the chairperson of the quarterly conference and s/he appoints the time and place of the Quarterly Conference. The Quarterly Conference is quite important as it is a law making body. Its duties amongst the others includes:

Examining the officers of our fellowship,

Granting or withholding approval of the character of the members of the Quarterly Conference,

Examination of Exhorters and Local Preachers, renew or revoke license and makes recommendation to the District Conference,

Recommendation of suitable candidates to the Annual Conference for ordination,

Hearing appeals and determining appropriate redress.

Election of delegates to the Annual and District Conferences (AME Church, 2008:205-207)

The empirical studies will demonstrate how effective these officers are in curbing membership decline.

#### **3.2.3.1.2 Local Church Conference**

The church conference meets when called by the Pastor. Whenever there is any business to be attended to by the local Church not otherwise vested in the Steward's Board meeting, Board of Trustees, Leaders Meeting or Quarterly Conference, the members in Full Connection shall be called together in a Member's Conference to consider the matter. The Pastor in charge shall have the sole right to make the call for and preside over the Church

Conference (AME Church, 2012:218). The agenda of a member's conference may include the following:

Organizational Plans

Development Plans (update Budget)

Expansion Plans

Other Ideas, Plans, Discussions that shall promote the general good of the fellowship (AME Church, 2012:218).

The local church of the AME Church is a most important unit in the connectional set-up, when any of the unit fails; it affects the connectional church that is why the connectional church decided to develop the above structure in order to equip the whole church. When the above structure is used optimally, it can be viewed as important resources for church growth and development (White, 1965:28). Some of the boards and organization of the local church will be discussed in order to sketch the importance of a local church structure in the AME Church. The following subsection will start by discussing the Class Leaders' Organization, the steward boards and then the trustee board.

### ***3.2.3.2 Organizations and Boards***

#### **3.2.3.2.1 The Class Leaders Organization**

The class leader's organization in the AME Church is the means by which the church shepherds and cares for its members. It is the system that enables the pastor and the congregation to remain a united family, to care, encourage and communicate throughout the church (AME Church, 2012:68-69). A class is made up of a group of church members (disciples) with one leader designated as class leader (shepherd). The pastor assigns the members to a class leader. The class leaders usually meet once a month as a group. The individual class leader is expected to meet with their members once a week to see how their souls are, by seeing class members at church, phone call, email, etc., (AME Church, 2012:68). During these meetings class leaders must introduce new members, give church notices, and have time of fellowship. The class leader has to listen to the concerns and suggestions of members. A class leader should be a member of the steward board where possible. All class leaders are sub-pastors who are urged to be concerned with the welfare of their members (AME Church, 2012:69).

The class leaders report to the pastor weekly, as well as when a need arises or circumstances dictate at various times. They have to report to the official board those who are sick, those who walk disorderly and need reproof (AME Church, 2012:69), and to keep an accurate record of class members and see to it that each member of the class is dutiful in supporting the work of the church (White, 1965:64). The class leader must care about the class members as a whole, especially their spiritual welfare. The class leader must visit the sick, the confined or those in need of spiritual care, direction or prayer. They are to be available for the class members (White, 1965:64).

Each class consists of ten to twelve members. This takes its foundation from the system used by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ had twelve disciples who he taught during His three years of ministry on earth. The class leader must possess leadership qualities suitable for a church leader (AME Church, 2012:69).

#### 3.2.3.2.2 Stewards Board

The Stewards are appointed by the Pastor and confirmed by the Quarterly Conference. The steward board is the highest office a lay person can hold in the AME Church.

A steward is considered as respectful member who abides by the AME Church doctrines, one who upholds church orders in principles and practice (Henderson, 1991:1-2). Members of the Steward board are responsible for assisting the pastor in keeping membership on a high and sound spiritual level, their major concern amongst others are to record marriages, baptisms, deaths, transfer and regularly check church records of all members (White, 1965:65).

They shall conduct a survey of membership of the church and must have addresses of all members of the church (AME Church, 2012:61),

They make an exact account of all money or other provisions collected for the support of the pastor of the mission, circuit or station (AME Church, 2012:61).

The salary of a full time minister shall be negotiated between the pastor and members of the steward board (AME 2012:62).

They shall seek the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them (AME Church, 2012:62).

They shall investigate all members on the church roll and submit its findings to the Official Board for approval (AME Church, 2012:62).

They serve three tables: the Lord's Table, the minister's table and the poor's table (Henderson, 1991:2)

They shall ensure that the church and its worshipping stations are conducted in line with doctrine and discipline of the church (Henderson, 1991:14). The Stewardship and Finance board is a sub-division of the steward board.

#### *3.2.3.2.2.1 Stewardship and Finance Board*

This Board is appointed by the Pastor, approved at the members meeting. The church treasurer and assistant treasurer are to be a part of this Board and are accountable to this Board.

This Board is to aid in raising money to meet the needs of the local church's commitments.

It handles and pays out the money upon presentation of vouchers with proper endorsement.

This Board is to keep the membership informed as to its economic assets and liabilities.

This Board is to keep membership informed as to how well or how poorly the worshippers give, thereby alerting the church to raise its level of giving to strengthen the church's total program commitment.

The qualifications of stewards are based on the bible. They are found in the following scriptures I Timothy 3:10 and Acts 6:3, I Timothy 3:12, Matthew 20:27, Titus 1:7-8. To be elected to the steward board one should have been a member in the AME Church for two years or more.

#### *3.2.3.2.3 Trustees Board*

A trustee in the AME Church is the elected recipient of the congregation's trust and shared responsibilities for the temporal concerns of the church, the "house of the Lord" (AME Church, 2012: 63). The Trustee is a woman/man over 21 years of age and in good standing in his/her local church. Trustees, except for the Pastor, shall be elected annually by the members of the Church, upon the nomination of the Pastor in charge (AME Church, 2012:63). The trustee's board members are elected by members of the church to:

Guard for the real estate of the church, churches, parsonage, schools, and any other property obtained by the local church (AME Church, 2012:64),

Make improvements upon the church property or real estate (AME Church, 2012:64), They do not have to register these on their names; the properties remain the church properties/belongings (White, 1965:66).

To qualify to be a trustee one must be at least eighteen years of age or above (White, 1965:65). To be a trustee you should have been a member in the AME Church for more than two years and at least six months in a local church (AME Church, 2012: 65). It must be a person who upholds the bible. They must report their activities to the official board meetings, quarterly conference and church conference.

The above two boards and organization, are more active in the church's day to day running. The empirical study will indicate how effective they are towards curbing membership decline. Through the above structure, the AME Church was able to develop and adopt a strategy. The next section will accordingly discuss the growth strategy adopted by the AME church through its church structures.

### **3.3 AME CHURCH GROWTH STRATEGY**

The Council of Bishops of the AME Church is leading the denomination in a process for planned growth in the 21 century. The AME Church is utilizing the five phase process to gather data on the current organizational culture. More than 90 persons began meeting in 2002. They represent all sections and structures of the whole AME Church. Two surveys were developed to give members the opportunity to voice their opinion of existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as well as giving demographical and physiological information. More than 25 000 responses garnered 13 critical issues identified as wake-up calls. The wake-up calls included declining membership, legal problems, exit of youth, young adults, men and ministries, loss of institutions, lack of programming for seminars, lack of pride, failure to follow the AME Church Doctrine and Discipline, anti-denominational sentiments and the impact of world events on lives of people (Young et al, 2008:3).

The church through its strategy in solving the declining membership resolved that:

“Each Presiding elder must focus on increasing church growth by completing a feasibility study, this feasibility study should include demographics, investigating new strategies to grow existing churches; start/plant new churches; relocate/develop; evaluate existing churches and abandoned properties; make appropriate recommendations to the annual conference. The annual conference provides the thrust and resources. Create a marketing plan to highlight the needed changes for church growth and planting (Young et al, 2008:7).

The church must teach the need of accurate membership reporting through local churches, quarterly conferences, Presiding Elder’s district conference and the Annual Conference through workshops, seminars, and/or retreats. Accurate reporting is essential for ministry planning to meet the needs of both the church and surrounding communities (Young et al, 2008:9).

The collaborating department creates new educational tools and shared learning experiences that develop a new cadre of trained lay persons and a new Evangelistic thrust. They should develop marketing plan to include the bulleting inserts and digital presentations that highlight new material and teaching tool (Young et al, 2008:10).

Develop a new paradigm that expands the role of the lay persons in doing ministry in an Education Department to develop and enhancing church growth. Reinforce and sustain the change in thinking and behavior through role plays, workshops, seminars, Annual Conferences Institutes, and studying biblical models of clergy and lay ministries (Young et al, 2008:12).

The Christian Education Department to develop tools of inspiration and instruction that includes but not limited to audio and visual presentations, and/or publications that address the history and heritage, doctrine and discipline of the African Methodism. The material that will be developed by aforementioned departments should also feature successful models of AME Churches who have met the challenge of developing contemporary worship setting ministry”. The above strategy is intended to enhance membership growth. The next section will discuss the ministries, powers and politics of the AME Church.

### **3.4 MINISTRIES, POWER AND POLITICS IN THE AME CHURCH**

This sub section will discuss the power, politics and ministries of the AME Church.

#### **3.4.1 Ministries in the AME Church.**

##### ***3.4.1.1 Ministerial Orders***

The AME Church follows the ordination procedure as outlined from the former Methodist Episcopal Church in the sense that it recognizes two orders of ministry. There is the order of deacon authorized to preside over the sacrament of baptism and to assist the ordained elder in the distribution and administration of the Lord's Supper. A deacon is not allowed to concentrate the elements of the Lord's Supper. A deacon has to preside at the rites of the church in the absence of an elder (AME, 2012:89).

The second order is that of an elder. This order gives a minister the responsibility to administer both sacraments and to function as a leader within the church. In the ordained clergy, there is the itinerant deacon and the itinerant elder. The itinerant elder and itinerant deacon in the AME Church is known as professional clergy (AME Church, 2012:90). They respond to their ordination vows that they will follow the church and go where ever they are sent to address the needs of the church and assignment by their Bishop (Hill, 2002:43)

The AME Church also has the local orders of a deacon and elder. The AME Church decided that these persons, based on a number of reasons, have their ministry confined within their local churches only. These ministers are called upon to lead in worship and to function in the absence of itinerant deacon or elders Church, 2012:91). They are not permitted to exercise their ministry outside their local church for which they were ordained (Hill, 2002: 44).

The AME Church has these ministries to ensure that if local churches are to prosper and grow, the church must attract and retain ministerial candidates whose experience and background are best suited for the ministry work (Wilson, 1988:17). There are specific requirements to move from one level to the other (Wilson, 1988:37-44). The candidate for ministerial orders must not be older than 60 years (AME Church, 2012:84). There is also a

ministry specifically looking after female ministers' interest and development. This ministry is called Women in Ministry. This ministry will be discussed further in the next sub-section.

### ***3.4.1.2 Women in Ministry***

This section traces the changing status of women in the AME Church as it also may have a bearing or consequences for the decline in the church membership. In the century that saw women's rights movement culminating in a Women's Suffrage Amendment being added to the US Constitution, the AME Church women actively sought wider opportunities for leadership and service. Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Evangelist Jarena Lee undertook an indefatigable and eloquent traveling ministry which was successful and fruitful. She won the support of Bishop Richard Allen for her ministry, even after Bishop Allen's death, Lee's work was well known. With all her hard work and support from Bishops, Lee was however never ordained as deacon or elder of the church (Pinn & Angell, 2000:267).

The AME Church like many black churches, sought consistently to place substance behind the principle that everyone is somebody. Therefore the 1862 General Conference of the AME Church approved the establishment of a board of stewardesses to be filled by women in the local churches to complement the already existing male stewards. Some women within the AME Church challenged the exclusion of females from the pastorate and ordained ministry more directly than Lee (Pinn & Angell, 2000:267-268).

Sarah Ann Huges was aspiring to be an ordained minister in the AME Church in 1882. For more than two years she served very well so that some pastors in 1884, before the General Conference, discussed the objection of the Bishop's council to prohibit women from becoming pastors. Despite this objection, Huges was ordained in 1885 as a deacon. This ordination was appealed during the 1888 General Conference, the appeal was successful (Pinn & Angell, 2000:268). Around 1895, in the AME Zion Church the same issue came up with different results where Mary J Small and Julia A J Foote were both ordained deacon and latter elders. Opponents of women's ordination were unable to overturn their ordination. (Pinn & Angell, 2000:268).

The AME Church has a lot of literature where females were ordained deacons and elders in the sixty years after the General Conference decision prohibiting women from being ordained. Despite the removal of Sarah Huges's name on the list of ministers, a number of AME Church women continued to preach, evangelize, and defend women in ministry (Pinn & Angell, 2000:297). With time the General Conference decision was enforced and no women were ordained in the AME Church, they would be deaconesses which was an office designed by male church authorities as a non-ordained office for women. Some were licensed as preachers like Mary B Cooper, but never ordained (Pinn & Angell, 2000:297).

In 1948, the General Conference resolved to ordain female ministers as deacons and elders. Rebecca M Glover appears to be the first woman ordained under this resolution (Collier-Thomas, 1998:35). This was not without struggle. Even today males and female ministers are not treated the same. According to McKenzie (1996:85):

“Clergy women’s indiscretions brand them, event taint their reputations, for a long time; they may become a hole from which it is difficult to climb out. The gossip about the same slips in judgment seems juicier and travel farther when a male leader is involved”.

Most congregations tolerate male ministers who cannot keep their hands to themselves or one who is little free with women other than their wife. The same congregations do not tolerate a female minister who cannot keep her hands on herself and a little free with men (McKenzie, 1996:85).

There are a number of things which congregations observe of when it comes to female ministers and don’t care when it comes to male ministers. In the interview Bishop McKenzie held with female leaders mostly ministers, the general consensus was:

“If a clergywoman is too good looking, she is regarded suspicious by other women and men. If she is committed to her ministry, then she must be unhappy at home. If she balances her work and home life, then she is neglecting her call. If she looks glamorous, then she is looking for extra male companionship. If she does not look at all glamorous, then she has no self-pride. If she dresses too well or live too high on hog, the she must be stealing. If she does not live well enough, she is an embarrassment to God and the church. If she is single, then she must be scouting the congregation for a husband. If she is a married woman, she must either be playing the field or not taking care of her husband or children properly” (McKenzie, 1996:85).

In response to the above, the AME church has an organization called Women in Ministry with the mission to enhance, support and expand the presence of women in ministry in the AME Church (AME Church, 2012:444). Women in Ministry have to meet the following objectives:

To recognize and support Women in Ministry as an integral part of the AME Church.

To address the consciousness of the AME Church on women's issues

To address issues of opportunities for Women in Ministry in the AME Church

To address issues of sexism in the AME Church

To support women in pastoral ministry

To encourage academic training for ministry

To sponsor a Connectional conference at least once during each quadrennial

To support and provide assistance and outreach to women in ministry in the fourteenth through twenty first Episcopal Districts

To compile a complete and accurate record of all women in ministry in the AME Church

To affirm specialized ministries, for example: Chaplaincy, writing, teaching, counseling, research, prison, youth, geriatric, single, street, health care, family/life relations, music, homeless, HIV/AIDS and religious education ministries (AME Church, 2012:444).

This sub-section assists to explain the link between emancipation of women and decline in the church membership. The next sub-section will look at the power and politics in the AME church and church growth.

### **3.4.2 Power and Politics in the AME Church**

The AME Church views the General Conference as the fundamental political unit of the church's structure. From the beginning, the AME Church ministers and church members worked tirelessly ensuring the protection of human rights (Pinn & Angell, 200:1). In 1822, when it was discovered that Denmark Vesly, the African American Methodist lay person instigated the conspiracy against the slave holders of Charleston, the AME Church was closed. Vesley and other alleged conspirators were executed, and the resident pastor, Rev. Morris Brown was forced to run away from Charleston. Rev. Morris Brown became the second elected and consecrated bishop of the AME Church in 1828. The AME Church could not return to Charleston until 1865, though established in other areas such as Baltimore, Louisville, New Lands, Saint Lois and Washington DC (Hill, 2002:38).

The AME Church's protests against slavery were very visible and led by the General Conference in 1856. During this conference an avowedly abolitionist solution was rejected in favor of a milder anti-slavery resolution. The AME Church members also opposed vigorously the racial discrimination and bigotry that pervaded all of the states. This church continued to criticize segregation on street cars and other public accommodations. Bishop Benjamin Arnett described the purpose of the AME church as to "assist in bringing the world to the foot of the cross of Christ, and the special contribution was to assist in relieving the African race from physical, mental and moral bondage" (George, 1997:12).

The AME Church's involvement in politics was approved by Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne who later turned against this movement (Pinn & Angell, 200:8). The AME Church participated in the abolition of racism in America by passing resolutions and communicating them to the authorities, e.g. resolution on civil rights at the 1860 General Conference (Mbulawa, 1998:42). When the black participation in important institutions of society was restricted by law and custom, the AME church provided its members with some limited avenue of taking part in politics by affording them the opportunity to elect their own officers and Bishops. Blacks were not allowed to participate in the body politics of America, but the church was affording them political skills that later translated into the secular realm (Hill, 2002:37).

The AME Church members rejoiced in 1865 when the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment brought about the abolishing of slavery and the sought after jubilee; but they remained concerned with the difficult problem about how to protect the human rights of the newly freed slaves. At the 1860 General Conference, the AME Church participated in the abolition of racism in America by passing resolutions and communicating them to the authorities, e.g. the resolution on Civil rights at the 1860 General Conference (Mbulawa, 1998:42).

In 1867, the Reconstruction Act was passed, this Act allowed the blacks to vote. The AME Church was working hard in mobilizing the Republican Party to provide African Americans with a viable political option; the clergy assisted in writing the new state constitution for southern states and ran for office under the new constitution (Pinn & Angell, 200:2). Bishop Turner was once a member of the legislature. In the legislature he would always speak

against racism and when blacks were removed from the legislature he made a harsh statement which read:

“But Sir, never in all history of the great nation of this world-never before – has a man been arraigned, charged, with an offence committed by the God of Heavens Himself. Cases may be found where men have been deprived of their rights for crimes and misdemeanors; but it has remained for the state of Georgia, in the very heart of the nineteenth century, to call a man before the bar, and there charge him with an act for which he is no more responsible than for the head which he carries upon his shoulders. The Anglo-Saxon race, sir, is as a most surprising one. No man has ever been deceived in that race than I have been for the last three weeks..... This is a question which will not die today ... Am I a man? If I claim the rights of a man because I .... Because God saw fit to make some red, and some white, and some black, and some brown, we are to sit here in judgment upon what God has been fit to do?... Never so help me, God shall I be a political slave.... Shall stand and plead the cause of my race until God, in His providence, shall see proper to take me here. I trust that He will give me strength to stand, and power to accomplish the simple justice that I seek for them... You may expel us, by your votes, today, but, while you do it, remember that there is a just God in heaven whose All-seeing Eye beholds alike the acts of the oppressor and the oppressed, and who, despise the machinations of the wicked, never fails to vindicate the cause of justice, and the sanctity of His own handiwork” (Turner, 1971:14- 15).

The above section shows that the AME is a missional church. It has resourceful and influential people who can represent the less represented well. The more a church become missional for Christ, the more the members of the local church will grow and become effective while continuing to develop a holistic ministry for Christ. The following section will provide more information about the growing AME Church in South Africa.

### **3.5 THE AME CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA**

This section of the chapter is about the growth of the AME Church into South Africa. This will start by presenting the amalgamation of the AME Church and the Ethiopian church into one AME Church.

### 3.5.1 Amalgamation Of The AME Church And The Ethiopian Church.

The AME Church identified foreign mission as a tool for church growth. In 1820 Minister Daniel Coker left for West Africa and spent the last days of his life evangelizing in Liberia and Sierra Leon, With time other ministers were sent to evangelize in Port au Prince, Haiti, a renewed missionary effort took place in the 1880's and 1890's under the leadership of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner (Pinn & Angell, 200:195).

In the years 1891 to 1892, the AME Church had entered its sixth period of church expansion (Campbell, 1989:68). Incidentally the Ethiopian Church, the for-runner of the AME Church in Southern Africa was founded in Pretoria by Rev. Maake Mangena Mokone, who was until 1892 a minister of the Wesleyan Church. He was not happy with discriminations of Africans (blacks) in the Wesleyan Church by whites; and he decided on the 20 November 1892 to pull out of the Wesleyan Church and organized the Ethiopian Church in Pretoria (Campbell, 1989:105-106).

The number of followers who moved out with him was twenty including local preachers (Mkhwanazi, 1996:5). He became pastor and founder. Its first nine members were Reuben Dlamini, Jantjie Thompson, Joshua Mphela, Job Malembe, Gana Hlatswayo, Ginger Mahlatsi, Abram Mokone and James Henry Mazibuko. Their secession received wide publicity in the European press which coined it the Ethiopian Movement (Thantsi, 1970:4).

In 1895 Rev. Mokone was joined by Rev. MG Gabashane, Rev. JG Xaba, PS Kuze, JZ Thantsi, James Dwane, Abraham Mngqibisi and Samson Mtintso who were outstanding ministers and teachers. While this movement was making progress as most people were leaving the white church to the black church, Bishop Turner of the AME Church was assigned to Sierra Leon and Liberian Conference in 1891, at the same time a group of singers from South Africa went overseas to sing before Queen Victoria and European crowds in England and across America (Thantsi: 1970:4-5).

While in America, the group disbanded, some of its members entered the learning institutions like Wilberforce and Lincoln Universities for courses leading to BA. B.D. and BSC. Charlotte Manye was one of those who took the opportunity and entered Wilberforce

University, an AME Church institution. She became the first South African woman to hold a BSC degree. While she was in the USA, she was impressed by the AME Church and its education work. She wrote to Rev. Mokone about it and sent him a copy of the discipline of the AME Church (Thantsi, 1970:5).

At the Ethiopian Church's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the 17 March 1896, the correspondence from Charlotte Manye was considered and the discipline carefully perused, and the conference decided to join hands with the AME Church. Rev. James Dwane was elected to attend the General Conference in Philadelphia, in May 1896 to present the Ethiopian church's resolution to join the AME Church (Thantsi, 1970:5).

The General Conference of 1896, after communication with the leadership of the Ethiopian Church in South Africa welcomed into the denomination the Ethiopian Independent Church of South Africa. The South African Church was to be the largest of the AME Church's foreign branches (Pinn & Angell, 2000:196).

Rev. James Dwane left South Africa on the 05 May 1896 and arrived on 10 June 1896, just after the General Conference had adjourned. He however met Rev. HB Parks, the secretary of the commission, and Rev. JS Flipper at Bishop Turner's house in Atlanta, Georgia. The Council of Bishops and Missionary Board of the AME Church had already accepted the proposition for the merger; Rev. Dwane was appointed General Superintendent (Thantsi, 1970:6).

