



**The Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church
growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African
Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own work. All the sources that I have quoted from 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.

DECLARATION

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This dissertation owes a debt of gratitude to several people who made this dream come true.

First and foremost, Glory, Peace and Dominion be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, who made all things possible.

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Reitumetse Gracious Mahloko and

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Lonwabo Lehlohonolo (Grand Son)

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ABSTRACT

This study intended to investigate the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. This study reveals that these Local AME Churches are confronted with an inability to sustain membership growth. The underlying issues attributed to this decline are, among others: these Churches' Class Leaders' inadequate training, lack of leadership, skills gap, and deficiency in knowledge to lead the Classes. Other challenges lie on the Class Leaders' inability to oversee the Church finances and their unhealthy relationship with the presiding Pastors.

This shows that the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is lacking. This underlying problem yet to be filled by this study stems from a decline in the membership growth of the AME Local Churches within the Wilberforce District. To close the above empirical gap, a qualitative research methodology was deemed fit to pursue the current research inquiry.

In pursuance of this current study, an investigation of the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church followed a qualitative approach. As this qualitative study remained unexplored and new, an exploratory research design was deemed appropriate. To achieve this, this study took an epistemological stance to investigate the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy of the five (5) identified Local AME Churches such as DM Robinson, Trinity, St Peter, CD Nthoba and OL Sherman) located within the Wilberforce District.

The unit of analysis of this study is out of 12 Churches that constitute the Wilberforce District. Of the 12 Churches, a purposeful sampling was used to select 5 Churches. The set criteria were that these local AME Churches were chosen because they have a history of more than forty years and are based within Emfuleni Local Municipality. The Class Leaders and Group Members were the population for this study. A convenience sampling was used to arrive at a sample of 240 individual members and 20 Group Members. The scope of this empirical investigation is limited to both participant observation and Group Administered Questionnaires within the five identified AME Churches. The unstructured interviews have been conducted to gain an in-depth and description of their life-world experiences of the individual and group members of the decline or growth of the AME Churches' membership. The qualitative data has been analysed by producing graphs, Figures and Tables. Eventually, collected data was analysed and interpreted.

This study recommends that Class Leader Ministry rely on adequate training, leadership skills and adequate knowledge to lead the Classes. The due diligence to the Church finances and healthy relationship with the resident Pastors as the backbone of a Church growth strategy should also be given due attention. Operationally, when fostered and valued, Class Leader Ministry can play a significant role in growing the AME Local Churches' membership.

Keywords: Class leader, Class leader ministry, backbone of a Church growth, Wilberforce District, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, South Africa.

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CHAPTER 1

1 INTRODUCTION, ORIENTATION, AND RESEARCH METHOD

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This investigation is about ways in which the Class Leader Ministry can become the backbone of an appropriate strategy for Church growth in the AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. The study will therefore look at the Class Leader Ministry to make recommendations about it with a view of making it an effective driver for sustainable membership and spiritual growth in the Churches of the Wilberforce District. A total of seven chapters were deemed necessary to explore the essential aspects associated with this academic investigation.

This chapter presents the concepts for the investigation by providing the orientation and background of the study, the problem statement and the rationale for this research, the hypothesis, the research questions, together with the objectives of the study. Details pertaining to methodology and relevant research ethics matters are also explained.

1.2 ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The researcher's curiosity in studying issues relating to Church growth with a focus on the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Churches was raised by reports presented by the district statistician of the AME Church during the Wilberforce District Conference. The researcher, as the secretary of the District, went through the statistician's reports of the five years starting from 2011 to 2015 (Minutes, 2011:27, Minutes, 2012:28, Minutes, 2013:14, Minutes, 2014:16, Minutes, 2015:39). These statistics are presented in Figure 1.1 below.