He returned to South Africa on 22 September 1896 as one who had been re-obligated by the authorities of the AME Church. He was also authorized to re-obligate ministers as a prerequisite to their reception into the AME Church. By that time the Ethiopian Church had 7 elders, 13 deacons and 59 local preachers and 2 800 members (Mkhwanazi, 1996, 7). The first Annual Conference of the AME Church in South Africa convened at Lesseyton, Queenstown; on 07 April 1897 and ministers belonging to the Ethiopian church were re-obligated by Rev Dwane who had been appointed superintendent by AME authorities before he left America to return to South Africa (Mkhwanazi, 1996, 8).

In March 1898, Bishop Turner presided over the second annual conference in South Africa, Cape Town, and after the conference he met President Kruger to discuss the AME Church (Mkhwanazi, 1996:9).

To the surprise of many, on 06 October 1899, Rev. Dwane called a meeting where he advocated and led a revolt against the AME Church which records, the first membership decline of the AME Church in South Africa (Thantsi, 1970:7).

He went to re-open the Ethiopian church with the permission of the Bishop of England. His reasons for leaving the AME Church amongst others were the failure of the American Church to fulfill their promise of sending him funds for the establishment of a college and make him Bishop so that he could be the sole head of the church in South Africa (Thantsi, 1970:7).

This split caused the AME church a number of buildings and a number of members. The ministers who did not go with Dwane, established a committee to visit circuits to counter the message that was being spread by Dwane, and most members returned to the AME Church (Thantsi, 1970:8).

### **3.5.2 The AME Church and Education**

This section will discuss the role of the AME Church in Education starting in America, then Africa with more emphasis on the role of education in the AME Church within the Wilberforce District.

#### ***3.5.2.1 The AME Church and education in America***

Early in the History of Africans in North America, it was understood that miss-education was necessary from a perspective of slave owners in order to ensure a docile and obedient workforce. This included religious notions of God's condoning the slave trade through a highly selective reading of scriptures. The denial of reading and writing to slaves was a mechanism used to stymie the flow of resistance. Knowledge is power; this was the reality understood by both slaves and slave owners (Pinn & Angell, 2000:72).

Based on the above, the African American tried to obtain as much education as possible in order to counter the effects of discrimination and to achieve the freedom both mentally and physically (Pinn & Angell, 2000:72). The AME Church as one of the African American Churches in which Daniel Payne came and affiliated recognized the importance of education opportunities for its members and the larger African American community. The AME Church established education as one of its ministries. The AME Church established courses in ministerial studies in 1843, and held an educational convention in 1845 while it was planning to build colleges and finance educational opportunities for young men. The AME Church joined other religious organizations in developing institutions of learning (Pinn & Angell, 2000:72-73).

There was a time when the AME Church owned twenty eight colleges and normal schools; and currently eleven institutions still survive, three in Africa, the AME University in Monrovia, Liberia, Wilberforce Community College and RR Wright theological Seminary in Evaton, South Africa, and eight in the United States. Within these institutions it is understood that the organizing principle for the entire education agenda is the Gospel of Christ. From its origin, the AME Church saw itself as training young men and women for service to the community as ministers, teachers, missionaries and other Christian workers. During the leadership of Bishop Payne, the church had resolved that ministers must receive education (Pinn & Angell, 2000:73). The following three elements of education were emphasized, Education should be: (i). Thorough, (ii). Practical and (iii). Christian (Pinn & Angell, 2000:80-82). Based on the above it is clear that since the beginning the AME Church has maintained an emphasis on education as a ministry. Even today, the AME church is in the vanguard of higher education, providing quality education opportunities for the people.

Feeding the church with committed, well trained and faithful members and clergy was critical for the AME church during the development of this new African and growing church. The church must have educated individuals to ensure sustainability of life, vitality and growth of a Christian church (Wilson, 1988:59).

### ***3.5.2.2 THE AME Church and Education in Africa***

In 1901, the AME Church purchased its first building in the Cape Colony which was a twelve class room building, and was named Bethel Institute. A triple story building was erected in 1903 to accommodate a larger school and dormitories. Due to lack of funds the school was closed in 1906 (Wright, 1948:320).

According to the 17<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District Report to the 2004 general conference in Rwanda, the AME Church was able to build the Solid Foundation Nursery School during the 2000 – 2004 quadrennial.

The AME Church operates 25 primary schools and five secondary schools in Lesotho. The introduction of free education for all in Lesotho is putting a strain on the ability of schools to operate effectively (LAC, 2006:35). The AME Church operates two primary schools in Swaziland.

There are other institutions that are community based and which are run by the AME Church in different communities in Africa like the Publishing House in Cape Town, Edith Ming Health and Wholeness Conference in Cape Town, the English learning school in Laroma, Self Help Institute in Cape Town, three orphans homes in Mbabane, the Holistic Approach to Nurturing and Developing Skills initiative, etc. (General Conference report 2008:27). The AME Church owns a huge land in Evaton within the Wilberforce District of the 19<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District. This land was used for education and employment. This will be discussed in details below.

### ***3.5.2.3 The AME Church as Education and Economic hub within the Wilberforce District***

Before the arrival of the AME Church bishops in South Africa, the Ethiopian church leaders and members were in need for institutions of leaning of their own. Bishop Turner, the first bishop to preside over South African AME Church after formalizing the connection between the Ethiopian church and the AME church provided means for the educated Africans to challenge the government regarding land issues.

In 1903, Charlotte and Marshall Maxeke started the Wilberforce Industrial School in a Sotho chiefdom of Ramogopa, in the old Transvaal, in an area that used to be part of the Limpopo province but currently in part of the Mpumalanga province. In 1905 farm 12 in Weldebeesfontein (known as Evaton) was subdivided. In 1906, the first Evaton property (1360-163) was bought by Rev. JZ Thantsi under the auspices of the AME Church for the purpose of building Lillian Derrick Institute through the AME Church donations. Charlotte Maxeke (Former Charlotte Manye, who was by then married to Rev. Maxeke) realizing the need for an educational institution in Evaton, and since the land was already available, after consultation with other graduates from Wilberforce in Ohio influenced the AME church to move the Wilberforce institute from Limpopo Province to Evaton. This was because Evaton was identified as the African Education and religious center for Africans in Transvaal (Thantsi, 1970:9).

In 1908, the construction was completed and the institution was called Wilberforce Institute with the hope that the institute will grow into a highly recognized post high school educational institution. Lack of funding and the impact of segregation and apartheid had a negative impact on the growth of the institute (Bradford, 1984: 298). This institute did not have funding to pay ministers salary, therefore ministers had to take care of their needs through whatever money they could raise from their different churches and come to teach at the institute during the week (Campbell, 1993:48). The spirit of self-help instilled to members at the institute had overflowed to the local residents and church and non-church members. This came in handy because everyone was determined to do all in their powers to keep the school functioning. Wilberforce was built by a group of local artisans who never wanted payment. These artisans also built some churches and local community centers (Thantsi, 1970:11). Even though the school belonged to the AME Church, it did not cater for AME Church members only, but it opened its doors for all persons from all over the country.

The lack of funding led to the school being closed between 1916 and 1920 when it was re-opened, and again between 1937 and 1939 because the buildings were dilapidated, (Wright, 1948:527). This did not make the school to lose hope; instead it grew from strength to strength.

Wilberforce was dedicated to promote the economic growth and give a profession to an African child. The curriculum at Wilberforce included the liberal arts, teachers training and

vocational skills. This institute was not imparting knowledge and skills only but also instilled respect and a sense of independent thinking and self determination to its products (Lulat, 2008:441). Wilberforce institute inspired Africans to crave and embrace education as the ultimate solution. It advocated for African education based on the AME Church 19<sup>th</sup> century doctrinal statements and publications stating that “education is a necessary component for black liberations (Childs, 2009). The education programs and social responsibility that took full cognizance of the community needs and life from which people came distinguished Wilberforce from other missionary schools (Lulat, 2008:442).

Rev. Thantsi under the auspice of the AME Church continued to buy stands in different freehold areas of the Transvaal for the expansion of the AME Church (Skota, 1932). Between 1936 and 1940, Bishop RR Wright Jr., M.A., D.D. PhD., founded the RR Wright School of Religion in Evaton, The work done at Wilberforce Institute and RR Wright School of Religion impressed the Education Department and the Institutions were fully recognized by the government and the staff received government grants (Thantsi, 1970:15). RR Wright like Wilberforce Institute did not cater for the children of the adherents of the AME Church only, but it was open for learners from different denominations and for those who were not attached to any denomination (Wright, 1948:526). The RR Wright School of Religion was renamed RR Wright Theological Seminary in 1996.

The only health facility that was available in Evaton was the Crogma Clinic under the auspices of the AME Church. This clinic catered for primary health care. The clinic was built during the administration of Bishop RR Wright and was completed in 1939. This clinic was built as a result of students who died on the Wilberforce campus in 1937 due to lack of doctors and nurses availability to attend to the students when a need arose. The building of the Crogma Clinic also impressed government and the staff at the clinic also received government grants (Wright, 1948:529). This clinic was abandoned with time due to lack of funds, which exposed the inability of a black person to maintain his asserts.

Within the Evaton area, the AME Church had a Post Office and a school named after Charlotte Maxeke under the administration of the Wilberforce institute. The Wilberforce Institute Post Office provided employment to some residents like Mr. Mwezi Twala who worked at the post office until 1968. Both the post office and the school were also abandoned due to lack of funding (Twala, 1994:89). Currently there is no sign of the buildings where

both the post office and Maxeke School were built. One can safely say that the buildings evaporated. A number of other pieces of land secured by the AME Church in Evaton were abandoned and dilapidated due to lack of funding.

The church grew from strength to strength, the 1940 General conference acknowledged that the AME Church in South Africa is growing numerically and spiritually; and therefore resolved to divide the fifteenth Episcopal district into two Episcopal districts namely, the fifteenth and seventeenth Episcopal District for better management. Between 1940 and 1944 there was no Bishop assigned to the South African AME Churches because of the world war. (Thantsi, 1970:17).

Bishop Bonner was appointed the Bishop between 1944 and 1948; his main achievements were the building of Bonner hall and the high school at Wilberforce Institute. This resulted in membership increase, most residents of Evaton and neighboring areas converted to the AME Church. Between 1948 and 1952, but the RR Wright School of Religion was later transferred to Adams Theological College due to lack of funds (Thantsi, 1970:20).

The 1948 – 1952 quadrennial was also affected by imposition of a ban of Negro Bishops by the South African Government. This ban cast a dark cloud over churches. Luckily, Bishop F.D. Jordan, who was elected and assigned to supervise the 15<sup>th</sup> Episcopal district was however allowed to enter the Union after representation made by the South African Church representatives, This permission was granted on condition he ensures that:

The church is self-governable in South Africa within a year and was able to consecrate a South African as a Bishop (Thantsi, 1970:20).

The church continued to grow and at the General Conference held in 1956, the First South African born Bishop, Rev. FH Gow was elected and consecrated the 74<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the AME Church. At the same general conference the eighteenth Episcopal district was created (Thantsi, 1970:20). Bishop Gow brought back the RR Wright School of Religion and AME Church students; and he also facilitated the building of Girls Hostel, Dining Hall, and Kitchen with modern equipment (Thantsi, 1970:21).

The church in South Africa continued to grow numerically and the General Conference of 1984 held at Kansas City, consecrated the second bishop from South Africa, the 102 Elected

and consecrated Bishop of the AME Church, Rt. Rev. HB Senatle and approved the creation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District (AME Church, 1984, 13).

Bishop Senatle presided over the fifteenth Episcopal District and the nineteenth Episcopal district during the 1984 - 1988 quadrennial. Ten years later, in 2004, the General Conference elected and approved the re-districting proposal of the Africa Jurisdiction Council to create the 20<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District (AME Church, 2004: 14). While in 2004, the third Bishop from South Africa, Rt Rev. WJ Messiah was elected and consecrated the 120th Bishop of the AME Church following the statisticians report on membership growth (AME Church, 2004:15).

The 2004-2008 the General Conference appointed Bishop L Davis. Bishop Davis realizing that The AME Church in Evaton was originally the hub of the economy and education for the people of Evaton and within the country deemed it necessary to identify all land secured under the auspice of the AME Church. He appointed the committee responsible for land audit. He also started rebuilding some of the buildings. The most successful projects he under took during this administration was the renovation of the Bonner hall, dedication of Cousin Senatle Centre within the Wilberforce Institute and building of the hope village on one of the open lands owned by the AME Church on the same street as Wilberforce Institute under the administration of Wilberforce Institute (Minutes, 2006:5).

### 3.5.3 Summary

It is evident from the above information that both the reason for Allen to leave the Methodist church and Mokone to leave the Wesleyan Church was the discrimination of black people in the Church of God. This movement led to the formation of the AME Church both in South Africa and in the USA. The AME Church had a liberating history with the church leading in educating its people and providing employment.

This section shows how rapid the AME Church expanded and that the rapid growth that took place was partly driven from a building of educational institutions and ownership of land point of view. Most initiatives were led by African American Bishops; there was no clear indication of when such a Bishop was to go back to the States, and there was also no clarity on who remained responsible for the church assets when such leaders left. This void in

leadership could have led to the evaporation and abandoning of other buildings. Section 3.2.3.2.3 above indicates that the trustees of the church guard for the real estate of the church, churches, parsonage, schools, and any other property obtained by the local church (AME Church, 2012:63-65), and they are also responsible for the maintenance of these assets. The remaining question is where were the church trustees when the church land was abandoned, the buildings were evaporating and asserts of the church were not taken care of.

This impacted negative on the residents because, some people lost their employment and they might have no reason to stay with the AME church. It is possible from the closing of Wilberforce that; some people had to go to higher schools of learning far away from Evaton. This can also be seen as one of the reasons that can lead to membership decline

#### **3.5.4 The AME Church and Politics in South Africa**

The arrival of the AME Church in South Africa was fortuitously propitious in that it helped the Ethiopians in moving the African masses in the direction of authentic African nationalism that is one not guided by white liberal paternalism. This does not mean that the AME Church missionaries were conservatives but unlike such black petit bourgeois leaders as Washington in the US and Dube in South Africa, they were not wholly enamored of the white person. The blacks that they were psychologically taught by whites that they were incapable of being anything worthy for themselves (Lulat, 2008:447).

The AME Church introduced the ideology of “black Consciousness” to Africans by means of their very practice of an independent black church organization (Lulat, 2008:447). The very existence of this large independent black church which is internationally recognized and is run by blacks put the lie in the whites who believe that the blacks cannot run their own affairs (Johnson, 1978:29). The AME Church was the first black organization in South Africa that looked at blacks not in terms of ethnically divided groups but as a single nation entity that is a South African entity (Lulat, 2008: 447).

The AME church work influenced and transcended linguistic and territorial boundaries and initiated an organizational pattern that united the Zulu’s, Xhosa’s and Sotho’s in a common cause (Ngubo, 1981:154). I believe that the education and activities which were taking place

at Wilberforce had the ability to lead people to changing from their home churches to join the AME Church. With the AME Church privileges evaporating, and people having to go elsewhere for their daily survival, many would also convert to the new available resourced church leading to membership decline in some AME local churches.

#### ***3.5.4.1 The AME Church and Revivals***

The AME Church has a ministry called revivals. This ministry is not only for renewing piety amongst church members, it assist in character forming. Powell (1903:585) argued that the AME Church as the most compete and influential of the churches controlled by the black people is the most appropriate agency to revive people from the dark races. According to him, the AME Church had the duty to undertake vigorously such Christian missions in order to help to uplift their darker brothers (Powell, 1903:595).

Coit (1906:306-307) agreed with Powell that the AME Church has much to offer to non-Christians in the whole world because of its history and origin. Though he differs with Powell when Powell says “the AME Church was an appropriate flexible accommodation of race feeling in the US”, Coit believed that the AME Church was pre-eminently a protest against the color-line as found in the US. Therefore for Coit, the AME Church’s mission was not solely to dark skinned people of the world, but rather to play a role in ameliorating friction which the economic and political struggles encourage between classes and races; and that it achieves this role through revivals (Coit, 1906:312).

Ridley (1919:285-286) indicated that after the staggering losses and the enormous hate that the world experienced during the world war, Christian Missions assumed a new importance. Missionaries had a responsibility to hold revivals in order to promote World peace.

This is one tool that the AME church could use to curb membership decline. The empirical study will be used to show if revivals are useful tools for curbing membership decline.

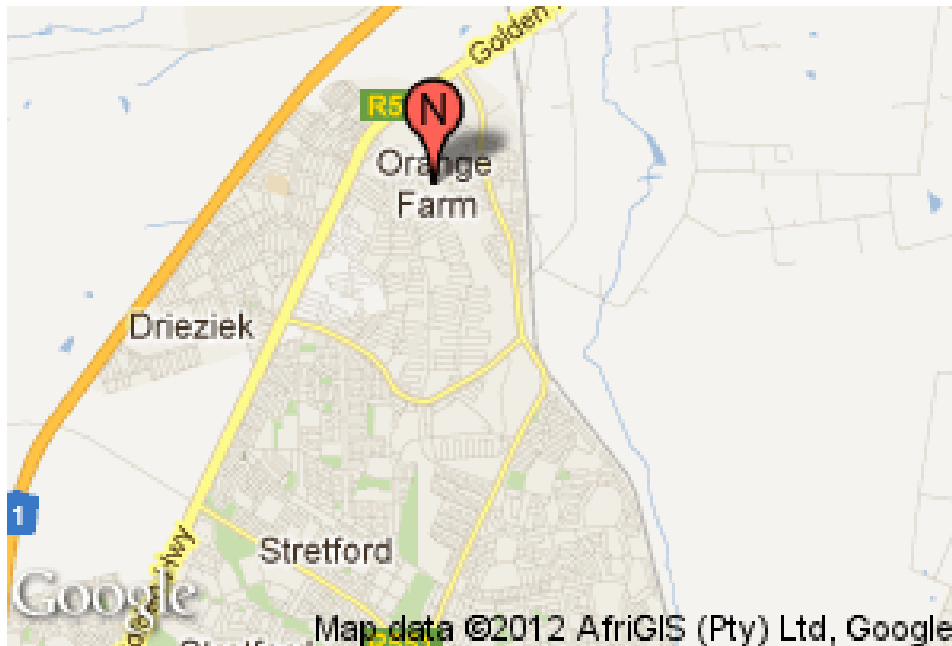
### **3.6 HISTORY OF SECOND BETHEL AME CHURCH IN ORANGE FARM**

This section will start by providing information pertaining to the history of Orange farm as an area where Second Bethel AME Church is found, and will also prove that Second Bethel is situated in a fertile soil to plant or grow a church. Secondly this section will provide history and more information pertaining to Second Bethel, this history will include the list of pastors who served the church and paint a picture of membership decline at Second Bethel AME Church.

#### **3.6.1 History of Orange Farm**

Orange Farm is located 55km to the south of Johannesburg. The farm was owned by the Wielers brothers and was called Wielers Farm and in 1988 the name was changed to Orange Farm. Some people who used to work for the Wielers brothers were the first to live in Orange Farm. The Transvaal Provincial Administration allocated land to these people in 1988. The name Orange Farm originates from the town's history. Prior to 1989, the township's date of establishment was used as a citrus farm (Statssa, 2004:205).

This was done in such a way that they can have their own land/yard. From then, many people from different neighboring townships like Evaton, Sebokeng, Soweto, Meyerton, etc. also settled in Orange Farm. The initial population in the year 1989 was three thousand, in the year 2004, the population had increased to three hundred thousand and it's continuously growing (Statssa, 2004:203-206).



Orange farm is divided into thirteen extensions; it incorporates Drieziek and Stretford which consist of six extensions. By the late 2011, 140175 stands were officially allocated to residents, but there were a number of stands occupied which were not officially allocated and the municipality is in a process of allocating these stands (IDP, 2011:55-57).

It is the biggest and most popular informal settlement in the country. According to the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council report to council (2011:6), the yards in Orange Farm are properly demarcated, neatly maintained, and the council cleans the front area and plant trees and residents take care of them. There are a lot of developments at Orange farm like the building of Chris Hani Sports Ground, Multipurpose center, Fire Department, Clinic, and most roads are tarred (IDP, 2011:59-61).

Based on the above information it is clear that Second Bethel is situated in a fertile soil. Because of the infrastructure mentioned above, it is clear that Orange Farm has a means of formal employment. It also has a potential for growth. The following section will provide the history of Second Bethel AME Church.

### 3.6.2 History of Second Bethel

The AME Church sees itself as a growing church. As much as the church started in Philadelphia in 1787 and in 1892 in Pretoria as discussed above, the church grew from strength to strength. Second Bethel AME Church is one of the churches established in South Africa. It was established in 1990, as a worship station under the wing of Trinity AME Church in Evaton, led by Presiding Elder, Rev. Simon Daniel Modise. This church is situated in Orange farm (Minutes, 1990:2).

This happened after Trinity experienced a rapid growth in membership through the people who moved from different areas to settle in Orange Farm. These people had to take two taxis traveling to the nearest AME Church (Trinity) from Orange Farm. The pastor, Rev. S.D. Modise who was also the Presiding Elder saw the opportunity for church planting. He worked together with the stewards' board members/class leaders and exhorters to get land suitable for the church (Minutes, 1990:2). With time, he realized that the church was ready to stand on its own. It operated as a worshiping station until 1996, when the East Annual Conference declared it a circuit (Minutes, 1996:47).

The first pastor appointed to serve Second Bethel AME Church by the Annual Conference was the Rev Dr. Andrew Walter Modise Makhene in the year 1996 (Minutes, 1996:56). He served the church with integrity from 1996 till 2001. The church continued to grow through membership transfer as the population continued to grow. Secondly membership continued to grow through birth during this period as the number of baptismal also grew (Minutes, 1996:56).

Rev. Dr AWM Makhene established four worshipping stations, three in Orange Farm and one in Drieziek, and also started the feeding scheme. He had a number of community projects funded by the church. He believed and understood the mission and vision of the church (Minutes, 1999:27) and all he did was in line with the spirit of the Free African Society. He created employment by buying chickens, eggs and vegetables distributing them to the unemployed to sell, during the week, every Saturday they had to come to report their sales; some would then need more while others will still have stock. He supervised these projects and ensured that members of the church do not go without food (Minutes, 1999:28). The

church was a visible missional church. The members were excited and fulfilled by this venture, and they felt like it's the responsibility of every local church to change the state of living of their members. Becoming missional is a biblical principle and practice in the life of Jesus Christ and the New Testament. The 2001 East Annual Conference transferred Rev. Makhene from Second Bethel to T.A. Mareka Memorial AME Church in Boipatong, Vanderbijlpark. When he left the membership at Second Bethel was at 197 inclusive of those worshipping stations.

The 2001 annual conference appointed Rev. Bathusang Jeremiah Motaung to pastor this charge of Second Bethel. He continued to nature the stations and the membership was growing numerically and spiritually. When he arrived in 2001, the membership at Second Bethel was at 307 members inclusive of those at worshipping station (minutes, 2001:174). He was an elder with experience and zeal. In the year 2004, the Annual conference deemed it necessary to utilize his skills and expertise somewhere else, and then the membership was at 579 inclusive of those stations (minutes, 2004:111).

Rev. BJ Motaung was succeeded by Rev. Motlotlo Ezekiel Rabotapi who only served this circuit for one year (2004-2005). He was a newly ordained itinerant deacon, and had a lot of challenges due to the size of the congregation and lack of experience. The congregation's size was too big for him, especially because he was fresh from the school. As a result the worshipping stations suffered and membership declined from 579 to 377 (Minutes, 2005:77). Since then, the annual conference appointed a new pastor to this church almost every year.

In the year 2005/6 the annual conference appointed Rev. Dumisa Leonard Lekala Mashego who also served for a year. He was a part-time pastor with a full time employment in Mpumalanga; and he therefore he would only come to church on Saturday evening and leave immediately after church on Sunday rushing to his place of employment. In the process the church lost some of its worshipping stations and has experienced a huge decrease in membership from the main circuit, membership declined from 377 to 221 (minutes 2006:88).

The 2007 Annual Conference appointed Rev. Moeletsi to the pastoral charge of Second Bethel AME church in Orange Farm. Rev. Moeletsi served Second Bethel for three months, and then passed on. (Minutes 2008:9). During the plenary meeting held at Bonner Hall in Evaton, Rev. Margaret M Khosana was appointed to the pastoral charge of Second Bethel.

She served this church until the 2008 Annual conference and by the time she left the membership had decreased to 75 and the worshiping stations were untraceable (AME, 2011a:15).

The 2008 Annual Conference appointed Rev. Reacoma Johannes Magome to the pastoral charge of Second Bethel AME Church. He tried his best to increase membership, but when compared to the size of the community, the marriages performed and baptisms performed, the church did not view the membership as growing. As compared to 2008 membership increased from 75 to 191 by the 2011 annual conference report (minutes 2011a:19).

The area's population is growing rapidly and the infrastructure in Orange Farm as indicated in section 3.5.1 above and in section on the history of Orange Farm, but the church does not show a lateral growth.

### **3.6.3 Conclusion**

The historical exposition of this study has been presented in this section. It included amongst other things how the AME Church was formed, how it was established in South Africa, its beliefs and doctrine. The section also included relevant information about the history of Second Bethel AME Church.

Developing an effective strategy for churches declining in membership like Second Bethel requires that such historical and general context circumstances that are part of the general context of the church be considered. The AME Church has a history of growing churches through missionary work, training of its pastors and lay persons, taking care of its community. It remains to be determined why in spite of this historical context and resources, a church such as Second Bethel AME Church can suffer membership decline and how it can be turned around. The next phase of this study hopes to probe this matter further and will do so also in the light of the contents of this chapter.

## CHAPTER 4



**Own Information: Chapter 4 Summary**

## **4. EMPIRICAL STUDY RELATING TO STRATEGIES TO TURN AROUND DECLINE IN LOCAL CHURCHES: A CASE OF AN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) LOCAL CHURCH**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter discussed the general historical understanding of the AME Church, its doctrine and discipline, strategy and the History of the AME Church in South Africa.

This section of the study discusses aspects of the empirical method that was used in this investigation. It describes the research method applicable to this study, the qualitative research design including the underlying research assumptions, selection of participants and the data collection technique. The chapter also tests the validity and reliability of data as well as relevant ethical consideration. It then presents responses from participants and concludes with the summary.

### **4.2 RESEARCH METHODS**

Cooper and Schindler (2006:38), define research methodology as the way data is gathered for a research project, the blue print of collecting, measuring and analyzing data to achieve the research objective. The focus in this section of the study therefore includes highlighting two types of research methods, namely the qualitative and quantitative method. The difference between the two methods will be discussed, the chosen relevant method for this study will be described and the motivation for the choice of that method is provided.

In the area of research methodology, one approaches a quantitative methodology by using a deductive form of logic, wherein theories and hypotheses are tested in a cause-and-effect order (Silverman, 2000:7). This cause-and-effect relationship is the

stated relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Concepts, variables, and hypotheses are chosen before the study begins and remain fixed throughout the study. The objective is to develop generalizations that contribute to the theory and that enable one to better predict, explain and understand some phenomenon (Silverman, 2000:7).

In a qualitative methodology, on the other hand inductive logic prevails. Arguments supporting qualitative inquiry indicate that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs; thus one must study that behavior in situations (Silverman, 2000: 8).

#### **4.2.1 A Qualitative Methodology**

The qualitative research method is used in this study. By definition, “Qualitative research is a type of research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting mainly of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyses these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.” (Creswell, 2009:4). Again, qualitative research denotes the type of inquiry in which the qualities, the characteristics or the properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation (Henning et al, 2004:5).

In view of the contents of the previous chapters of this investigation, this study proceeded on the basis of the realization that the use of a qualitative approach is considered more appropriate. In addition, Gilmore & Carson (1996) pointed out that qualitative research methods are well suited for the nature of the service industry. From a qualitative research point of view, this study therefore investigates an instance of such phenomenon in that it probes strategies for turning around churches declining in membership, a case of an AME local Church.

#### 4.2.2 Significance In Qualitative Research

The goal of qualitative research is to obtain insights into particular educational, social and family processes and practices that exist within a specific location (Connolly, 1998:123). Bogdan and Biklen (2003:6) state that one of the features of qualitative research is to define how people negotiate meaning. In an attempt to gain insights into how to turn around churches declining in membership, a case of an AME local Church, the researcher will extract meaning from the data.

In the Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, Schwandt (2001:6) defines “meaning” as a taken-for-granted assumption in qualitative inquiry that studies meaningful social action; and that therefore cannot adequately be described in purely physical terms. The intention of qualitative research according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:94) is to establish, and confirm or validate relationships and further develop generalizations that contribute to existing theories. The following section will discuss the qualitative research design for this study.

#### 4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design is a preliminary plan for conducting research (Cant et al., 2005:46). This plan guides the study to achieve the research objective, it must have the ability to save the researcher time, money and provide reliable valid results (Cant et al., 2005:46). A qualitative research design often consists of different methods of data collection ranging from questionnaires, semi-structured interview, focus group discussions and participant observation and many more. In this study the researcher will use questionnaires, interviews, focus group and participant observation only. A research design is a plan, blueprint, or guide for data collection and interpretation with the concept of exploration. Preliminary findings found that researchers should be locked into a rigid design or ultimate income when seeking new information and insights (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1985:103).

According to Maree, (2010:7), a research design is a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of

respondents, the data gathering technique to be used and the data analysis to be done. In this study, a four step research design as defined by Maree will be followed.

#### **4.3.1 Underlying Philosophical Assumptions**

All research is based on some assumptions regarding its validity and the appropriate methods to follow. When a researcher undertakes a qualitative study, they are agreeing to its underlying philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2013:15). Philosophical Assumptions are the first ideas in developing the study, how they are related to the overall process of research is something that baffles understanding and cannot be explained (Creswell, 2013:16).

The physical assumptions shape the formulation of research questions and problem and how information will be sought from participants. According to Creswell (2013:16-17), there are four philosophical assumptions namely, Ontological, Epistemological, Axiological and Methodological assumptions. These philosophical assumptions are claims by the researcher regarding the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between researcher and what may be known (epistemology), the way in which values are applied in research (axiology) and the process followed in the research(methodology) (Maree and Van der Westhuisen, 2009:19-21).

For the purpose of this research, the philosophical assumptions relevant are those relating to the underlying epistemological assumptions guiding the researcher. The epistemological assumption in a qualitative research means that the researcher get as close as possible to the subjects of the research. The researcher stays in the research field to get to know and understand the participants (Creswell, 2013:20). The epistemological assumptions are characterized by subjective evidence from participants and the researcher is not far from the research participants. In this assumption, the researcher relies on responses from participants, collaborates and spends time with respondents as participant (Creswell, 2013:21).

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the church acknowledges that there is a decline in membership and there is a need to develop strategies to curb membership decline in churches as indicated in the last paragraph. The research objectives and questions are presented to validate the assumption. The AME local church is identified as a field of research. The population of the research is identified as per the subsection below. From this it is concluded that the epistemological assumption present a subjective evidence collected by the researcher from the chosen field of research.

### **4.3.2 Selection of Respondents**

In qualitative paradigm, before collecting data, (Babbie & Mouton 2010:199) argued that two important procedures need to occur. There needs to be a sampling process before data collection. By implication, sampling is a process whereby one makes estimates or generalizations about a population based on information contained in a portion (sample) of the entire population. It is important in the qualitative analysis to define the participants.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher had the opportunity to choose participants that could yield the most information about the topic under investigation. It is the goal of this qualitative research to have a sample that is truly representative of the total population from which the sample has been selected (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1985: 175). To ensure that the sample is a true representative of the total population, of the 147 (100%) total population at the AME Local Church, as indicated in section 3.7, 60 (41 %) members were selected to participate in the study. From this we realize that the sample is above a quarter (25%) of the total population, and it therefore can be concluded that the sample was a good representation of the possible total population.

According to Kolb (2008:161), defining the participants help keeps the researcher focused on finding the right participants. The researcher can choose participants from more than one group and also decides on the proportion of each group. In line with section 3.2.3, the AME Church has boards, Auxiliaries and organizations. The sample was from these different groups. The sample consists of 60 participants

divided into three groups. The first group consists of twenty Senior Management Team members (SMT). The SMT consists of pastors, trustee board members, steward board members and class leaders organization. All six class leaders participated in the study, five of the ten steward board and five of the ten trustees board members participated in the study. The selection of participants for both the trustees and steward board was through the random selection of members. A list of members was submitted in an alphabetical order, the first in alphabetical order on the list was chosen, the next was skipped, the third selected, fourth skipped, etc. until a total of five members were selected for each board.

The second group consists of twenty members being leaders of all nine auxiliaries of the church and two lay organization leaders. This group was made of the president of each auxiliary or board and secretary of each auxiliary or board. The choice was based on the fact that the president leads the auxiliary/organization while the secretary keeps the record of activities of the auxiliary and/or organization.

The last group also consists of twenty adult church members of the particular AME local Church. These members were selected from the AME Church directory name list provided by the church secretary. This list consists of sixty seven (30%) names of members of the church not holding office in the church but willing to participate in the study. The selection was done by writing names on small, same size and shape pieces of paper folded into two equal halves, placed in a container and randomly drawn one at a time, shaking the container after every draw.

All participants met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Therefore, the researcher decided to include all 60 participants identified on AME Church directory list name list. The next sub-section will provide information on data collection technique.

### **4.3.3 Data Collection Technique**

Data collection involves a number of steps, these includes setting the boundaries for the study, collecting information through unstructured and semi-structured observations or interviews, documents, and visual materials as well as establishing the

protocols for recording information (Creswell,2009:178). This can also be done by either identifying the purposefully selected sites or individuals for the proposed study or by indicating the type or types of data to be collected (Creswell: 2009:178). In a discussion about data collection forms, one needs to be specific about the types and include arguments concerning the strengths and weakness of each type (Creswell, 2009:181). Hair et al. (2008:78), indicates that qualitative research emphasizes the use of structured questionnaires. A qualitative study with a structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection to investigate strategies for turning around churches declining in membership, a case of an AME local Church. Adams and Schvaneveldt (1985:202) define a questionnaire as a list or grouping of written questions which a respondent answers.

In investigating strategies for turning around churches declining in membership, a case of an AME local Church, self/individual administered questionnaire, group administered questionnaire and participant observer data collection tools were chosen. At this point, these three mentioned research methods/tools would be discussed in more detail as to how data was obtained during this study. Before data could be collected, the researcher developed a list of questions for the participants in line with literature review in chapter two and relevant to the AME church as per chapter three. Once developed, the researcher asked the supervisor to review and check the relevancy, as well as the clarity of the designed questionnaire.

The term questionnaire suggests as a collection of questions but an examination of a typical questionnaire will probably reveal as many statements as questions (Babbie, 2007: 141). This design is not without question. Research often focuses on determining the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude or perspective. If a brief statement regarding attitude or perspective can be expressed, the respondent can be asked to indicate the degree to which respondents agree or disagree (Babbie, 2007: 141). The following section will discuss how the questionnaire was designed.

#### *4.3.3.1 Design of Questionnaire*

To facilitate data collection the survey method was used. Towards that end, a questionnaire was developed. A lot of preparation goes into a survey. Therefore, the questions are tailored in a way that encompasses the scope and objectives of the research. For this study, the survey is designed to investigate strategies for turning around membership decline in local churches, a case of an AME local Church. The questionnaire was structured and based on an extensive literature review of international and local written material.

Most researchers found it difficult to design a reliable and suitable questionnaire to gather information from the sample population. There are a number of additional guidelines which should be followed during the construction of the questionnaire. Firstly, the questionnaire items should be clear and unambiguous. Secondly, double-barreled statements should be avoided (Dilon et al. 1993:304).

Double-barreled statement describes items which typically contain two questions, but allow for only one response which would apply to the entire statement. Based on the comprehensive review of literature, Rensis Likert has greatly formalized this procedure through the creation of the Likert scale, a format in which respondents are asked to strongly agree or strongly disagree or perhaps strongly approve and so forth (Babbie, 2007:256).

Two options may be used in the construction of a questionnaire. First option is to present what is called "open-ended" questions which require the respondent to provide his or her own answer to the question. Second option is "closed-ended" questions, in which case the respondent is asked to select an answer from among a list provided by the researcher (Babbie, 2013:249). For the focus of this study, these three options were considered for data collection because they are both relevant to the study.

#### 4.3.3.2 Administration of Questionnaire

The questionnaire may be administered in the following ways: self-administered, group administered, mailed, long, short, open-ended or closed ended style questions. The purpose for which a questionnaire is used can range from exploring-probing type research to a highly structured lab experiment (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1985:202).

Babbie referred to self-administered questionnaire as a situation in which questions are sometimes asked by the interviewer; sometimes they are written down and given to respondents for completion (2007:25). In this study, more details are provided on how the survey was conducted based on each group of participants.

##### 4.3.3.2.1 Senior Management Team (SMT)

The first population for the sample investigation is limited and analytically descriptive to those SMT (adults in senior positions) of an AME local Church. A cursory review of literature established factors that were viewed as influential upon perceptions of adults in senior positions regarding the turning around of membership decline at an AME local Church. These constituted purposeful sampling because these SMT members are key decision-makers who have vested authority and responsibilities. The informants that responded to the self/individual administered questionnaire were made up of eleven females and nine males from different boards of the church like Stewards board, Trustee Board and Class leaders" organization. The selection of members was done as per section 4.2.3.1 above.

In this qualitative research, self/individual administered questionnaire research tool/method is used. The self/individual administered questionnaire is a process where questionnaires are handed to respondents, who complete them on their own, while the researcher is available in case they experience any problems (De Vos *et al*, 2011:188). In this instance the researcher limits her/his contribution to responding to questions relating to the completion of the questionnaire to the absolute minimum. The researcher remains mainly in the background. Self-administered questionnaire can be defined as the research questions delivered by the researcher to research participants, completed by the participants without help from others.

For the purpose of this group, individuals were grouped, put in the same venue and at the same time so that the same information can be given to individuals at the same time and to facilitate the answering of questions without delays (e.g. questionnaire were distributed during the presiding elder's quarterly conference where the local pastors, all officers as well as other members of the church are expected to attend). As much as these individuals are in the same venue, they are not allowed to discuss their response or share their views. This was done in order to investigate whether membership decline is a problem at an AME local Church and what are the possible solutions that could curb membership decline.

In the researcher's opinion, conducting the self/individual administered questionnaire survey was a valuable tool for gaining insights about the membership decline at an AME local Church.

#### 4.3.3.2.2 Auxiliary Leaders Within an AME local Church

The second population of this study consists of presidents and secretary of different auxiliaries of the church (ten auxiliaries in the church). For the purpose of this group, a group administered questionnaire method was used to collect data. These twenty members are of different age groups to ensure that the sample is representative of the church. In this research, a common questionnaire was distributed to this sample by the researcher in person to the group. This group was in a venue separate from the one referred to above in 4.4.2.1. This was during the same quarterly conference.

Each member of the group was given a questionnaire to fill before the researcher could conduct a group discussion with the whole group (De Vos, 2011:189). A scribe was appointed to complete a group questionnaire while the researcher was taking notes. The same group questionnaire was distributed to all members of the group for easy reference. The scribe completed the questionnaire by capturing the views that represents the standpoint of the whole group after discussion. At the end of the discussions the completed questionnaire represents the views of all group members. This group was asked questions that could assist in curbing membership decline.

A group administered questionnaire based on the above process is a questionnaire distributed to a group of persons prepared to participate in a study, and these persons are grouped in a room or common venue, where a common questionnaire is discussed and group opinion is solicited.

#### 4.3.3.2.3 Church Members at an AME Local Church

The third population of this research consists of twenty members of the church randomly selected from a list supplied by the secretary of the church as indicated in section 4.2.3.1 above. In this research, a common questionnaire was distributed to this sample. These twenty members are of different age groups to ensure that the sample is well represented. This group was deemed essential because of the need to arrive at a better understanding on how people feel or think about membership decline and services received in an AME local Church. For the purpose of this group, a group administered questionnaire method was used to collect data.

#### 4.3.3.2.4 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and everyday set up in a particular community or situation (De Vos, 2011:330). Adams and Schvaneveldt (1985:235) implied that, as a participant observer, the researcher is located in an intimate relationship with the subjects. Participant-as-observer was the appropriate method to be followed, since it provides a way to work closely with the participants, while still gathering rich and detailed data. According to Lee, there are a number of categories of observer applicable to the researcher like "complete participant", meaning the researcher participate fully as a researcher; but on the other hand the researcher can do so as an organizational member (1999:98). From the above we can say participant observation is a research procedure or method used to study natural or daily activities of an identified field which the researcher has full participation as member without ignoring his/her role.

The researcher as a participant observer attended church services, funeral services and auxiliary meetings to observe how the church service is run, member's role and participation during funeral and how meetings are run with the intention to have their

impact on membership decline. The researcher spent twelve months worshipping and participating in the various activities of the church. During this period the whole church was observed.

While participating in all these activities, the researcher had to take precautions and be discreet to avoid interrupting the normal running of the church activities. As a participant observer, the researcher felt that she is better positioned than any external observer or researcher to understand the actual reality behind the sequence of actions that contributed to membership decline at an AME local Church. This method granted the researcher the accessibility to the utmost important information that created more understanding and expedite the development of the study.

Before the above process could take place, permission was sought from the Bishop; secondly, letters were written to all participants assuring them that responses to the questionnaire will be kept confidential and anonymous as indicated in section 4.4 above; lastly, a number of questionnaires were distributed to the above groups separately.

“Appendix C” constitutes the questionnaire distributed to the Senior Management Team of the specific AME local church. “Appendix D” constitutes the questionnaire to be responded to by the auxiliary and organization leaders, while “Appendix E” constitutes the questionnaire that was used to obtain information from the twenty randomly selected adult members of the church that voluntarily agreed to participate in this study.

In all of the above methods and categories of data collection methods, the researcher after outlining the aim of the study, encouraged the respondents to be fair and frank in their answers, and were assured of their confidentiality. The following section will discuss the validity and reliability of the study.

#### **4.3.4 Parts of Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaire is constructed into three main parts. A total of seventy three questions were asked. Each part had a different section of questions from other parts; some sections are longer than other sections while some questions are common to all three parts. These questionnaires are used to gather information. The Senior Management Team of the church responded to part one of the questionnaires consisting of 62 questions, Auxiliary leaders responded to part two of the questionnaire consisting of 47 questions, and other members at the specific AME local Church responded to part three of the questionnaire consisting of 37 questions.

Once a group completed the survey, the researcher set up and began cataloguing all survey responses. The original response documents are kept in the possession of the researcher. These were summarized into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet and graphs. Data was also collected using a participation observation as a research tool. This will be discussed below.

#### **4.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Both validity and reliability are required when research instruments are to be used. In conventional usage, validity is defined as the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under construction. In abstract terms, reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the object yield the same result each time (Babbie, 2007:143). In order to ensure validity and reliability of the data, strategies such as triangulation and feedbacks were used (Mahapa, 2003:74).

##### **4.4.1 Triangulation**

For the purpose of this study, triangulation was used. Triangulation is using two or more methods of data collection in the study of same aspects (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:195). In this study, triangulation was achieved by using literature review, self/individual administered questionnaires, and group administered questionnaires as well as the observation methods of data collection to empirically investigate the

strategy to turn around decline in local churches: a case at AME local Church (Mahapa, 2003:74).

According to Cohen et al (2011:195), triangulation is a worthwhile research strategy because each research method used in the study has its own strength and weaknesses. Therefore triangulation is used to enhance objectivity and social relevance of the study. This method gives the researcher the confidence that the findings of the study are reliable because of the end results of the study using more than one method are not conflicting. Based on this, triangulation is using more than one research method to come to the same end results.

This research takes care of ethical principles in order to protect the participants. The following section will give more information on ethical consideration.

#### **4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher has social, legal or moral requirements not to harm, deceive or force research participants. Participants should be willing and informed that information they provide will be held with outermost confidence (Roberts-Lombard, 2002:19). Based on that the following ethical aspects were adhered to:

- A detailed proposal of the study was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the North West University (Vaal Campus) for approval. Approval was granted see annexure G
- A letter requesting permission to conduct this research and hold semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations with the church leaders and members was written to the Bishop, Rt. Rev. KJM Kawimbe. *Appendix A* articulates the thrust of the discussions within that correspondence.
- *Appendix E* shows a second letter which was issued together with the questionnaire to an AME local church Leaders, Officers and Adult members.
- Participants were not subjected to any risk, loss of self-esteem or exposed to any hazard or chance of loss by participating in the study. All the participants were informed about the ethical issues applicable to the research study.

- The researcher ensured that the contents of the questionnaire responses remain anonymous

These ethical issues were addressed and accepted by participants. They were advised that their participation was voluntary and it was explicitly expressed that they can withdraw from the research any time they wish. The ethics requirements are important for the success of the study. It reduces legal battles and errors. The next section will present the responses.

#### **4.6 RESPONSES AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The preceding sub-section has discussed the parts of the questionnaire for the study taking into account the need to identify the sample, data collection methods, data collection tools, and the targeted population.

This section presents the information regarding the responses from the study participants and the data analysis. Responses means data received from research participants responding to research questions. Data analysis is the application of reasoning to understand data that was collected (Zikmund and Babin, 2010:66). Qualitative data Analysis is a process of establishing how participants make sense of a specific phenomenon by analyzing their perception, attitudes, undertaking, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences (Niewenhuise, 2007:98). This means that a process of sorting and categorizing data with the intention to come to a conclusion on the field under study was involved.

It was the purpose of this study to determine the perceptions of respondents regarding the decline in local churches, specifically for the AME local Church. In so doing, *Part I, Part II, and Part III* of the survey questionnaire was conducted using a self-administered and group administered questionnaire. The main focus of the questionnaire process is to explore and analyze more in-depth the Senior Management Team (SMT), Auxiliary Leaders and the general church members' perceptions, attitude, needs and expectations regarding the decline of the membership at their church. Responses to the questionnaire seek to determine the underlying causes of the decline in church membership as perceived by the particular congregation within the

AME church. As a result, these guiding success factors intended to prevent membership decline in the AME Church will be discussed below:

#### **4.7 SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

This is the initial section of the research instrument which served to collect demographic profile relating to issues of position, gender, age group, marital status, education and subjects attained in the educational level, years of experience in the present position and as a member at an AME local Church.

The demographic profile is general information important for classification purposes. General information included demographic information, as described by Hair *et al.*, (2000:158) and Proctor (2000:157) to constitute an essential aspect of research as it provides basic information about the respondents and their circumstances. The demographic profile or the general information about participants is analyzed question-by-question as per the questionnaire.

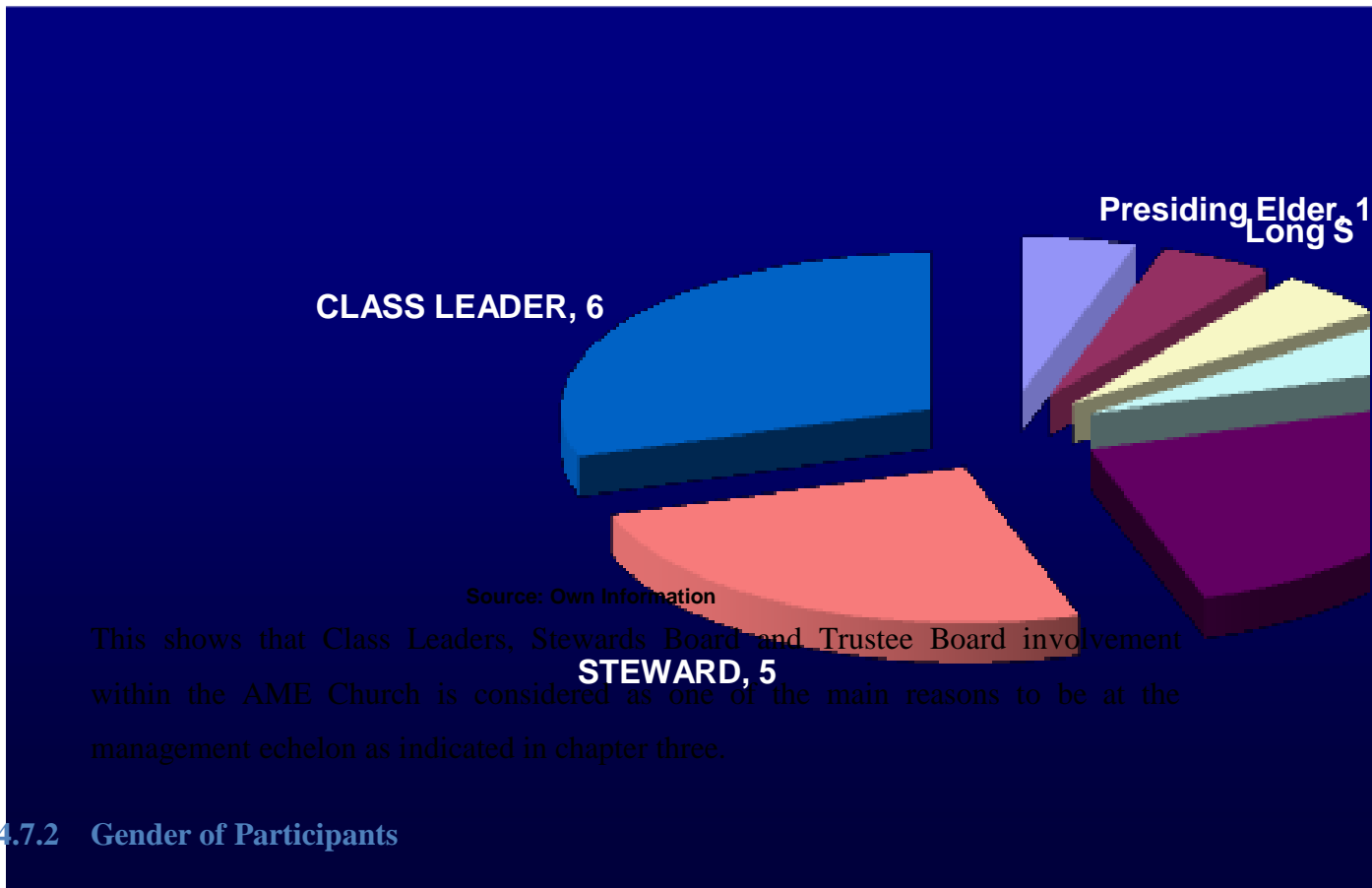
##### **4.7.1 Position**

This section determines the position of authority held by the SMT members. These positions vary from a Presiding Elder, Pastor, Class Leader, Stewards, and Trustees. The positions for the Auxiliary leaders will not be sketched because each auxiliary is represented by the president and the secretary; the third group consists of members of the church not holding any office in the church. Therefore, Figure 4.1 below focuses only on SMT members because of the role they play in the church.

The survey suggests that the vast majority of participants in this category are Class Leaders (30%), Stewards Board (25%), Trustee Board (25%), with the class leaders being the majority. The clergy account for (15%), divided into Presiding Elder (5%), Immediate Past Pastor (5%) and the Longest Serving Pastor (5%). According to chapter three, 3.2.3.2.1, the first paragraph, a class leader must be stewards where possible; therefore, the stewards are in majority in this group.

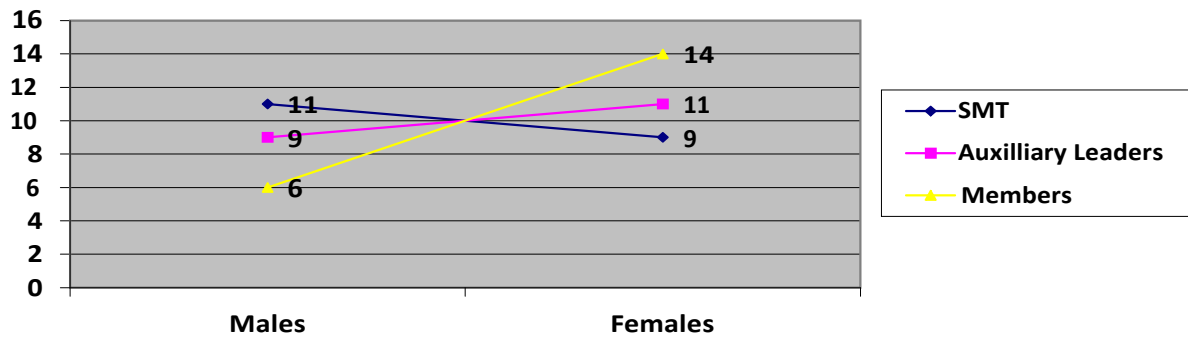
For the purpose of this study, even if a person holds more than one position in the church, s/he was only allowed to participate in one of the positions.

Figure 4.1: Positions of SMT 1



There was need to determine the gender of respondents to enable the researcher to make demographic inferences concerning the respondents. The gender question applied to all three groups; therefore Graph 4.1 depicts gender of all respondents.

Graph 4.1: Gender of Participants



Source: Own Information

#### 4.7.2.1 SMT

As per Table 4.1 above, of the 20 SMT sampled, 11 were male and 9 were female

#### 4.7.2.2 Auxiliary and organization leaders

Of the 20 Auxiliary Leaders, 11 were Female and 9 were their male counterparts. From this we also realize that in this category females are more than males.

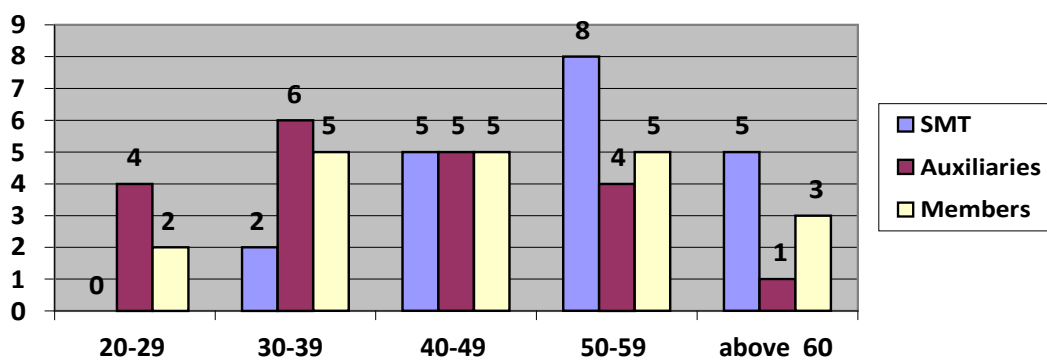
#### 4.7.2.3 Members

Of the 20 Church members surveyed, 6 were male and 14 were females within the church setting. Normally the majority of members in the church are females. In this sample, the Second Bethel AME church members are represented mostly by males. When combining all groups, the results thus suggest that there are 34 (56.7%) females and 26 (43%) males" participants in this study. Females are more involved in the AME activities as compared to their male counterparts. As indicated in section 3.2.5 females had to fight for their inclusion in the church leadership, it is unusual in the AME Church to have more females in leadership positions than male regardless of the fact that more members in the congregation are females.

### 4.7.3 Age of Participants

The age distribution of participants is important in enabling the researcher to know whether respondents are old or young (Zindiye, 2008:150). Graph 4.2 below shows the age categories of the respondents. This information was collected in order to help determine the maturity level of the respondents.

Graph 2: Age of Participants



Source: Own Information

#### 4.7.3.1 SMT

The Senior Management Team has most members between the age of 50 and 59 (40%) followed by those between 40 and 49 years and those above 60 years (25%). The Senior Management Team sample does not have a person below the age of 30. For this SMT to be legitimate, according to chapter three, 3.2.3.2, we note that for one to be a class leader, steward, and a trustee board member must be above the age of 21. It was also noted in 3.4.1, that one has to be above 18 years old to be accepted into the ministry of the AME church.

#### ***4.7.3.2 Auxiliary and organization leaders***

Most auxiliary and organization leaders are between the age of 30 and 39 (60%) with only one person (5%) above 60 years.

#### ***4.7.3.3 Members***

The majority in this sample is between the age of 30 and 59 (75%) followed by those above 60 years (15%) with those between the age of 20-29 accounting for the remaining 10%

Most of the participants in this study (SMT, Auxiliary and organization leaders as well as members) are found to be between the ages of 40 and 59 accounting to a total number of 32 (53%) participants, followed by the once aged between 30 and 39 with a total number of 13 (21%) participants while the ages below 29 equates 6 members (10%) and those above 60 accounts for 9 (15%) participants. From the responses received the majority of respondents were Adults (68%) with very few young adults meaning those below the age of forty (31%). It is good for any organization to have matured people to lead it.

### **4.7.4 Marital Status of Participants**

#### ***4.7.4.1 SMT***

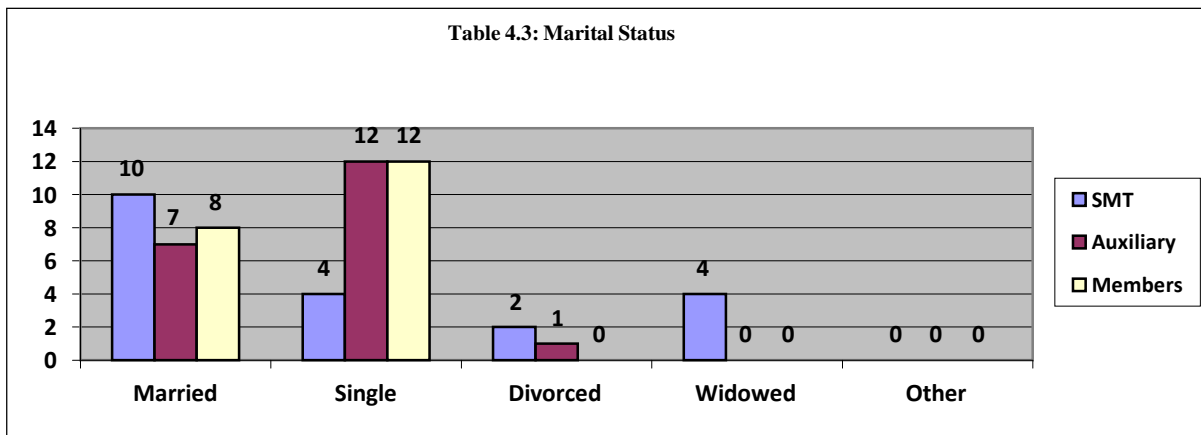
This section of the study intended to determine the marital status of the Participants. From the graph below we realize that SMT accounts for 10 (50%) married, 4 (20%) single, 4 (20%) widows and 2 (10%) divorced participants. The findings from this survey suggest that the overwhelming majority of the SMT members are married which is very important for a church setting in light of I Timothy 3:10-13 and Titus 1.

#### 4.7.4.2 Auxiliary and organization leaders

When coming to auxiliary leaders we discovered that the majority 12(60%) is not married and 7 (35%) is married while only 1 (5%) is divorced.

#### 4.7.4.3 Members

Member's component depicts that 8 (40%) of members are married while the remaining 12 (60%) is single.



Source: Own Information

### 4.7.5 Educational Level

#### 4.7.5.1 SMT

To effectively determine the caliber of the SMT it was crucial to seek information about the highest educational qualification of the respondents. The aim of collecting this data was also to determine to what extent the SMT members are capable of leading a growing church, interpret the church legislations and strategies.

Graph 4.5 below also reflects the educational level of the SMT who participated in this study. It is clear from graph 4.5 below that 25% of the SMT have primary education, 30% have secondary education and 45% have diplomas.

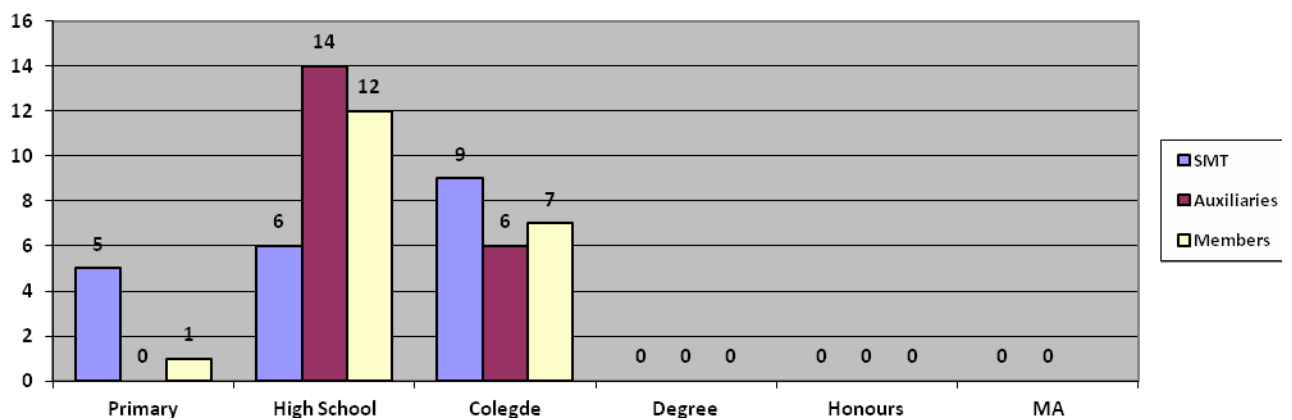
#### 4.7.5.2 Auxiliary and organization leaders

The Auxiliary and Organization leaders sample indicate that the majority 14 (70%) have high school qualification with 6 (30%) holding a College Diploma.

#### 4.7.5.3 Members

The members sample indicates that 12 (60%) have high school qualification with 7 (35%) holding a College Diploma.

Graph 4.5: Education Qualifications



Source: Own Information

The results shows that the current senior management team members are not really educated and lack sophisticated managerial skills to be considered for the church's success. As indicated in 3.5.2.3 the AME church schools in Evaton had to be closed in line with the new legislations of the land. As an observer, I came to realize that this has a direct implication on the empowerment of members of the church; and that the skills the church used to impart to its members through these institutions could not continue anymore.

For one to be ordained an elder in the AME Church s/he must at least have a Diploma in Theology. The 2014 annual conference resolved that one must have a BA in theology or equivalent to be ordained and consecrated an elder in the AME Church (Minutes, 2014:43).

#### **4.7.6 Subjects Attained**

##### **4.7.6.1 SMT**

From the educational qualifications obtained by the SMT ranging from primary, secondary, diplomas to Honors, Masters and the MBAs, this section seeks to determine whether the major subjects attained from the above qualifications are relevant to church leadership.

Graph 4.6 below depicts that 4 (20%) have a theology qualification, 1 (5%) have a finance qualification, 5 (25%) have a secondary school with biblical studies qualification and 2 (10%) have qualifications in the study direction of administration. The results show that 80% of the SMT members lack theology, finance and administrations in their educational qualifications.

The researcher notes that the lack of administration and finance qualifications can have a negative impact on the functioning of the SMT. The SMT is after all responsible for the day to day running of the church and they are tasked with most of the administrative duties of the church as indicted in 3.2.3.2. The appointment of stewards and trustees does not require a theological education but all clergy must at least possess a diploma in theology. It is very important for all members of the SMT to have some basic administration and financial skills to enable them to know the polity of the church and to apply relevant policies in performing their leadership roles.

#### 4.7.6.2 Auxiliary Leaders

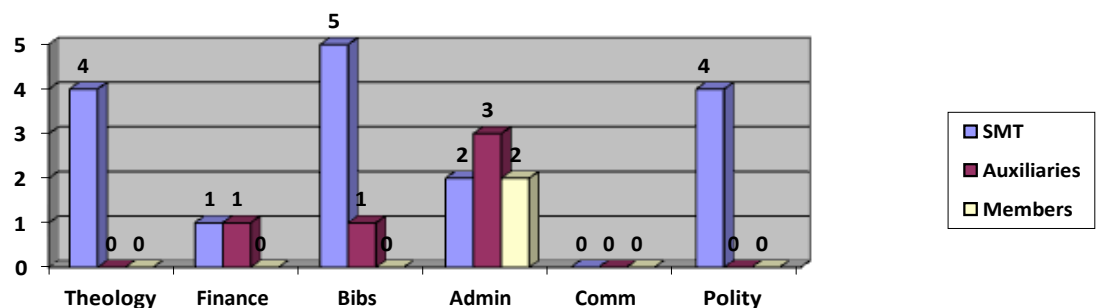
Graph 4.6 below depicts that 3 (15%) have administration as their study direction, 1 (5%) has a finance qualification, 1 (5%) has a secondary school education with biblical studies as study direction.

The high school and college certificate qualifications which the leaders of auxiliaries and organization possess should be considered as adequate education background for their roles. It is however a gap if these leaders do not also have a good knowledge of the church polity to understand the church and how it must be run as they have certain set rules when they lead church members. The auxiliary leaders at Second Bethel AME church need to be supported with many in-house church training courses to equip them further for their tasks.

#### 4.7.6.3 Members

No educational qualifications are necessary for people to become members of the church. It is however, very important for members of the church to be developed, so that they can be ready to lead the church in the near future.

Graph 4.6: Subjects Attained



Source: Own Information

This graph suggests that there is a need for the church to encourage its members to develop themselves the same way as the early AME Church leaders were interested in

the development of a black person. It was accordingly pointed out in 3.5.2.3, that there was in the AME Church a spirit of self help which overflowed to church and none church members. The church believed in empowerment of its members and surrounding community.

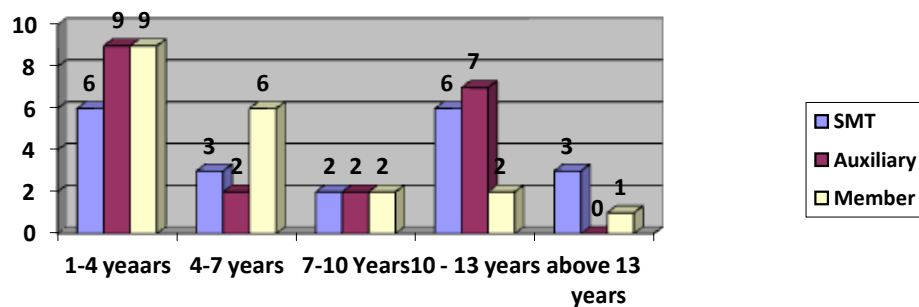
#### 4.7.7 Years Of Experience In The Present Position

Similar to the formal educational level completed, it is important to determine the years of experience of the respondents especially for those in positions. This information is important in order to determine the capacity of participants to deal with core issues of the church.

##### 4.7.7.1 SMT

Graph 4.7 below shows that 55% of SMT members reflect fewer than ten years experience, 30% showed between ten and thirteen years of experience, while only 15% have above thirteen years of experience.

Graph 4.7: Years of Experience in the Current Position



Source: Own Information

##### 4.7.7.2 Auxiliary and organization leaders

Looking at Auxiliary leaders reflect that there is no one who has been in the position for more than 13 years among the auxiliary and organization leaders, 35% of the

current auxiliary leaders had been in their current position for less than 10 years. The overwhelming majority of auxiliary leaders have been in their position for less than four years.

#### **4.7.7.3 Members**

We also realize that the majority of members who participated in this study have four or less years in the church.

The years of experience for SMT members and auxiliary leaders in the particular AME Church in current positions is quite too short. O gives an idea how closely those who were new in the church aligned with the ethos and vision of the core members“ the brighter site, one can conclude by saying, the lesser years.

The researcher was a member of this church for more than ten years before answering the call to preach. While conducting this study, the researcher noted with concern that most members who started with this church are no longer part of its membership. Some left the church every time the new pastor is assigned to the church. Some of those that left followed previous pastors to their new assignments; others just stay at home without attending any church, while others joined other denominations leading to a decline in membership at Second Bethel AME Church.

This section dealt with the demographic details of all the four groups“ respondents. The next section will deal with the descriptive analysis and findings of the study

## **4.8 SECTION B: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

This section will provide information on the responses from the senior management team and the data analysis thereof.

### **4.8.1 Senior Management Team Responses (Part I)**

Part one of this questionnaire consist of eight sections with sixty one (61) questions. Some of these questions appear in both Part II and Part III of the questionnaire. This

part of the questionnaire consists of a summary of the responses to demographic questions, responses to questions relating to leadership related questions, questions relating to weakness in preaching, Evangelism, Class Leader's System, Membership Retention, Church finances and Community Involvement.

In this part of the questionnaire, respondents are merely asked "open-ended" and "closed-ended" questions. Questions are designed in Likert scale, a format in which respondents are asked to strongly agree (SA) or strongly disagree (SD). The responses in this part are from members of the senior management team (Presiding Elder, Pastors, Class Leaders, Stewards board members and Trustees board members). The following responses were received:

The table below presents the summary of the demographic details of the SMT. The general findings from the above will be discussed in chapter five of this study.

**4.8.1.1 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR THE PRESIDING ELDER, PASTORS, STEWARDS, TRUSTEES AND CLASS LEADERS AT THE AME LOCAL CHURCH (SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM[SMT])**

<b>PART 1 SECTION I : DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS</b>							
POSITION	JOB DESCRIPTION	SEX	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	EDUCATION	MAJOR	EXPERIENCE
PE: Wilberforce	YES	M	Above 60	MARRIED	DIPLOMA	THEOLOGY/BIBS	ABOVE 13
PE: Springs	YES	M	40-49	MARRIED	DIPLOMA	THEOLOGY/BIBS	10-13
Pastor	YES	M	50-59	MARRIED	DIPLOMA	THEOLOGY/BIBS	ABOVE 13
IPP	YES	M	50-59	MARRIED	DIPLOMA	THEOLOGY/BIBS	ABOVE 13
Class Leader,	YES	F	Above 60	WIDOW	PRIMARY	NONE	10-13
Class Leader,	YES	F	40-49	SINGLE	PRIMARY	NONE	10-13
Class Leader,	YES	F	40-49	MARRIED	DIPLOMA	NONE	4-7
Class Leader,	YES	F	40-49	MARRIED	PRIMARY	NONE	4-7
Class Leader,	YES	M	Above 60	WIDOW	PRIMARY	NONE	10-13
Class Leader,	YES	F	Above 60	DIVORCED	PRIMARY	NONE	10-13
Steward Board	YES	F	30-39	SINGLE	HIGH SCHOOL	NONE	1
Steward Board	YES	M	Above 60	MARRIED	HIGH SCHOOL	NONE	1
Steward Board	YES	M	30-39	SINGLE	DIPLOMA	BIBLICAL STUDIES	1
Steward Board	YES	M	50-59	WIDOW	HIGH SCHOOL	NONE	4-7
Steward Board	YES	F	50-59	MARRIED	HIGH SCHOOL	NONE	7-10
Trustee Board	YES	F	50-59	MARRIED	DIPLOMA	FINANCE	10-13
Trustee Board	NO	M	50-59	MARRIED	HIGH SCHOOL	NONE	1-4
Trustee Board	YES	F	50-59	SINGLE	HIGH SCHOOL	ADMIN	1-4
Trustee Board	YES	M	40-49	DIVORCED	DIPLOMA	ADMIN	1-4
Trustee Board	YES	M	50-59	WIDOW	DIPLOMA	NONE	7-10

**Table 4.1**

**Source: Own Information**

#### 4.8.1.2 Leadership

This section of this study is used to measure perceptions on aspects of leadership. The main thrust of this section is to explore more in-depth the Senior Management Team’s perceptions, attitude, needs and expectations regarding factors leading to membership decline in AME Church. Part I Section 2 focuses on the overall characteristics and capacity of leadership especially the Senior Management Team. In this section, six questions were asked under this main principle. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don’t Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The results of the survey are shown in Table 4.2 below.

<b>PART 1 SECTION 2 : LEADERSHIP</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>10.</b>	The church has a structured five year strategic plan	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>11.</b>	The Clergy encourage members of the church to discover and use their God given talents	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>12.</b>	During the worship service the leaders of the church encourage biblical relevance.	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>13.</b>	Opportunity is provided for mentoring and coaching and leaders encourage member’s participation in church activities.	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>14.</b>	The church strategy is reviewed annually to be aligned with the changes in the society and the church at large.	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>15.</b>	The church leaders continue to seek the needy and distress in order to relieve and comfort them	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

**Table 4.2** **Source: Own Information**

*The responses to Question 10* suggest that 80% of respondents are of the view that the church does not have a five year strategic plan.

*The responses to Question 11 and question 12* are not conclusive

*The responses to Question 13* suggests that 40%% of respondents are of the view that the church provides opportunity for mentoring and coaching and leaders encourage member’s to participate in church activities. It must be noted that 55% of respondents are of the view that the church does not provide opportunity for mentoring and coaching and leaders do not encourage members’ participation in church activities.

*Responses to Question 14 suggest that 80% of the respondents are of the view that the church does not review its strategy annually.*

*Responses to Question 15 suggest that 75% of respondents are of the view that the church does not seek the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them.*

*The researcher observed that, during the church conference, the organizational and development plan were not discussed. The officers of the church were confirmed. After the questionnaires were collected, during the informal discussions class leaders and other stewards indicated that they were not aware it's their role to go out and seek the needy and distressed. They always thought the pastor must visit the sick and the distress and if a need arise, the pastor will ask a steward or class leader to accompany him/her.*

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### **4.8.1.3 Preaching**

This section investigates what respondents expect from the sermons. In order to determine the views of participants on preaching eight questions were used to get responses of the SMT as depicted in Table 4.3 below. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

<b>PART I SECTION 3 PREACHING</b>						
<b>N O.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
16.	Preaching takes the large part of the Sunday service	3	2	1	5	9
17.	Members draw strength from Sunday's and mid-week's preaching	5	3	1	5	6
18.	Preaching addresses current issues and relevant to the audience.	4	4	2	8	2
19.	Sermons are delivered in an language that can be understood by all	11	8	1	0	0
20.	Preaching in the church motivates members to continue coming for more sermons	4	4	4	3	5
21.	There is a need for greater member involvement in preaching	14	5	1	0	0
22.	The sermons are bible based and relevant to member's daily living.	6	3	5	6	0

**Table 4.3**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 16* suggest that 25% of respondents are of the view that preaching takes the large part of our Sunday service while the other 70% are of the view that preaching does not take a large part of the Sunday service.

*The researcher observed that preaching takes a maximum of fifteen minutes of the one hour service. Singing takes most of the worship service time. I also observed that there are interpreters in the church. Every speech or sermon is translated.*

*The responses to Question 17* suggest that 55 % of the respondents are of the view that members draw strength from the Sunday and mid week's preaching while the other 40% are of an opposing view.

*The responses to Question 18* suggest that 50% of respondents are of the view that preaching does not address the current issues and is not relevant to the audience. The other 50% of respondents are of the view that the sermons address current issues and are relevant to the audience.

*The responses to Question 19* suggest that 95% of respondents are of the view that the sermons are delivered in a language that can be understood by all in the church.

*The researcher during the period of the study saw that all sermons are interpreted.*

*The responses to Question 20* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that Preaching in the church motivates members to continue coming for more sermons; the other 40% are of the view that Preaching in the church does not motivates members to continue coming for more sermons

*The responses to Question 21* suggest that 95% of respondents are of the view that there is a need for greater member involvement in preaching.

*The responses to Question 22* suggest that 45% of respondents are of the view that the sermons are bible based and relevant to members' daily living. The other 30% are of the view that the sermons are not bible based and not relevant to members' daily living.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### 4.8.1.4 Evangelism

This section of the statements provided responses to questions enquiring about the views of participants with respect to the particular church's work to evangelize with the intention to curb membership decline. Eight questions were used to get responses from the SMT. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.4 below depicted the responses.

PART I SECTION 4 : EVANGELISM						
NO.	QUESTIONS	SA	A	DK	D	SD
23.	The church provides its members with training on evangelism	4	3	0	9	4
24.	The church provides training on spiritual gifts and how to determine them	3	2	0	8	7
25.	The church's mission statement does cater for evangelism	5	4	0	7	4
26.	The church organizes annual community evangelism related activities	2	3	0	8	7
27.	The church has an active department of evangelism	6	4	2	5	3
28.	Evangelism is important for church growth as per the bible (Matthew 28:18-20)	4	7	1	3	5
29.	The pastor lives an evangelism lifestyle	4	3	6	3	4
30.	The Church has dedicated evangelists	3	2	3	8	4

**Table 4.4**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 23* suggest that 65% of respondents are of the view that the church does not provide training on evangelism. The other 35% of respondents are of the view that training is provided on evangelism.

*The responses to question 24* responses suggest that 75% of respondents are of the view that the church does not provide training on spiritual gifts and how to determine or identify them. The 25% of participants are of a view that the church provides training on spiritual gifts and how to identify them.

*The responses to question 25* suggest that 45% of respondents are of the view that the mission statement of the church caters for evangelism. The 55% of respondents are of the view that the mission statement of the church does not cater for evangelism.

*The responses to question 26* suggest that 25% of respondents are of the view that the church does organize annual community evangelism related activities. The 75% of respondents are of a view that the church does not organize annual community evangelism related activities.

*The responses to question 27* suggest that 40% of the respondents are of the view that the church provides opportunity for mentoring and coaching and leaders encourage members' participation in church activities. The 55% of respondents are of a view that the church does not provide opportunities for mentoring and coaching and leaders do not encourage members to participate in the church activities.

*The responses to question 28* suggest that 51% of respondents are of the view that evangelism is important for church growth while 40% of respondents are of the view that evangelism is not important for church growth.

*The responses to question 29* suggest that 35% of respondents are of the view that the pastor lives an evangelism lifestyle. The other 35% of respondents are of the view that the pastor does not live an evangelism lifestyle.

*During observation, training on evangelism or on spiritual gifts or any other training did not take place. I also observed that the pastor evangelize while on the pulpit during the sermon time. After the pronouncement of the benediction, the pastor leave church for home and the members will see the pastor the next Sunday.*

*The responses to question 30* suggest that 60% of respondents are of the view that the church does not have dedicated evangelists while 25% are of the view that the church has dedicated evangelists. The other 15% did not give their views

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### ***4.8.1.5 Class Leader's System***

This section of enquiry is about the Class Leader System in the particular local church. The aim with the questions is to determine whether the class leader system has an impact on membership decline in the church. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree

(A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.5 below presents the responses from SMT.

<b>PART 1 SECTION 5: CLASS LEADER'S SYSTEM</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
31.	The class leaders receive training on membership multiplication	5	3	0	8	4
32.	The class leaders meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.	3	1	2	6	8
33.	The class leaders visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care?	3	3	1	8	5
34.	The number of classes and class leaders grow annually	1	1	0	10	8
35.	The class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings	9	4	0	5	2
36.	The church has a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class	5	0	1	5	9
37.	The class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes	1	4	8	4	3
38.	The class leaders system is important for membership growth	7	6	0	5	2
39.	During class meetings there is time for fellowship.	2	2	0	9	7

**Table 4.5**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 31* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that class leaders receive training on membership multiplication while 60% of respondents are of a view that class leaders do not receive training on membership multiplication.

*The responses to question 32* suggest that 20% of respondents are of the opinion that the class leaders meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church while 70% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders do not meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church

*The responses to question 33* suggest that 30% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care. The 65% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders do not visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care

*The responses to question 34* suggest that 10% are of the opinion that the number of classes and class leaders grow annually. The remaining 90% of respondents are of the view that the number of classes and class leaders are not growing annually.

*The responses to question 35* suggest that 65% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings while the remaining 35% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders do not attend the quarterly conference meetings

*The responses to question 36* suggest that 25% of respondents are of view that the church has a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class while 70% of respondents are of the view that the church does not have system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class

*The responses to question 37* suggest that 25% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes; the other 35% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders do not have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes and the remaining 40% of respondents did not give their opinion.

*The responses to question 38* suggest that 65% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders system is important for membership growth, while the remaining 35% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders system is not important for membership growth.

*The responses to question 39* suggest that 20% of respondents are of the view that during class meetings there is time for fellowship, while the remaining 80% of respondents are of the view that during class meetings there is no time for fellowship.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### ***4.8.1.6 Membership Retention***

This section enlists myriad activities expected to take place in the AME Church local church to ensure membership retention. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.6 below presents the responses from SMT

<b>PART 1 SECTION 6 : MEMBERSHIP RETENTION</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>40.</b>	Members of the of the church are kept on a high and sound spiritual level	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>41.</b>	Some members of our church have left for greener pastures	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>42.</b>	The church seeks the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>43.</b>	Churches in the vicinity of the AME church creates a situation for migration from the AME church	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>44.</b>	Some classes are merged due to members leaving the church	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>45.</b>	The church investigates all members on the roll	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>46.</b>	The church conducts the membership survey	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>47.</b>	The church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>

Table 4.6

Source: Own Information

*The responses to question 40* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that members of the of the church are kept on a high and sound spiritual level while 60% of respondents are of the view that members of the of the church are not kept on a high and sound spiritual level

*The responses to question 41* suggest that 65% of respondents are of the view that some members of our church have left for greener pastures while 30% of respondents are of the view that some members of our church did not leave the church for greener pastures.

*The responses to question 42* suggest that 20% of respondents are of the view that the church seeks the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them. The 80% of respondents are of the view that the church does not seek the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them.

*The responses to question 43* suggest that 55% of respondents are of the view that the churches in the vicinity of the AME church create a situation for migration from the AME church. The remaining 35% of respondents are of the view that the churches in the vicinity of the AME church do not creates a situation for migration from the AME church

*The responses to question 44* suggest that 50% of the respondents are of the view that some classes are merged due to members leaving the church, while 40% of respondents are of the view that classes are not merged due to members leaving the church

*The responses to question 45* suggest that 100% of respondents are of the view that the church does investigate all members on the roll.

*The responses to question 46* responses suggest that 100% of the respondents are of the view that the church does not conduct the membership survey

*The responses to question 47* suggest that 10% of the respondents are of the view that the church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church. The other 60% of respondents are of the view that the church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church. The remaining 30% withheld their views.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### **4.8.1.7 Church Finances**

This section investigates the impact of church financial management to membership decline

In order to determine the impact of church financial management on membership decline, seven questions were used to get responses from the SMT. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.7 below; present the summary of responses from SMT.

<b>PART 1 SECTION 7 : CHURCH FINANCES</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>48.</b>	The church make an extra account for all moneys/provisions collected for the pastor's support as per the AME Church Doctrine and Discipline.	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>49.</b>	The church stewardship and finance board provides accurate reports for every expenditure.	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>50.</b>	The church stewardship and finance board members are trained in financial management	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>51.</b>	The church financial needs are planned by the entire congregation	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>52.</b>	50% of the church members contribute their tithe monthly	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>53.</b>	There are monthly teachings on tithing in the church	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>54.</b>	Church members are encouraged to ask questions relating to church finances	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 4.7

Source: Own Information

*The responses to question 48* suggest that 30% of respondents are of the view that the church makes an extra account for all moneys/provisions collected for the pastor's support. The other 55% of respondents are of the view that the church does not make an extra account for all moneys/provisions collected for the pastor's support.

*The responses to question 49* suggest that 60% of respondents are of the view that the church stewardship and finance board provides accurate reports for every expenditure. The other 35% of respondents are of the view that the church stewardship and finance board do not provide accurate reports for every expenditure.

*The responses to question 50* suggest that 30% of respondents are of the view that the church stewardship and finance board members are trained in financial management. The 60% of responses are of the view that the church stewardship and finance board members are not trained in financial management

*The responses to question 51* suggest 65 of the respondents are of the view that the church financial needs are planned by the entire congregation. The 25% of respondents are of the view that the church financial needs are not planned by the entire congregation

*The responses to question 52* suggest that 50% of respondents are of the view that 50% of the church members contribute their tithe monthly. The other 40% of respondents are of the view that 50% of the church members do not contribute their tithe monthly

*The responses to Question 53* suggest that 80% of respondents are of the view that there are monthly teachings on tithing in the church

*The responses to question 54* suggest that 55% of respondents are of the view that the church members are encouraged to ask finance related questions. 25% of respondents are of the opinion that the church members are not encouraged to ask finance related questions, while the remaining 20% withheld their views.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### 4.8.1.8 Community Involvement

This section investigates the involvement of the church in the community. In order to determine the involvement of the church in the community, seven questions were used to get responses from the SMT. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Responses are depicted in Table 4.8 below.

<b>PART 1 SECTION 8 : COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>55.</b>	The church's membership drives reach the community	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>56.</b>	The church has a good relationship with the schools in its area	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>57.</b>	The church is taking part in community activities and projects	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>58.</b>	The church belongs to our community	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>59.</b>	The church invites the community to social activities	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>60.</b>	The church is involved in community road shows	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>61.</b>	The church is known in Orange Farm for its community based activities	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 4.8**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 55* suggest that 20% of respondents are of the view that the church membership drives reaches the community, while 70% of respondents are of the view that the church membership drives do not reach the community.

*The responses to question 56* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that the church has a good relationship with schools near the church while 55% of respondents are of the view that the church does not have a good relationship with schools near the church

*The responses to question 57* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that the church is taking part in community activities. The 50% of participants are of the view that the church is not taking part in community activities.

*The responses to question 58* suggest that 35% of the respondents are of a view that the church belongs to the community. The remaining 65% of respondents are of the view that the church does not belong to the community.

*The responses to question 59* suggest that 30% of respondents are of the view that the church is involved in community social activities. The other 60% is of the view that the church is not involved in the community social activities.

*The responses to question 60* suggest that 20% of respondents are of the view that the church is involved in road shows. 60% of respondents are of the view that the church is not involved in community road shows; the remaining 30% withheld their views.

*The responses to question 61* suggest that 45% of respondents are of the view that the church is known in Orange Farm, while 55% of the respondents are of the view that the church is not known in Orange Farm for its community based activities.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### **4.8.2 Auxiliary and Organization Leaders Responses (Part II)**

Part two of the questionnaire consists of six sections (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.). Some of these questions that were asked in part two appear in both parts one and three. This part of the survey questionnaire consist of section providing information relating to demographics of participants, Auxiliaries Ministry, Evangelism, Class Leader's System , Membership Retention, and Community Involvement which are vital and necessary for church growth at the AME local Church.

This questionnaire seeks to gather information on the opinion, feeling, attitude and perception of auxiliary and organization leaders pertaining to the level of membership decline and methods to curb such decline. It further looks at the level in which auxiliary and organization leaders feel involved and empowered in Church growth matters. The following auxiliaries and organization of the church were involved: Lay Organization, Women's Missionary Society (WMS), Young Peoples Division (YPD), Christian Education, Richard Allen Young

Adult Council (RAYAC), Sons of Allen, Church School, Charlotte Maxeke Ladies Fellowship (CMLF) and Allen Christian Evangelical League (ACE League).

A total of forty seven (47) questions are asked to respondents. In this part, respondents are merely asked "open-ended" and "closed-ended" questions. Questions are designed in Likert scale, a format in which respondents are asked to strongly agree or strongly disagree. There is a space for one to provide any comments if available.

In this part responses were solicited from Auxiliary and organization leaders (Presidents and secretaries of different auxiliaries and organization of the church). The next section provides a summary of responses received from these auxiliary and organization leaders.

Table 4.9 below; present the summary of responses received from Auxiliary and organization leaders pertaining to their demographic responses as discussed in 4.6.1 above.

#### 4.8.2.1 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR TWENTY AUXILIARY LEADERS AT AME CHURCH

PART 1 SECTION I : DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS							
POSITION	JOB DESCRIPTION	SEX	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	EDUCATION	MAJOR	EXPERIENCE
PRESIDENT	YES	F	Above 60	Married	High School	None	10-13
SECRETARY	YES	F	50-59	Divorced	High School	None	10-13
PRESIDENT	YES	F	20-29	Single	High School	None	1-4
SECRETARY	YES	M	20-29	Single	High School	None	1-4
PRESIDENT	YES	M	50-59	Married	College	None	4-7
SECRETARY	YES	F	40-49	Single	High School	Finance	1-4
PRESIDENT	YES	F	20-29	Single	High School	None	10-13
SECRETARY	YES	F	20-29	Single	College	Administration	1-4
PRESIDENT	YES	M	40-49	Single	High School	None	4-7
SECRETARY	YES	M	30-39	Single	College	None	1-4
PRESIDENT	YES	M	30-39	Married	College	None	7-10
SECRETARY	YES	F	50-59	Married	High School	None	10-13
PRESIDENT	YES	M	30-39	Single	College	Administration	1-4
SECRETARY	YES	M	40-49	Single	High School	Biblical Studies	1-4
PRESIDENT	YES	F	30-39	Single	High School	None	10-13
SECRETARY	YES	M	40-49	Married	High School	None	7-10
PRESIDENT	YES	M	30-39	Single	College	Administration	1-4
SECRETARY	YES	F	40-49	Single	High School	None	10-13
PRESIDENT	YES	M	30-39	Married	High School	None	1-4
SECRETARY	YES	M	50-59	Married	High School	None	10-13

Table 4.9

Source: Own Information

#### 4.8.2.2 Auxiliary Ministry

This section investigates the effectiveness of Auxiliary Ministry in the church. In order to determine the effectiveness of the auxiliary ministry in the church, six questions were used to get responses from the Auxiliary Leaders. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.10 represent the agreed upon views of the group as captured by the scribe after discussion.

PART 11 SECTION 2: AUXILIARY MINISTRY						
NO	QUESTIONS	SA	A	DK	D	SD
62.	The church has an ongoing training for members in auxiliaries					X
63.	The training program deals with auxiliary needs and expectations				X	
64.	It is easy for a new member to hold office in an auxiliary		X			
65.	Auxiliaries have an adopted program to recruit new members				X	
66.	All auxiliaries of the church are supported by the church leadership				X	
67.	Auxiliaries have adopted strategies to practice love moreover to new members					X

**Table 4.10**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to questions 62 and 63* suggest that the group responses are of the view that the church does not have ongoing training for members in auxiliaries.

During discussions it was indicated that most people are holding office in auxiliaries without training. Elected and appointed officers in most auxiliaries have to read from the doctrine and discipline what their roles are. Most of them do not have the doctrine and discipline document. Some learn about their duties at the District convention. No training is offered at local level.

*The researcher observed that if an auxiliary or organization has for example 14 positions/ must have 14 elected officers, during the church conference; all positions will be filled either by nomination or presentation of the slate. As long as all positions are filled, no one is questioning the capacity of the incumbent, or the nominee. When coming to auxiliaries, the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church*

*is clear in terms of the qualification one has to possess to hold office e.g. “Any candidate for the office of Recording Secretary, Assistant Recording Secretary and/or Corresponding Secretary must be literate in basic computer technology” (AME, 2012: 403)*

*The responses to question 64* suggest that the group is of the view that it is easy for new members to hold office in an auxiliary.

During discussions members indicated that some auxiliaries do not have enough members to occupy all offices as prescribed by the Doctrine and Discipline, therefore some positions remain vacant until a new member join the auxiliary. Once accepted in the auxiliary, one can fill the vacant position.

*The responses to question 65* suggest that the group is of the view that there is no program to recruit new members in auxiliaries.

During discussions, the group pointed out that they only program available is the normal church program. They have dates for local drives, district drives and the conventions. These are the only activities taking place in most auxiliaries, except that the WMS and YPD have other activities mandated by the area, conference or connectional meeting, these must be reported annually to different levels of the connectional.

*The responses to question 66* suggest that the group is of the view that they do not get support from the church leadership.

During discussions it was noted that the group believe that the church leaders does not care about what the auxiliaries and organizations are doing. The only time the auxiliaries and organizations are called upon by the church leaders is when there is a financial need.

*The responses to question 67* suggest that auxiliaries are of the view that they have not adopted strategies to practice love to new members

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

### 4.8.2.3 Evangelism

This section investigates the effectiveness of evangelism in the church towards curbing membership decline. In order to determine the effectiveness of evangelism in the church, eight questions were used to get responses from the auxiliary and organization leaders. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.11 represent the agreed upon views of the group as captured by the scribe after discussion.

PART I SECTION 3: EVANGELISM						
NO.	QUESTIONS	SA	A	DK	D	SD
23.	The church provides its members with training on evangelism					X
24.	The church provides training on spiritual gifts and how to determine them					X
25.	The church's mission statement does cater for evangelism	X				
26.	The church organizes annual community evangelism related activities					X
27.	The church has an active commission on evangelism	X				
28.	Evangelism is important for church growth as per the bible (Matthew 28:18-20)	X				
29.	The pastor lives an evangelism lifestyle				X	
30.	The Church has dedicated evangelists					X

**Table 4.11**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 23* suggest that the group is of the view that that the church does not provide provides training on evangelism.

During discussions, members of the group were of the view that the church must provide training on evangelism. They raised issues like when they are in conventions they feel that they are behind other churches. Members from other churches know exactly what to do while they continue to follow. Those who have been to conventions before will be able to follow better than those who are at the convention for the first time. The group also suggested amongst themselves to adopt "each one teach one strategy". This means that those members who have been to conventions must teach those who could not attend the convention how the AME church evangelize and how the department of evangelism do its activities.

*The responses to question 24* suggest that the group is of the view that the church provides training on spiritual gifts and how to determine them.

During discussions most members of the group did not know what the spiritual gifts are. They did not know that other members of the church have spiritual gifts except the pastor. Only WMS members were able to explain what spiritual gifts are and how to determine them according to the bible. They also indicated that they have learned about this at the WMS area meetings and conventions.

*The responses to question 25* suggest that the group is of the view that the church's mission statement does cater for evangelism.

Most members know the church vision and mission statements as it is part of the church closing song. The church mission statement is also found in the churches doctrine and disciple (AME Church, 2012:13).

*The responses to question 26* suggest that the group is of the view that the church does not organize annual community evangelism related activities.

During discussions the group was of the view that the church is not doing any community based activities. Therefore the church is not organizing annual community evangelism and related activities. The other members were not aware of the importance of the church going out before evangelizing inside. Other members were of the opinion that the church will attract more members if it can organize annual community evangelism and related activities.

*The responses to question 27* suggest that the group is of the view that the church has an active department of evangelism.

During discussions, members had different views around the question of evangelism. Others have pointed it out of the department of church growth and development as it presents its report during the annual conference; others were referring to the commission on membership and evangelism. Mostly were referring to ACE League, which is singing every Sunday in the church. Finally they agree that ACE League is active in the church.

*The researcher noted that in this local church there is no difference between the ACE League and the Church growth and Development department (AME, 2012: 174) and*

*the commission on membership and evangelism (AME Church, 2012: 78). This local church has the ACE League which is equivalent to Sons of Allen and does not have Church growth and Development department and the commission on membership and evangelism*

***The responses to question 28*** suggest that the group is of the view that evangelism is important for church growth as per the bible (Matthew 28:18-20). During discussion the group referred to this question on the great commission. The group continued to discuss how the great commission should be the core business of the church. The lay organization members were also referring to their 2008 quadrennial theme which was about sowing seeds beyond the wall: an agenda of ministry and service.

***The responses to question 29*** suggest that the group is of the view that the pastor is not living an evangelism lifestyle.

During discussion, members indicated that after church the pastor is leaving. There are no extra activities taking place. The pastor is not evangelizing once he descends the pulpit. The other members indicated that they wish the pastor could have midweek services or activities led by the pastor. Some members were not happy that they only see the pastor on Sundays during the service. They wish they can have more time with the pastor to visit the sick, to visit other members that are not coming to church, etc

***The responses to question 30*** suggest that the group is of the view that the church does not have dedicated evangelists.

During discussions members agree that members of ACE League are only active during the music ministry. Most members were also arguing that most of the time the ACE League members sing the same old songs. Some were arguing that they are dedicated because they are always available to sing during the service. A number of issues were raised as the group defines dedication and finally the group came to a conclusion.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### 4.8.2.4 Class Leader's System

This section investigates the effectiveness of the Class Leader's System in the church towards curbing membership decline. In order to determine the effectiveness of the Class Leader's System in the church towards curbing membership decline, nine questions were used to get responses from the Auxiliary Leaders. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.12 below represent the agreed upon views of the group as captured by the scribe after discussion.

PART 1 SECTION 4 : CLASS LEADER'S SYSTEM						
NO.	QUESTIONS	SA	A	DK	D	SD
31.	The class leaders receive training on membership multiplication					X
32.	The class leaders meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.					X
33.	The class leader's visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care					X
34.	The number of classes and class leaders grow annually					X
35.	The class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings		X			
36.	The church has a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class				X	
37.	The class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes				X	
38.	The class leaders system is important for membership growth	X				
39.	During class meetings there is time for fellowship.					X

**Table 4.12**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 31* suggest that respondents are of the view that class leaders do not receive training on membership multiplication.

During discussions members of the group complained about the way class leaders lead the classes. Some were saying their class leaders only collect money. Some were also complaining that when they collect money they do not show a good manner in their approach, it like they demand this money.

*The responses to question 32* suggest that respondents are of the view that the class leaders do not meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.

During discussions members were of the view that there are no class leaders meetings with members scheduled or randomly called. The class leader will go to a member to collect monthly dues.

*The responses to question 33* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the class leaders do not visit the sick, confined or in need of spiritual care.

During discussions, the role of class leaders as written in the Doctrine and discipline of the AME Church were discussed. Some members were surprised to realize that there are so many benefits that the church can reap from the class leader's system. Some members were happy that they were afforded the opportunity to participate in the study. They indicated that most of the things they are hearing the first time in this group.

The other members indicated that during Rev. Dr AWM Makhene's tenure they were taught these things. They further indicated that the majority of old class leaders are not in the church anymore. Some were of the view that the current class leaders are old to travel from their home to their class member's home due to ill health.

*The responses to question 34* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the number of classes and class leaders are not growing annually.

During discussions, the group indicated that the number of classes have decreased with time. They also indicated that some classes were merged due to the number of members in each class. One of the members indicated that there was a time when the class composed of her family only. This member indicated that during that time, class leaders used to report in the church, in a form of a competition. The class reporting more finances will be applauded, for her and her class leader it was tough times until the class leader deserted the class.

*The responses to question 35* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings.

After a lengthy discussion, the group agreed on a view that class leaders attend quarterly conference meetings. Some indicated that all members present during the quarterly conference Sunday service will automatically be present during the quarterly conference.

Some indicated that quarterly conferences held during the week are not well attended. Most members had a view that even though not all class leaders will attend the mid-week quarterly conferences, the majority of class leaders are attending the quarterly conferences. They have to report their works as stewards of the church as indicated in, 3.2.3.2.2 above.

***The responses to question 36*** suggest that the group is of the view that the church does not have a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class.

During discussion, members agreed that most members in the church belong to a class even though there are those people who attend church and do not belong to a class. The argument was around the system to get them to a class. Some indicated that they were allocated a class after attending a church for more than six months because they did not know that they must belong to a class. Some indicated that every member of the church must belong to a class. Members are allocated to a class when they join the church. Others indicated that they did not know that they must go in front to present themselves to the pastor. They enjoyed coming to church, sitting at the back participating in the worship service. Some of the group members indicated that they do not belong to a group; they did not know that it's compulsory for all.

The members of the group decided to have a meeting with the pastor to advice on their findings during the discussion. They are of the view that new members must be invited explicitly, not during the invitation to Christian Discipleship because other members have already accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior from their previous churches therefore will not respond to such an invite.

***The responses to question 37*** suggest that the group is of the view that the class leaders do not have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes

Some members of this group were of the opinion that their previous churches used to utilize them more, because their spiritual gifts were recognized in the church. Other members did not even know if they have spiritual gifts or not. Others were of the opinion that only the pastors spiritual gifts must be utilized in the church or else, the church will lose the direction.

***The responses to question 38*** suggest that the group is of the view that the class leaders system is important for membership growth.

Members of the group were very excited about the class leader's system after reading the duties of class leaders and class members and they were of the view that the class leader's system is important for membership growth. They were also of the view that the class leader's system is also important for both spiritual and numerical growth if class leaders can do their duties as discussed in 3.2.3.2.1.

*The responses to question 39* suggest that the group is of the view that during class meetings there is no time for fellowship. The group indicated that there are no class meetings and that there is therefore no fellowship

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### **4.8.2.5 Membership Retention**

This section investigates the effectiveness of membership retention strategy in the church. In order to determine the effectiveness of membership retention in the church, eight questions were used to get responses from the Auxiliary Leaders. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.13 represent the agreed upon views of the group as captured by the scribe after discussion.

<b>PART 1 SECTION 5: MEMBERSHIP RETENTION</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
40.	Members of the of the church are kept on a high and sound spiritual level		X			
41.	Some members of our church have left for greener pastures	X				
42.	The church seeks the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them		X			
43.	Churches in the vicinity of the AME church creates a situation for migration from the AME church		X			
44.	Some classes are merged due to members leaving the church	X				
45.	The church investigates all members on the roll					X
46.	The church conducts the membership survey					X
47.	The church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church					X

**Table 4.13**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 40* suggest that the group is of the view that members of the church are not kept on a high and sound spiritual level.

During discussion some members were of the opinion that the church services are not capable of keeping members on a high and sound spiritual level. Some were blaming the choir for not singing, some were blaming the mothers for not supporting the choir. Some were of the view that they are not connecting to the service. Some members believe that the pre-determined program of the church does not allow flexibility. Some were of the view that the pastor should have Sundays where he is not using a standard church program. They are of the view that it does not allow them to grow spiritually. Some were of the opinion that they come to church because it is a norm, sometimes they do not thereafter feel that they are from the church.

*The responses to question 41* suggest that the group is of the view that some members of our church have left for greener pastures. During discussions other members indicated that there are members leaving the church because they have spiritual gifts they cannot utilize in the AME church because of its formal structure and the episcopacy.

*The responses to question 42* suggest that the group is of the view that the church does not seek the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them.

The group discussions indicated that the church lost members and no one is making a follow up regarding their whereabouts. Some members indicated that some members left the church because they were not well and the church did not visit them, instead members of other churches were visiting and praying with them. Some members indicated that even now, their parents are not well and the church is not visiting them

*The responses to question 43* suggest that the group is of the view that the churches in the vicinity of the AME church create a situation for migration from the AME church. Some members also indicated that if their church does not visit them during their distress they will go to churches taking care of their aged and sick ones. Some members were discouraging others from leaving the church, but to raise these issues with the church leaders especially the pastor.

*The responses to question 44* suggest that the group is of the view that classes are merged due to members leaving the church.

During discussions the group indicated that the class leader system must be revitalized and be used effectively to avoid members leaving the church and the shrinking membership.

*The responses to question 45* suggest that the group is of the view that the church does investigate all members on the roll. During discussion the members were of the view that if the church could go out to search for its members it's possible that some are just at home. The stewards must start doing the duties as per 3.2.3.2.2 above.

*The responses to question 46* responses suggest that the group is of the view that the church does not conduct the membership survey

The members of the group are of the view that the number that is reported at the annual conference is the number of members belonging to the classes or those members paying their monthly dues because their names appear on the church book. The group is of the opinion that the church like other AME churches could set aside a day for roll call of members. All church members names will be on the roll and the church will know of its members' whereabouts. The stewards and class leaders have to assist the pastor with the annual survey.

Some members were of the view that the survey will also assist in soliciting members views for church growth and development. Other members are of the view that the survey will waste member's time because the AME church is an Episcopal church, if someone could suggest changes on Sunday worship program, changes cannot be implemented until they are adopted at the connectional quadrennial meeting/general conference.

*The responses to question 47* suggest that the group is of the view that the church does not have a follow-up system on members not coming to church.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### 4.8.2.6 Community Involvement

This section investigates the effectiveness of community involvement in the church towards curbing membership decline. In order to determine the effectiveness of community involvement in the church, eight questions were used to get responses from the Auxiliary Leaders. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4.14 represent the agreed upon views of the group as captured by the scribe after discussion.

PART 1 SECTION 6 : COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT						
NO.	QUESTIONS	SA	A	DK	D	SD
55.	The church's membership drives reach the community					X
56.	The church has a good relationship with the schools in its area				X	
57.	The church is taking part in community activities and projects				X	
58.	The church belongs to our community		X			
59.	The church invites the community to social activities					X
60.	The church is involved in community road shows					X
61.	The church is known in Orange Farm for its community based activities					X

**Table 4.14**

**Source: Own Information**

The responses to question 55 suggest that the group is of the view that the church membership drives do not reach the community.

During discussion the group indicated that during the year each auxiliary or organization is given a chance to conduct a membership drive. These membership drives are always targeting members in the church not belonging to auxiliaries or prepared to serve more than one auxiliary. These drives promote members moving from one auxiliary to the other every year. The group indicated that these drives are not reaching the community. Members of this group indicated that this study helped them to redirect their focus to people outside the church as well during their membership drives.

**The responses to question 56** suggest that the group is of the view that the church does not have a good relationship with schools near the church. The groups' view is that the school never invited the church or pastor during its activities, and the church never invited the school during the church activities. Some members were arguing that the lack of communication between the school and the church does not mean that the church does not have a good relationship with the school; it's only that everyone is comfortable in their zone. Other members raised the view that the AME Church and its founders believed in education and that therefore the church must move from its comfort zone to ensure its involvement in school activities.

**The responses to question 57** suggest that the group is of the view that the church is not taking part in community activities.

**The responses to question 58** suggest that the group is of the view that the church belong to the community. During discussions the group agreed that all church buildings are build on a land reserved for community facilities. If the church was not a public facility, the government would not have allocated that stand.

*The researcher noted that even though other members of the church try to explain what is meant by the church belonging to the public, the vocal members were taking over the discussions and redirecting them.*

**The responses to question 59** suggest that the group is of the view that the church is not involved in the community social activities.

**The responses to question 60** suggest that the group is of the view that the church is not involved in community's road shows.

**The responses to question 61** suggest that the group is of the view that the church is not known in Orange Farm for its community based activities. Other members in the group indicated that they used to worship in Soweto because they wanted the AME Church and no one knows where it was. Other members know the tavern opposite the church but do not know the name of the church because there is no identification on the church building. The other members were of the opinion that the church is known in the vicinity, but not known in

other parts of Orange Farm, because of the vast size of the area. They finally concluded with the view that the church is not known in the area.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

### **4.8.3 Members Responses (Part III)**

Part three consist of four sections (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5,) with a total of thirty seven (37) questions. These sections are focusing on the members' perception on the membership decline at the AME local Church. The questions provide information on participants' Demographics, Class Leader's System, Membership retention, and cultural changes.

Some of these questions appear in both parts one and two. The next section provides a summary of responses from members of the church randomly selected. In this part, respondents are merely asked "open-ended" and "closed-ended" questions. Questions are designed in Likert scale, a format in which respondents are asked to strongly agree or strongly disagree. There is a space provide for respondents to provide comments where necessary.

Table 4.15 below; present the summary of details received from members of the church pertaining to their demographic profile as discussed in 4.6.1 above.

#### 4.8.3.1 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR AME LOCAL CHURCH MEMBERS RANDOMLY SELECTED

PART 1 SECTION I : DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS							
POSITION	JOB DESCRIPTION	SEX	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	EDUCATION	MAJOR	EXPERIENCE
MEMBER	YES	MALE	20-29	Single	College	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	30-39	Married	High School	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	30-39	Single	College	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	40-49	Single	High School	Administration	4-7 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	40-49	Single	College	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	40-49	Single	High School	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	40-49	Married	High School	None	4-7 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	50-59	Single	College	None	4-7 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	50-59	Married	High School	None	4-7 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	ABOVE 59	Married	Primary	None	4-7 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	20-29	Single	College	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	30-39	Single	High School	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	30-39	Single	High School	None	1-4 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	40-49	Single	College	Administration	4-7 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	40-49	Single	High School	None	7-10 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	50-59	Married	High School	None	10-13 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	50-59	Married	High School	None	7-10 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	ABOVE 59	Married	College	None	10-13 years
MEMBER	YES	FEMALE	ABOVE 59	Married	High School	None	Above 13 years
MEMBER	YES	MALE	20-29	Single	High School	None	1-4 years

**Table 4.15**

**Source: Own Information**

#### 4.8.3.2 Cultural Changes

This section investigates the effectiveness of cultural changes in the church towards curbing membership decline. In order to determine the effectiveness of cultural changes in the church, eight questions were used to get responses from the members of the church. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Responses are depicted in Table 4.16 below.

PART 11 SECTION 2 : CULTURAL CHANGES						
NO	QUESTIONS	SA	A	DK	D	SD
69	The church caters for cultural diversity.	3	6	3	6	2
70	The church has responded to the times and community issues	9	5	2	2	2
71	The Church is missing out and lagging behind as far as community issues are concerned	1	7	2	3	7
72	The church remains relevant in the face of cultural diversity	3	10	3	0	4
73	Cultural diversity is appreciated at the AME local church	0	8	5	1	6

**Table 4.16**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 69* suggest that 45% of respondents are of the view that the church caters for cultural diversity. The other 40% of respondents are of the view that the church does not cater for cultural diversity.

*The responses to question 70* suggest that 70% of respondents are of the view that the church has responded to the times and community issues while 20% of respondents are of the view that the church is not responding to the times and community issues.

*The responses to question 71* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that the church is missing out and lagging behind as far as community issues are concerned. 50% of respondents are of the view that the church is not missing out and lagging behind as far as community issues are concerned.

*The responses to question 72* suggest that 65% of respondents are of the view that the church remains relevant in the face of cultural diversity. The 20% of respondents are of the view that the church is not relevant in the face of cultural diversity.

*The responses to question 73* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that Cultural diversity is appreciated at the AME church. The other 35% of is of the view that cultural diversity is not appreciated at the AME Church while the other 25% withheld their views.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### **4.8.3.3 Class Leader’s System**

This section investigates the effectiveness of class leader’s system towards curbing membership decline of a local church. In order to determine the effectiveness of class leader’s system, nine questions were used to get responses of the members of the church. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don’t Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Responses are depicted in Table 4.17 below.

<b>PART 1 SECTION 3 : CLASS LEADER’S SYSTEM</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>31.</b>	The class leaders receive training on membership multiplication	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>32.</b>	The class leaders meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>33.</b>	The class leaders visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care?	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>34.</b>	The number of classes and class leaders grow annually	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>35.</b>	The class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>36.</b>	The church has a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>37.</b>	The class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>38.</b>	The class leaders system is important for membership growth	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>39.</b>	During class meetings there is time for fellowship.	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>

**Table 4.17.**

**Source: Own Information**

**The responses to question 31** suggest that 60% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders receive training on membership multiplication, while the remaining 40% of participants are of the view that the class leaders do not receive training on membership multiplication.

*The researcher observed that the local church does not have the training program. No training is offered to these members. Training was offered to class leaders during the first quadrennial of the church.*

**The responses to question 32** suggest that the respondents are of the view that class leaders do not meet with members monthly for feedback and empowerment.

*The researcher also never noticed of such meetings during the period when this study was being conducted; the class leaders never held meetings. They collect dues from members during the service. These moneys/dues are reported during the church service to the Steward board and finance committee, which in turn announce all monies received to the congregation after receiving the offerings*

**The responses to question 33** suggest that the respondents are of the view that the church leadership does not meet with class leaders to evaluate the class leaders' strength and weaknesses.

*The leadership of the church never had a meeting with class leaders during the time when the researcher was conducting this research.*

**The responses to question 34** suggest that the number of classes and class leaders grow annually.

*The researcher however noted that the number of classes did not grow while this study was being conducted; in fact; during the church conference she witnessed one class being formally merged with another because both classes had less than ten members and the other class leader had requested to be removed from the responsibility and motivated the request on the basis of age and health reasons*

***The responses to question 35*** suggest that 35% of respondents were of the view that cultural diversity is appreciated at the particular AME church while the other 65% of respondents were of the view that cultural diversity is not appreciated at the particular AME Church.

In this church there are people of different cultural backgrounds, the church has its norms. All members of the church adhere to norms, e.g. Females do not wear trousers and during communion, all females must cover their heads.

*The researcher observed that in this church there are people of different cultural backgrounds, the church had its norms. All members of the church adhere to the church norms, e.g. Females do not wear trousers and during communion, all females must cover their heads.*

***The responses to question 36*** indicate that the respondents are of the view that the church does not have a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class.

*The researcher observed that most members belong to classes. Other members of the church did not know what the class system is all about. There were also members who did not belong to a class. There was a family that realized that they do not belong to a class when they were supposed to baptize their child.*

***The responses to question 37*** suggest that 25% of respondents are of the view that the class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes. The other 50% of respondents are of the view that class leaders do not have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes, while the other 25% withheld their views.

*The researcher observed that many members of the church are not aware of their spiritual gifts. They come to church to follow the pastor's teachings. There are instances that those who become aware of having certain spiritual gifts will leave the church because they don't think the AME church has room for them. The class leaders were also not sure how to identify them. One class leader indicated, during discussions with the researcher, that she did not know how to tell the pastor about the member who indicated to her that she is leaving the church to pursue her spiritual gift.*

*The responses to question 38* suggest that 45% of respondents are of the view that the church class leaders recruit new members to the church while the remaining 55% of respondents are of the view that class leaders do not recruit new members to the church.

*The researcher observed that class leaders were not recruiting members to the church. One class leader indicated that if it happens that he lose one member from his class and there is one member of the church who does not belong to any class, he will approach such church member to join his class*

*The responses to question 39* suggest that respondents are of the view that the church class leaders are not trained in new member’s membership retention.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### **4.8.3.4 Membership Retention**

This area enquires about membership retention activities envisaged to curb membership decline in a local church. Nine questions were used to get responses from the members of the church and responses are depicted in Table 4.18 below. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don’t Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

<b>PART 1 SECTION 4: MEMBERSHIP RETENTION</b>						
<b>NO.</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
40.	Members of the of the church are kept on a high and sound spiritual level	3	9	6	0	2
41.	Some members of our church have left for greener pastures	0	15	3	2	0
42.	The church seeks the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them	9	2	6	3	0
43.	Churches in the vicinity of the AME church creates a situation for migration from the AME church	4	1	0	5	10
44.	Some classes are merged due to members leaving the church	5	7	0	4	4
45.	The church investigates all members on the roll	0	2	0	8	10
46.	The church conducts the membership survey	0	0	6	8	6
47.	The church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church	3	4	0	8	5

**Table 4.18**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 40* suggest that 60% of respondents are of the view that some church members leave the church to fulfill their spiritual gifts. The other 30% of respondents withheld their views.

*The researcher observed that there was a member who left the church to join another church and became a minister in that church. According to this member the church could not accept him into itinerant ministry because of age. In the AME Church a candidate for admission to itinerant ministerial orders shall not be older than sixty (60) years (AME Church, 2012:84).*

*The responses to question 41* suggest that respondents are of the view that some members of the church have left for greener pastures.

*The responses to question 42* suggest that respondents are of the view that the church is well located.

*The researcher observed that the church is situated next to a tavern, multipurpose centre, sports ground, and not far from the train station. The church's location should attract members of the community. Taxis are passing next to the church. It is easy to locate this church.*

*The responses to question 43* suggest that the respondents are of the view that churches in the vicinity of the church do not create a situation for migration from the church.

*The responses to question 44* suggest that 60% of respondents are of the view that the cultural diversity is appreciated at the AME church, while the remaining 40% of participants disagree with this statement.

*The responses to question 45* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the church does not have a welcoming committee.

*The responses to question 47* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the church does not have a follow-up system on members not coming to church

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### 4.8.3.5 Community Involvement

This section investigates the impact of the involvement of the community in the church towards curbing membership decline. In order to determine the impact of the involvement of the community in the church activities towards curbing membership decline, seven questions were used to get responses from the members of the church. The responses range from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Don't Know (DK), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Responses are depicted in Table 4.19 below.

PART 1 SECTION 5 : COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT						
NO.	QUESTIONS	SA	A	DK	D	SD
48.	The church's membership drive reach the community	2	2	1	8	7
49.	The church has a good relationship with the schools in its area	2	2	0	9	7
50.	The church is taking part in community activities and projects	2	2	0	8	8
51.	The church belongs to our community	4	4	4	5	3
52.	The church invites the community to social activities	2	1	0	9	8
53.	The church is involved in community road shows	1	1	0	10	9
54.	The church is known in Orange Farm for its community based activities	5	3	3	4	5

**Table 4.19**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 55* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the church membership drives do not reach the community.

*The responses to question 56* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the church does not have relations with nearby schools.

*The respondents to question 57* suggest that the church does not participate in community activities and projects

*The respondents to question 58* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that the church belongs to the community. 40% of respondents are of the view that the church does not belong to the community and the remaining 20% withheld their views.

*The responses to question 59* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the church does not invite the community to its social activities.

*The responses to question 60* suggest that the respondents are of the view that the church is not involved in road shows.

*The responses to question 61* suggest that 40% of respondents are of the view that the church is known in Orange Farms. However 45% of the respondents are of the view that the church is not known in Orange Farm.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

## 4.9 SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

### 4.9.1 SMT and Organization Leaders Responses

This section of the study provides for a summary of responses to common questions asked to both SMT and Auxiliary and Organization Leaders

#### 4.9.1.1 Evangelism

Section	SMT					AUXILIARIES & ORGANIZATION LEADERS				
	SA	A	DK	D	SD	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Question 23	4	3	0	9	4					X
Question 24	3	2	0	8	7					X
Question 25	5	4	0	7	4	X				
Question 26	2	3	0	8	7					X
Question 27	6	4	2	5	3	X				
Question 28	4	7	1	3	5	X				
Question 29	4	3	6	3	4				X	
Question 30	3	2	3	8	4					X

**Table 4.20**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 23* suggest that the majority of respondents in both the SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders are of the view that the church does not provides its members with training on evangelism.

*The responses to question 24* suggest that the majority of respondents in both the SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders sampled are of the view that the church does not provide training on spiritual gifts and how to determine them.

*The responses to question 25* suggest the majority of respondents that were sampled to represent auxiliary and organization leaders and the majority of respondents in the SMT sample have different views on whether the church mission statement does cater for evangelism.

*The mission of the AME church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people (AME Church, 2012:13).*

*The responses to question 26* suggest that the majority of respondents in both the SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders that were sampled are of the view that the church does not organize annual community evangelism related activities.

*The responses to question 27* suggest that the majority of respondents in both SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders are of the view that the church has an active department of evangelism.

*The responses to question 28* suggest that the majority of respondents in both SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders are of the view that evangelism is important for church growth as per the Bible.

*The responses to question 29* suggest that the majority of responses from SMT are not conclusive, while the auxiliary and organization leaders are of the view that the pastor does not live an evangelism lifestyle.

*The responses to question 30* suggest that the majority of respondents in both the SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders" samples are of the view that the church does not have dedicated evangelists.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

## 4.9.2 SMT, Organization Leaders And Members Sample Responses

This section of the study provides for a summary of responses to common questions asked to all three groups (SMT, Auxiliary Leaders and Members).

### 4.9.2.1 Community Involvement

Section	SMT					AUXILIARIES					MEMBERS				
	SA	A	DK	D	SD	SA	A	DK	D	SD	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Question 55	3	1	2	6	8					X	2	2	1	8	7
Question 56	3	5	1	1	10				X		2	2	0	9	7
Question 57	6	2	2	8	2				X		2	2	0	8	8
Question 58	7	0	0	9	4		X				4	4	4	5	3
Question 59	1	5	2	2	10					X	2	1	0	9	8
Question 60	2	2	6	5	5					X	1	1	0	10	9
Question 61	4	5	0	7	4					X	5	3	3	4	5

**Table 4.21**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 55* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church membership drives do not reach the community

*The responses to question 56* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church does not have a good relationship with the schools.

*The responses to question 57* suggest that the majority of respondents for all categories are of the view that the church is not taking part in community activities and projects.

*The responses to question 58* suggest that the majority of respondents for the SMT category are of the view that the church does not belong to the community while the majority of respondents in the Auxiliary and organization leaders sample are of the view that the church belongs to the community. Responses from the member's category are not conclusive.

*The responses to question 59* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church does not invite the community to social activities.

*The responses to question 60* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church is not involved in community road shows

*The responses to question 61* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church is not known in Orange Farm for its community base activities.

*The researcher can also confirm that there were no community based activities that took place during the period she was conducting this study.*

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### 4.9.2.2 Class Leader’s System

Section	SMT					AUXILIARIES					MEMBERS				
	SA	A	DK	D	SD	SA	A	DK	D	SD	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Question 31	5	3	0	8	4					X	5	7	0	4	4
Question 32	3	1	2	6	8					X	2	2	1	9	6
Question 33	3	3	1	8	5					X	1	3	1	10	6
Question 34	1	1	0	10	8					X	10	4	0	5	1
Question 35	9	4	0	5	2		X				6	1	0	8	5
Question 36	5	0	1	5	9				X		0	2	0	9	9
Question 37	1	4	8	4	3				X		1	4	5	6	4
Question 38	7	6	0	5	2		X				4	5	0	5	6
Question 39	2	2	0	9	7					X	0	4	0	7	9

**Table 4.22**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 31* suggest that the majority of respondents in both the SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders are of the view that the class leaders do not receive training on membership multiplication while the views of those that represented the members differ; they have a view that training is provided.

*The researcher saw no evidence of training provided to the class leaders during the period when she conducted the study.*

*The responses to question 32* suggest that the majority in all categories of respondents are of the view that that the class leaders do not meet with members monthly for feedback and empowerment.

*The responses to question 33* suggest that the majority in all categories of respondents are of the view that the church leadership does not meet with class leaders to evaluate class leaders’ strength and weakness of each class

***The responses to question 34*** suggest that the majority of respondents in both SMT and auxiliary leaders are of the view that the number of classes and class leaders do not grow annually while the majority of respondents in the members group are of the view that the class and class leaders grow annually.

*As already indicated in 4.8.3.3 the researcher witnessed an instance of a merger of one class during the church conference.*

***The responses to question 35*** suggest that the majority of respondents in both Auxiliary leaders and SMT are of the view that the church follows a specific criterion to appoint class leaders while the majority of respondents in member's category are of the view that the church does not follow a specific criterion to appoint class leaders.

*The researcher observed that the names of the members of the church who were class leaders the previous year were called by the secretary by instruction of the pastor. Then pastor announced that "these persons will be the class leaders for the new year".*

*According to the AME Church discipline (2012:68-69), "class leader must be appointed annually by the minister. They shall serve for one year and may be appointed as long as their conduct is satisfactory. They shall be examined quarterly by the minister and the presiding elder".*

***The responses to question 36*** suggest that the majority of respondents for all categories are of the view that the church does not have a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class.

***The responses to question 37*** suggest that the majority of respondents for all categories are of the view that the class leaders do not have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes.

***The responses to question 38*** suggest that the majority of respondents for both the SMT and auxiliary and organization leaders are of the view that the class leaders recruit members to the church while the majority of respondents for members of the church category are of the view that the class leaders do not recruit members to the church.

*The researcher observed that the class leaders recruit members to their classes not to the church as discussed in the response to question 38 in section 4.8.2.2 above.*

*The responses to question 39* suggest that the majority of respondents in all categories are of the view that the church class leaders are not trained in new member’s retention strategy.

**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### 4.9.2.3 Membership retention

Section	SMT					AUXILIARIES					MEMBERS				
	SA	A	D K	D	SD	SA	A	DK	D	SD	SA	A	D K	D	SD
Question 40	7	5	0	4	4		X				3	9	6	0	2
Question 41	6	7	1	5	1	X					0	15	3	2	0
Question 42	10	3	1	3	3		X				9	2	6	3	0
Question 43	10	1	2	3	4		X				4	1	0	5	10
Question 44	6	4	2	6	2	X					5	7	0	4	4
Question 45	0	0	0	7	13					X	0	2	0	8	10
Question 46	0	0	0	8	12					X	0	0	6	8	6
Question 47	2	0	6	9	3					X	3	4	0	8	5

**Table 4.23**

**Source: Own Information**

*The responses to question 40* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that some church members leave the church to fulfill their spiritual gifts.

*The responses to question 41* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that some members of the church have left for greener pastures

*The responses to question 42* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church is well located

*The responses to question 43* suggest that the majority of respondents for both the SMT and auxiliary and organization leader’s are of the view that the churches in the vicinity of the church creates a situation for migration from the AME church while the majority of respondents for the members category are of the view that the churches in the vicinity of the church do not create a situation for migration from the AME church.

*During the period of the study it was brought to the researcher’s attention that other churches make time to visit the sick in the neighborhood regardless of their denominations. The churches around have activities involving members of the community such as heritage day celebration, where all members of the community are invited to wear their different traditional attires and*

*join in celebrating the day. Some members of the church indicated that they do attend such activities in the neighboring churches.*

*The responses to question 44* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that some classes are merged due to members leaving the church

*The responses to question 45* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church does not have a welcoming committee.

*The responses to question 46* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the welcoming committee does not make follow-up on visitors and new members whereabouts.

*During the period of the study the researcher did not see the welcoming committee in action, even during the church conference; the welcoming committee was never elected or appointed.*

*The responses to question 47* suggest that the majority of respondents for all the categories are of the view that the church does not have a follow-up on members that are not coming to church.

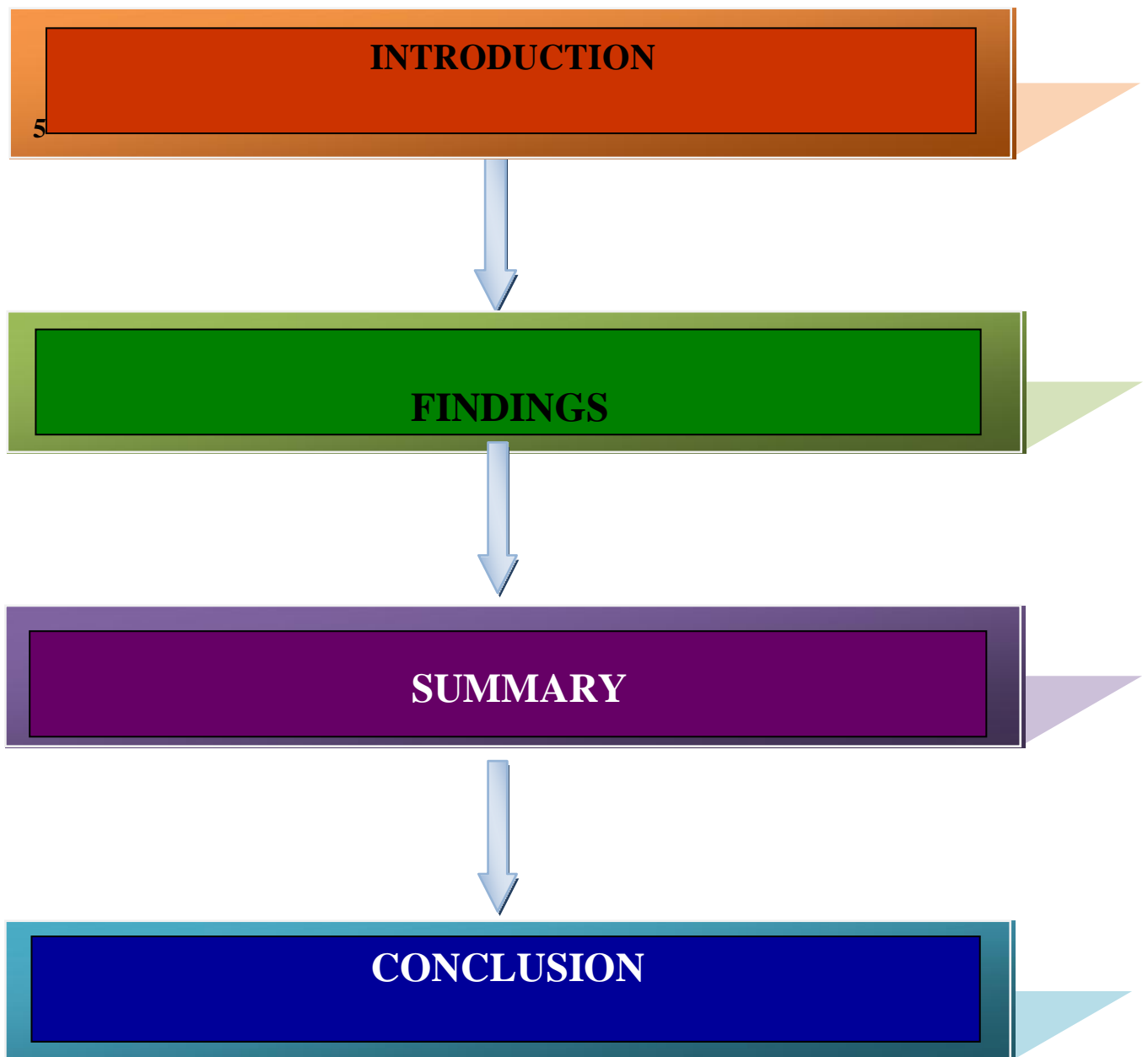
**NB: The findings to this section will be discussed in chapter five below.**

#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with an overview of the main methodology that was followed to empirically examine the strategy for turning around churches declining in membership. The chapter began by highlighting some relevant but common distinctions between quantitative and qualitative study, and then proceeded to a discussion of qualitative research design, the validity and reliability of data in terms of the research method described and then discussed the issues pertaining to this study.

This data was collected by means of literature review, self administered questionnaires, group administered questionnaire and the participation observation of the researcher. The chapter concluded with the discussion of a summary of the responses that respondents for different categories gave to common questions. The next chapter will present findings of the study and present the summary of the study.

**CHAPTER 5:**



OWN INFORMATION - CHAPTER 5 SUMARRY

## **5. FINDINGS AND SUMMARY**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter discussed the way the empirical research of this study was conducted. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of membership decline in local churches, as in a case of a local African Methodist Episcopal Church and use findings to develop strategies to curb membership decline. The qualitative method was used for the study.

This chapter presents the empirical findings of this study in accordance with the research aims and objectives in chapter one.

### **5.2 FINDINGS**

This section will discuss the findings of this study.

#### **5.2.1 Leadership**

The questionnaire on leadership was distributed to the SMT only. With regard to leadership the following findings are applicable:

- The church does not have a strategy and according to 3.2.3.1.2, the agenda of a local church conference must have an item on Organizational plan and the Development plan. According to 2.6.2.1, for any activity to be counted successful it must have a visible goal (Wagner, 1974:77)
- The church leaders are not seeking the needy and the distressed in order to relieve and comfort them. According to 3.2.3.2.2 and the AME church doctrine and discipline (2012:68), this is one of the duties of the stewards and section 3.2.3.2.1 also indicates this as one of the duties of the class leaders.

It was indicated in 2.10.3.1 above that some of the strategies to grow the churches involves taking the word of Christ that the Christian community should care for the hungry and thirsty seriously (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:10).

This study found that the leadership of the particular local church that is struggling to arrest its membership decline is not doing well in this domain of ministry.

### **5.2.2 Preaching**

The questionnaire on preaching was only distributed to the SMT. With regard to preaching the following findings are applicable:

- Preaching is not taking a central or large part of the Sunday service.
- Sermons are delivered in a language that can be understood by all.
- The preaching is not relevant and does not address current issues. According to the AME church doctrine and discipline (2012:91), the preacher must always apply the text to the audience.

### **5.2.3 Evangelism**

This questionnaire was distributed to both SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders sample. With regard to evangelism the following findings are applicable:

The church does not provide its members with training on evangelism or on spiritual gifts and how to determine them. According to 2.5.1.2.4 above, the great commission commands that people should be taught. It was also found that the literature on church growth emphasizes the fact that effective church leaders also lead through their example. This was noted in section 2.6.1.2 above (Coleman, 2010:114). It was also pointed out in 3.5.2.1 above, that the AME church emphasized education as one of its ministries.

The particular local church does not organize annual community evangelism related activities. The study also found in 2.1.7.1.3 above, that it is desirable that the church must minister beyond its walls (AME Church, 2012:91).

#### 5.2.4 Class leader's System

The questionnaire on the class leader's system was distributed to all participants.

With regard to the class leader's system, the following findings are applicable:

- The class leaders do not receive training on membership multiplication. According to 2.10.3.3.3 above, a local church must have effective training programs aimed at equipping its members to share their faith (McIntosh & Martin, 1992:15). In 2.6.1.2 above, this study indicated that relevant literature emphasizes that even today; people must be taught and prepared to mentor others. A church that aspires to grow has, according to the literature explored in section 2.8 above train and involve others for growth (Stetzer and Doodson, 2007:34-38). The study then indicated that such an emphasis on training members is present in the AME Church documents which sum up the matter by bluntly stating that "there shall be training courses for prospective stewards under the supervision of the pastor (AME Church, 2012:61).
- The study also found that another area that should be targeted for improvement at the particular local church is that around the role of class leaders. It was found that the class leaders at the particular local church do not meet with members of the class. Section 2.6.1.3 highlighted the fact that Jesus made it His responsibility to meet His disciples when they come from their tour of service to hear His disciples' reports/feedback (Coleman, 2010:91). According to 2.10.3.3.3, the church must provide an environment where people can come together. The literature explored advocated in 2.10.3.3.5 for small groups that meet for fellowship to help new members find a sense of belonging. It was indicated in 3.2.3.2 that one of the duties of the class leaders is to meet with members once a week to see how their soul is faring. During these meetings class leaders must introduce new members, give notices, and have time of fellowship.

- The class leaders of the particular local church that is seeking to turn around its membership decline were found to be wanting with respect to visiting the sick, the confined or those in need of spiritual care. According to 2.9.11, Paul also used to visit the believers to see how they were doing (Acts 15:36); he even went to places where people had previously resisted the gospel. It was also highlighted in 3.2.1 that the AME Church urges or instructs the local churches to seek out and save the lost and to serve the needy (AME Church, 2012:13).

It is clear that a turnaround strategy for this particular local church has to include a process aimed at empowering its class leaders through training.

#### ***5.2.4.1 Membership Retention***

The questionnaire on membership retention was distributed to all participants. With regard to membership retention the following findings are applicable:

- Some members of the church left the church for greener pastures
- The church does not investigate members on the roll and the church does not conduct membership survey. In terms of 3.2.3.2.1 and 3.2.3.2.2 respectively, the class leader shall keep accurate record of class members and the stewards shall conduct survey of membership and addresses of all members of the church. The stewards must also investigate all members on the roll and submit their findings to the official board for approval (AME Church, 2012:63).

#### ***5.2.4.2 Church Finances***

The questionnaire on church finances was distributed to the SMT only. With regard to church finances the following findings are applicable:

- The church does not make an extra account for moneys/provisions collected for the pastor's support. According to 3.2.3.2.2.1, the stewardship and Finance board must keep this record.
- The church stewardship and finance board members are not trained in financial management. In terms of officers of the church, "All candidates seeking the office of treasurer, or financial secretary must have experience in financial

management, including but not limited to, the areas of accounting, bookkeeping, finance and economics” (AME Church, 2012:403).

#### ***5.2.4.3 Community Involvement***

The questionnaire on Community Involvement was distributed to both SMT and Auxiliary and organization leaders” samples. With regard to community involvement the following findings are applicable:

- The church membership drives do not reach the community
- The church does not have good relations with schools in its area
- Church is not taking part in the community activities
- The church is not known in Orange farm for its community based activities.

According to 2.10.1.1 the church has to establish ministries in its community and must have a process to draw the un-churched into Christ and be members of the local church. According to 2.5.1.1.1, a missional church does not focus within its four walls; it reaches out for the sake of the gospel (Stedzer and Dodson, 2007:5).

#### ***5.2.4.4 Auxiliary Ministry***

The questionnaire on church auxiliary ministry was distributed to the auxiliary and organization leaders only. With regard to auxiliary ministry the following findings are applicable:

- The church does not have ongoing training for members and auxiliaries
- The auxiliaries do
- not have a program to recruit new members

According to 2.8, the church must continue to evaluate its condition and growth pattern. The congregation must be involved in curbing membership decline. Chapter three also emphasizes the need for training in 3.5.2.

### 5.3 SUMMARY

Based on the findings it is also very clear that this study is relevant and important. There is no doubt that many churches are declining in membership. There is no doubt that there is a need for strategies to curb membership decline in local churches. The importance and relevancy of this study cannot therefore be exaggerated. A summary of the study is presented under in terms of the contribution of each chapter.

*Chapter one* presented the skeleton of this study. Its four sections:

- Created the basis of the study by presenting the research problem; it discussed the orientation and background of the study, problem statement, the research questions, the aims and objectives of the study, hypothesis, and the objective of the study.
- Introduced issues central to local churches declining in membership and concludes by providing the structure of the study.
- Motivated the importance of investigating the identified problem.
- Explored the research methodology and the organization of the research project to complete the study.

*Chapter Two* of the study provides a foundation for the rest of the project; it reviewed the literature relevant to local churches declining in membership. Its four sections:

- Clarifies and conceptualizes the concepts church and its mission, present further aspects about the mission of the church.
- Discussed the plan for successful implementation of the great commission and explores the phenomenon of churches that are declining in membership, the causes thereof and literature review on reasons for churches to decline in membership with suggestions to curb membership.
- Identified the churches declining in membership and the causes thereof.
- Presented what the Bible teaches about preventing possible membership decline in churches and then also presented relevant strategies or plans that are often used in churches that overcome the tendency to decline in membership. It dealt with the theoretical overview of turning around local churches declining in membership.

*Chapter 3* of the study provided terms in general the historical understanding of the AME Church, explores the relevant sections of the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, and the AME Church Strategy and also described the History of AME Church in South Africa. The four sections of this chapter:

- Explored and critically evaluated the processes and support that were available for an AME local Church throughout the years of its existence and ministry with respect to making it possible to overcome membership decline.
- Explored how the AME Church was formed, how it was established in South Africa, the beliefs and doctrine, the history of the AME local Church. It made it clear that there is a need for strategies to curb membership decline.
- Highlighted aspects that an AME local church can consider to utilize from its denominational traditions and processes when seeking to deal with issues pertaining to its membership decline. This is relevant because the AME Church has a history of a growing church through missionary work, training of its pastors and lay persons, and taking care of its community.

#### **Chapter 4: Empirical study on turning around decline in local churches: a case of an African Methodist (AME) local Church**

This section of the study focused on the empirical research design for this study. It provided an overview of the methodology used to empirically study and critically evaluated the strategies developed for turning around membership decline at the particular AME local Church. This was done in four sections.

- Discussed the research methods available and chose the method appropriate for this study, then highlighted the research design of the study, for example the underlying philosophical assumption, the selection of respondents, and the data collection technique.
- Described the questionnaire as well discussed the aspects used in ensuring the validity and reliability.
- Discussed the ethical standard used in data collection.
- Presented responses and data collected was analyzed.

*Chapter 5* presents the findings of the study and summarizes the purpose of this study.

This chapter proved that there is a need for strategies to turn around decline in local churches: a case of a local African Methodist Episcopal Church. The qualitative method was used for the study. The findings from this study confirm the need to develop strategies for turning round a decline in local churches.

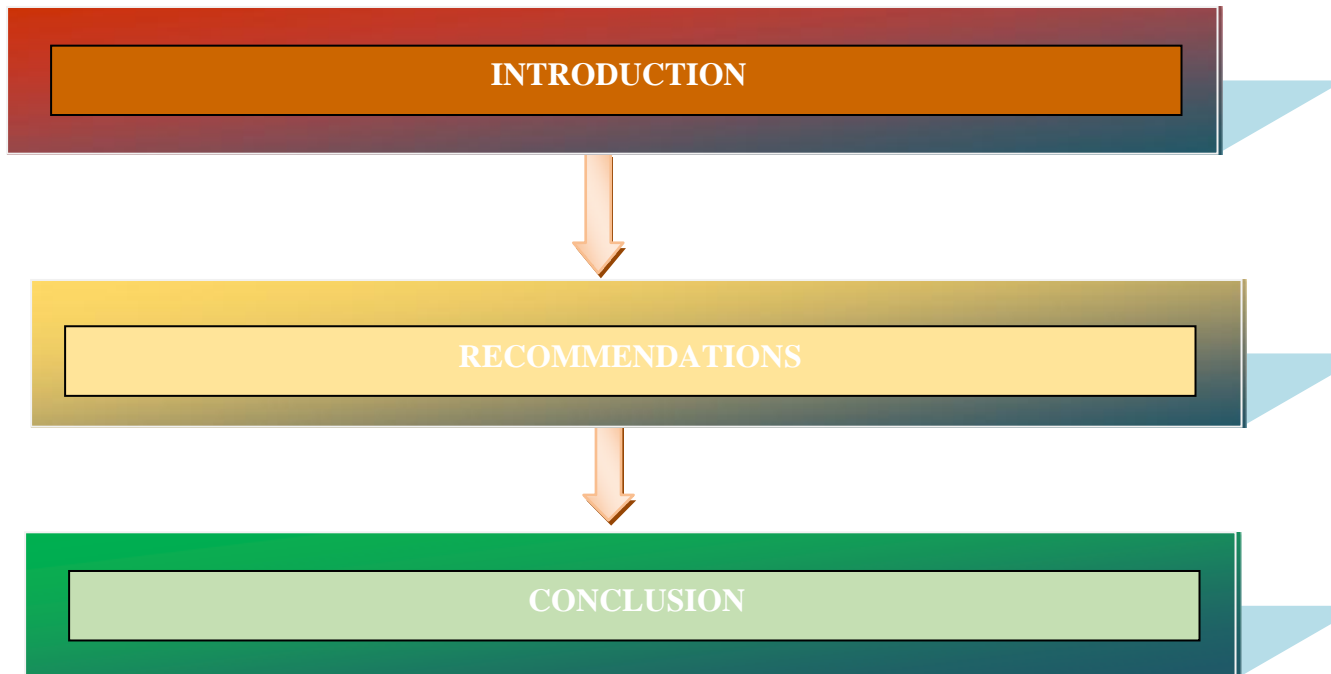
*Chapter 6* of the study presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

It concludes by presenting recommendations for implementation with the view to turning around local churches that are declining in membership.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

The findings from this study confirm the need to develop strategies for turning round a decline in local churches. Some relevant strategies were accordingly also highlighted. The next chapter will present recommendations that are based on discussions from the above chapters of the study.

## CHAPTER 6



OWN INFORMATION - CHAPTER 5 SUMARRY

## **6. CONCLUSIONS RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented the summary of the empirical findings of the study and the summary of the study. The results were translated into meaningful statistics and findings. The findings are related to the objectives of the research.

This section of the study will present the recommended strategies for turning around churches in membership decline for implementation. The recommended strategies are based on the findings of the study.

### **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the view of findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested.

#### **6.2.1 Strategy One: Leadership**

Every church must have a strategy to grow. The following strategy is recommended

- The church must adopt the strategy that was used by the Disciples of Christ. Aspects of the relevant strategy were highlighted in 2.6.2 and entails the following:
  - The right goal (2.6.2.1)
  - The right place at the right time (2.6.2.2)
  - The right method (2.6.2.3)
  - The right people (2.6.2.4)

In an AME local Church, it is necessary that this strategy be understood and used within the framework provided by the broader AME Church. There is nothing in the AME church that makes it impossible to implement the strategy that is being recommended here. The exploration of the AME Church in chapter three demonstrated that the AME church environment gives room for local churches that desire to implement the strategy.

### **6.2.1.1 Motivation**

Majority of respondents indicated that there is no strategic planning adopted.

## **6.2.2 Strategy Two: Evangelism and Community Involvement**

The church must follow the great commission in terms of evangelism. It must be prepared to:

- go out
- Make disciples
- Baptize
- Teach

As it was indicated before, the particular AME local church is not sufficiently known in its community where it has to grow.

### **6.2.2.1 Motivation**

Majority of respondents indicated that there are no community related activities including evangelism.

## **6.2.3 Strategy Three: Training**

The church must train its leaders for church growth.

In terms of training, the mentorship strategy and feedback strategy that was employed by Jesus Christ as highlighted in 2.6.1.2 and 2.6.1.3 must be adopted to ensure that the leadership is prepared to lead for growth.

### **6.2.3.1 Motivation**

The majority of respondents indicated that there is a lack of training in different categories.

#### 6.2.4 Strategy Four: Class Leaders' System, Auxiliary Ministry and Membership retention

The best method for the church to grow is its ability to ensure that new comers do not leave the church. Therefore the class leader's system is the way in which the church must take care and manage the new comers. The class leaders are the ones to create a warm atmosphere for the new members. This is one of the strategies that an AME local Church has. Currently it is not very effective at the particular AME local church.

Through this study, the researcher suggests that the class leaders' system at Second Bethel AME Church be revitalized. The class leaders are to perform their duties as described in 3.5.1.3.1 while the stewards also adhere to their duties as these were highlighted in 3.5.1.3.2 above.

In addition to what is prescribed in the book of discipline, the class leaders and auxiliaries and organizations leaders in the church can be effective if they could adopt the strategy used by Paul as discussed in 2.9.1 consisting of the following aspects of ministry:

- Follow-up ministry
- Preaching the Gospel
- Co-workers Ministry
- Letters Ministry
- Appointment of leadership
- Prayer ministry

Further more in preventing further decline, the church must evaluate the church's growth, the same way that Jesus evaluated the seven churches of Asia as discussed in 2.9.2 above.

#### **6.2.4.1 Motivation**

The majority of respondents indicated that there was a lack of most of the above elements.

### **6.3 CONCLUSION**

In concluding this study, I have realized that Second Bethel AME Church is in need of strategies to curb membership decline. In line with the literature and empirical study the above strategies are recommended. These recommendations are biblically and universally applicable for implementation to any local church. The findings of this study and its recommendations were presented to bring about a positive contribution to the matter of how churches that experience decline in membership can turnaround towards growth.

The church of Jesus Christ is today diverse in terms of denominational traditions and different countries and cultures in which it is found. The researcher therefore perceives the need for other empirical case study of local churches that are struggling with issues of membership decline. Such studies could be conducted along the lines used in this present study.

There is also a need for comparative studies. It would broaden our knowledge for instance, to use the data that was collected during this study in a comparative study involving another local church in another area or even denomination.

The impact of pluralism on the phenomenon of church membership decline was not explored in this study. It would be useful for this to be investigated in an effort to devise or adjust strategies to curb church membership decline that may be primarily the result of the impact of pluralism.

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**FORMAL REQUEST MADE TO THE EPISCOPAL BISHOP TO CONDUCT THIS STUDY**

Enquiries : MA Mahloko  
Telephone: +27 16 950 5163  
Fax : +27 16 950 5254  
Cell : +27 82 438 0925  
Email : [mmahloko@gmail.com](mailto:mmahloko@gmail.com)

North West University  
P.O. Box 1174  
**VANDEBIJLPARK**  
1911

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15 September 2012

Rt. Rev. Paul J M Kawimbe  
The Presiding Bishop  
19<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District of the AME Church  
P.O. Box 261306  
**Excom**  
**2023**

Dear Bishop Kawimbe

**REQUEST OF APPROVAL FOR EXECUTION OF A RESEARCH STUDY**

I greet you in the Name above all Names, the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ.  
Amen.

I am an itinerant Deacon in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, East Annual Conference and currently registered with the Northwest University [Vaal Triangle Campus] and pursuing a master's degree in Theology. Through this letter, I request the Bishop to grant me permission to conduct research on the topic, "strategies to turn around decline in local churches: a case of an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) local church". The Second Bethel AME Church is the locus of this study. The research topic has been duly approved by the university.

The objective of this research is to develop appropriate strategies for turning around declining membership in churches. The use of Second Bethel in this study is not in any way intended to bring this church to shame or any other church for that matter. It is to present a tangible problem and come up with a proposed solution that will ensure church growth.

Some of the members of the church, like the Presiding Elder of the District, the local pastor at Second Bethel as well as lay persons will be requested to participate and form part of this research project by means of completing questionnaire. This will be done without interruption of the church activities and without compromising church service time.

On completion of the research study, the results thereof will be made available to the church for future application in the churches at large through your office, as well as to the direct participants of the research study for future application, if found necessary.

All responses to the research study will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only. If further clarification is needed, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Prof. Christopher Rabali is my supervisor and his contact details are provided below. Should you need further information to facilitate granting the requested permission, kindly contact me or him in the provided contact details.

Thank you in anticipation for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully

.....

**Rev. MA Mahloko**

**Approved/Not Approved**

.....

**Rt. Rev. Paul J.M. Kawimbe**

Professor Christopher Rabali  
Director: School of Basic Sciences  
North West University  
Tel : +27 16 910 3465/51  
Cell: +27 82 469 6098  
Email: [christopher.Rabali@nwu.ac.za](mailto:christopher.Rabali@nwu.ac.za)

CC: Rev. TS Setai: P.E. Wilberforce District /AA to Bishop  
: Rev. Mengoai, AA to Bishop  
: Rev. PE Thothobolo: Pastor Second Bethel

## APPENDIX B

### LETTER ISSUED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE TO STEWARDS, TRUSTEES, CLASS LEADERS, AUXILIARY LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH REQUESTING THEIR PARTICIPATION.

**Enquiries** : MA Mahloko  
**Telephone:** +27 16 950 5163  
**Fax** : +27 86  
**Cell** : +27 82 438 0925  
**Email** : [mmahloko@gmail.com](mailto:mmahloko@gmail.com)  
**Student No:** 201711093

North West University  
P.O. Box 1174  
**VAN DER BIJLPARK**  
1911

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25 August 2013

Officers of the Church  
Second Bethel AME Church  
Orange Farm

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

You have been selected to voluntarily participate in a research study which examines the level of success of the strategies for turning around decline in local churches: A case study of an AME Local Church.

This research study is a requirement for the undersigned to complete a master's degree in Theology at Northwest University (NWU, Vaal Triangle Campus). The study and the attached survey instrument remains independent of the AME Church and no one, except NWU faculty members, will have access to your responses.

The objective of this study, through the attached questionnaire, is to obtain information regarding your perceptions of membership decline at your church. Your prompt responses will be used to determine whether the church is doing all in its power to curb membership decline and if not to develop strategies to ensure growth. I would be grateful if you could spend a few minutes answering the attached questionnaire. As all of them are designed for quick and easy response, they require a tick or a circle only.

I assure you that all your responses will be treated with a high degree of secrecy and confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only. When the results of this survey are published, readers will be unable to identify any specific individual. The survey result will be viewed in terms of overall perceptions. Please do not sign, or in any way identify yourself.

If you need further clarification feel free to contact me or my supervisor, whose contact details are provided below.

Thank you for your cooperation

Yours faithfully

.....

**Rev. M.A. Mahloko**

**Professor Christopher Rabali**  
**Director: School of Basic Sciences**  
**North West University**  
**Tel : +27 16 910 3465/51**  
**Email: [christopher.Rabali@nwu.ac.za](mailto:christopher.Rabali@nwu.ac.za)**

**CC: Rev. TS Setai: P.E. Wilberforce District /AA to Bishop**  
**: Rev. Mengoai, AA to Bishop**  
**: Rev. PE Thothobolo: Pastor Second Bethel**

**APPENDIX C**

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE PRESIDING ELDER, PASTOR,  
STEWARDS, TRUSTEES AND CLASS LEADERS AT SECOND BETHEL**

<p><b>STRATEGIES TO TURN AROUND DECLINE IN LOCAL CHURCHES: A CASE OF AN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) LOCAL CHURCH</b></p>
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Submission Instructions

The high-ranking person in the church with direct responsibility for management and leadership acumen should complete this survey:

Name : .....

Title : .....

Position : .....

Phone : .....

Fax : .....

E-mail : .....

**IF NOT USING REAL NAME PLEASE USE “JOE NKU” OR “MARY NKU”**



**Section 2.): LEADERSHIP**

This section looks at the church’s leadership style and its impact on the status quo, growth or decline in the membership of the church. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
10.	The church has a structured five year strategic plan	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11.	The Clergy encourage members of the church to discover and use their God given talents	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12.	During the worship service the leaders of the church encourage biblical relevance.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
13.	Opportunity is provided for mentoring and coaching and leaders encourage member’s participation in church activities.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
14.	The church strategy is reviewed annually to be aligned with the changes in the society and the church at large.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15.	The church leaders continue to seek the needy and distress in order to relieve and comfort them	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 3.): PREACHING**

This section looks at the church’s effort at improving preaching and church service and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
16.	Preaching takes the large part of the Sunday service	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
17.	Members draw strength from Sunday’s and mid-week’s preaching	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
18.	Preaching addresses current issues and relevant to the audience.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
19.	Sermons are delivered in an language that can be understood by all	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
20.	Preaching in the church motivates members to continue coming for more sermons	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
21.	There is a need for greater member involvement in preaching	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
22.	The sermons are bible based and relevant to member’s daily living.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 4): EVANGELISM**

This section looks at the church’s effort at improving evangelism and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
23.	The church provides its members with training on evangelism	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
24.	The church provides training on spiritual gifts and how to determine them	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
25.	The church’s mission statement does cater for evangelism	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
26.	The church organizes annual community evangelism related activities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
27.	The church has an active department of evangelism	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
28.	Evangelism is important for church growth as per the bible (Matthew 28:18-20)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
29.	The pastor lives an evangelism lifestyle	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
30.	The Church has dedicated evangelists	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 5): CLASS LEADER’S SYSTEM**

This section looks at the class leader’s system and its impact on the growth or decline in membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
31.	The class leaders receive training on membership multiplication	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
32.	The class leaders meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
33.	The class leaders visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
34.	The number of classes and class leaders grow annually	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
35.	The class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
36.	The church has a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
37.	The class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
38.	The class leaders system is important for membership growth	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
39.	During class meetings there is time for fellowship.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 6.): MEMBERSHIP RETENTION**

This section looks at the current membership retention strategy and its impact on the growth or decline in the church’s membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

SKILLS		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
40.	Members of the of the church are kept on a high and sound spiritual level	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
41.	Some members of our church have left for greener pastures	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
42.	The church seeks the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
43.	Churches in the vicinity of the AME Church creates a situation for migration from the AME Church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
44.	Some classes are merged due to members leaving the church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
45.	The church investigates all members on the roll	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
46.	The church conducts the membership survey	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
47.	The church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 7.): CHURCH FINANCES**

This section looks at the impact which church finances has on the growth or decline in the church’s membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

<b>TOOLS AND RESOURCES</b>		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>48.</b>	The church make an extra account for all moneys/provisions collected for the pastor’s support as per the AME Church Doctrine and Discipline.					
<b>49.</b>	The church stewardship and finance board provides accurate reports for every expenditure.					
<b>50.</b>	The church stewardship and finance board members are trained in financial management					
<b>51.</b>	The church financial needs are planned by the entire congregation					
<b>52.</b>	50% of the church members contribute their tithe monthly					
<b>53.</b>	There are monthly teachings on tithing in the church					
<b>54.</b>	Church members are encouraged to ask question relating to church finances					

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 8.): COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

This section looks at the impact which laity/clergy relationship has on the growth or decline in the church’s membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

TOOLS AND RESOURCES		SA	A	DK	DA	SD
55.	The church’s membership drives reach the community					
56.	The church has a good relationship with the schools in its area					
57.	The church is taking part in community activities and projects					
58.	The church belongs to our community					
59.	The church invites the community to social activities					
60.	The church is involved in community road shows					
61.	The church is known in Orange Farm for its community based activities					

**Any Comment:**

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**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEN AUXILIARY AND ORGANIZATION  
LEADERS (PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY) AT SECOND BETHEL**

**1. STRATEGIES TO TURN AROUND DECLINE IN LOCAL CHURCHES: A  
CASE OF AN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) LOCAL CHURCH**

Submission Instructions

The following persons are invited to fill in the questionnaire. Two auxiliary and organization leaders from each auxiliary and lay organization

**Name** : .....

**Title** : .....

**Position** : .....

**Phone** : .....

**Fax** : .....

**E-mail** : .....

**IF NOT USING REAL NAME PLEASE USE "JOE NKU" OR "MARY NKU"**



**Section 2.): AUXILIARY MINISTRY**

This section looks at the church’s auxiliary ministry and its impact on the status quo, growth or decline in the membership of the church. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
62.	The church has an ongoing training for members in auxiliaries	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
63.	The training program deals with auxiliary needs and expectations	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
64.	It is easy for a new member to hold office in an auxiliary	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
65.	Auxiliaries have an adopted program to recruit new members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
66.	All auxiliaries of the church are supported by the church leadership	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
67.	Auxiliaries have adopted strategies to practice love moreover to new members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 3): EVANGELISM**

This section looks at the church’s effort at improving evangelism and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
23.	The church provides its members with training on evangelism	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
24.	The church provides training on spiritual gifts and how to determine them	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
25.	The church’s mission statement does cater for evangelism	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
26.	The church organizes annual community evangelism related activities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
27.	The church has an active department of evangelism	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
28.	Evangelism is important for church growth as per the bible (Matthew 28:18-20)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
29.	The pastor lives an evangelism lifestyle	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
30.	The Church has dedicated evangelists	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 4): CLASS LEADER’S SYSTEM**

This section looks at the class leader’s system and its impact on the growth or decline in membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
31.	The class leaders receive training on membership multiplication	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
32.	The class leaders meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
33.	The class leaders visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
34.	The number of classes and class leaders grow annually	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
35.	The class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
36.	The church has a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
37.	The class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
38.	The class leaders system is important for membership growth	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
39.	During class meetings there is time for fellowship.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 5.): MEMBERSHIP RETENTION**

This section looks at the current membership retention strategy and its impact on the growth or decline in the church’s membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

SKILLS		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
40.	Members of the of the church are kept on a high and sound spiritual level	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
41.	Some members of our church have left for greener pastures	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
42.	The church seeks the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
43.	Churches in the vicinity of the AME church creates a situation for migration from the AME church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
44.	Some classes are merged due to members leaving the church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
45.	The church investigates all members on the roll	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
46.	The church conducts the membership survey	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
47.	The church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 6.): COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

This section looks at the impact which laity/clergy relationship has on the growth or decline in the church’s membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

<b>TOOLS AND RESOURCES</b>		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>55.</b>	The church’s membership drives reach the community					
<b>56.</b>	The church has a good relationship with the schools in its area					
<b>57.</b>	The church is taking part in community activities and projects					
<b>58.</b>	The church belongs to our community					
<b>59.</b>	The church invites the community to social activities					
<b>60.</b>	The church is involved in community road shows					
<b>61.</b>	The church is known in Orange Farm for its community based activities					

**Any Comment:**

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**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECOND BETHEL CHURCH MEMBERS  
RANDOMLY SELECTED**

**2. STRATEGIES TO TURN AROUND DECLINE IN LOCAL CHURCHES: A  
CASE OF AN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) LOCAL CHURCH**

**Submission Instructions**

The following persons are invited to fill in the questionnaire. Two auxiliary leaders from each auxiliary and twenty members randomly selected from list submitted by the church secretary.

**Name** : .....

**Title** : .....

**Position** : .....

**Phone** : .....

**Fax** : .....

**E-mail** : .....

**IF NOT USING REAL NAME PLEASE USE "JOE NKU" OR "MARY NKU"**



**Section 2.): CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

This section looks at the church’s cultural diversity and its impact on the status quo, growth or decline in the membership of the church. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
68.	The church caters for cultural diversity.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
69.	The church has responded to the times and community issues	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
70.	The Church is missing out and lagging behind as far as community issues are concerned	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
71.	The church remains relevant in the face of cultural diversity	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
72.	Cultural diversity is appreciated at the AME local church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
73.	The church caters for cultural diversity.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 3): CLASS LEADER’S SYSTEM**

This section looks at the class leader’s system and its impact on the growth or decline in membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
31.	The class leaders receive training on membership multiplication	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
32.	The class leaders meet with members weekly as per the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
33.	The class leaders visit the sick, confined or those in need of spiritual care?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
34.	The number of classes and class leaders grow annually	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
35.	The class leaders attend the quarterly conference meetings	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
36.	The church has a system to ensure that all members of the church belong to a class	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
37.	The class leaders have capacity to identify spiritual gifts within their classes	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
38.	The class leaders system is important for membership growth	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
39.	During class meetings there is time for fellowship.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 4.): MEMBERSHIP RETENTION**

This section looks at the current membership retention strategy and its impact on the growth or decline in the church’s membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

SKILLS		<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>
40.	Members of the of the church are kept on a high and sound spiritual level	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
41.	Some members of our church have left for greener pastures	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
42.	The church seeks the needy and distressed in order to relieve and comfort them	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
43.	Churches in the vicinity of the AME church creates a situation for migration from the AME church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
44.	Some classes are merged due to members leaving the church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
45.	The church investigates all members on the roll	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
46.	The church conducts the membership survey	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
47.	The church has a follow-up system on members not coming to church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Any Comment:**

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**Section 5.): COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

This section looks at the impact which laity/clergy relationship has on the growth or decline in the church’s membership. Please respond to each statement by placing an “X” in the relevant box of each competency. Indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don’t know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

<b>TOOLS AND RESOURCES</b>		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>48.</b>	The church’s membership drives reach the community					
<b>49.</b>	The church has a good relationship with the schools in its area					
<b>50.</b>	The church is taking part in community activities and projects					
<b>51.</b>	The church belongs to our community					
<b>52.</b>	The church invites the community to social activities					
<b>53.</b>	The church is involved in community road shows					
<b>54.</b>	The church is known in Orange Farm for its community based activities					

**Any Comment:**

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