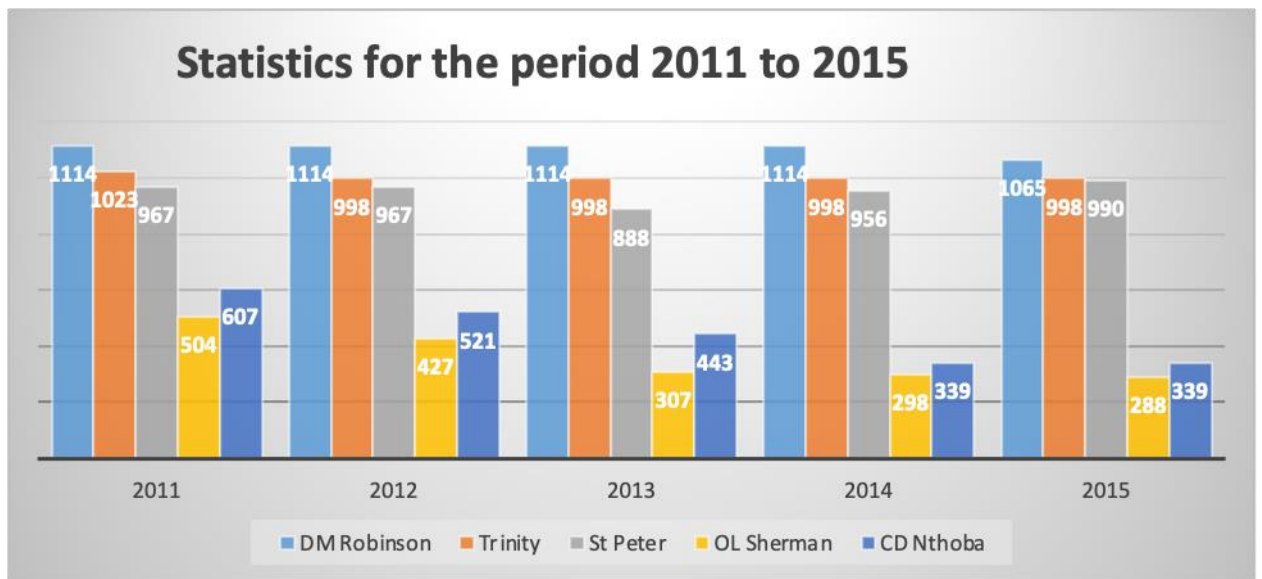


Figure 1.1: STATISTICS FROM 2011 TO 2015

The statistics revealed that these Churches are either stagnating or declining in membership. Figure 1.1 above indicates that in 2011, Dare Mae Robinson had 1114 members, but by 2015, membership had declined to 1065. This is despite the fact that the Church is located in an area which is experiencing a growing population with the development of new townships like Boitumelo, Johan Deo, and Kanana. The statistics for St Peter may suggest that the Church experienced some growth. In 2011 there were 967 members, and in 2015 there were 990 members. The bone of contention here is that there are three new townships developed around St Peter and OL Sherman, namely: Tshepiso, with its extensions, Powerville Park, and Miami Sands. The surrounding town of Vanderbijpark has also experienced a considerable population dynamic transformation. OL Sherman depicts a drastic membership decline between 2011 and 2015. CD Nthoba confirms the fact that the Churches are declining in membership. In 2011, CD Nthoba had 607 members but in 2015 had only 339 members regardless of the growing developments in Zone 10 towards the Kwa-Gastroom station, Zone 12 extension (Lengoeleng informal settlement), and developments of Eastonside. In areas where these selected Wilberforce District Churches are located, there are no new AME Churches planted; instead, there is population growth; but membership is declining. All these Churches are based within Emfuleni Local Municipality (details to follow in the fourth chapter). According to statistics SA, Emfuleni Local Municipality population was estimated at 658 422 for October 2001 (Stats SA 2003a). Evaton estimated at 143 152, Sharpeville estimated at 41 031, and Sebokeng estimated at 222 044 (Stats SA, 2003a). In line with the population estimates of Stats SA (2003a), this Municipality's population grew by 1.95% as calculated from Stats SA (2003b:6).

These statistics were compared with the reports from 1974 to 1978 (Minutes, 1974:7, Minutes, 1975:18, Minutes, 1976:29, Minutes, 1977:14, Minutes, 1978:39). Documentary evidence from both the reports reveals an alarming trend of membership stagnation and decline in the Wilberforce District. Figure 1.2 below depicts the differences in trends and statistics for the two periods cited above.

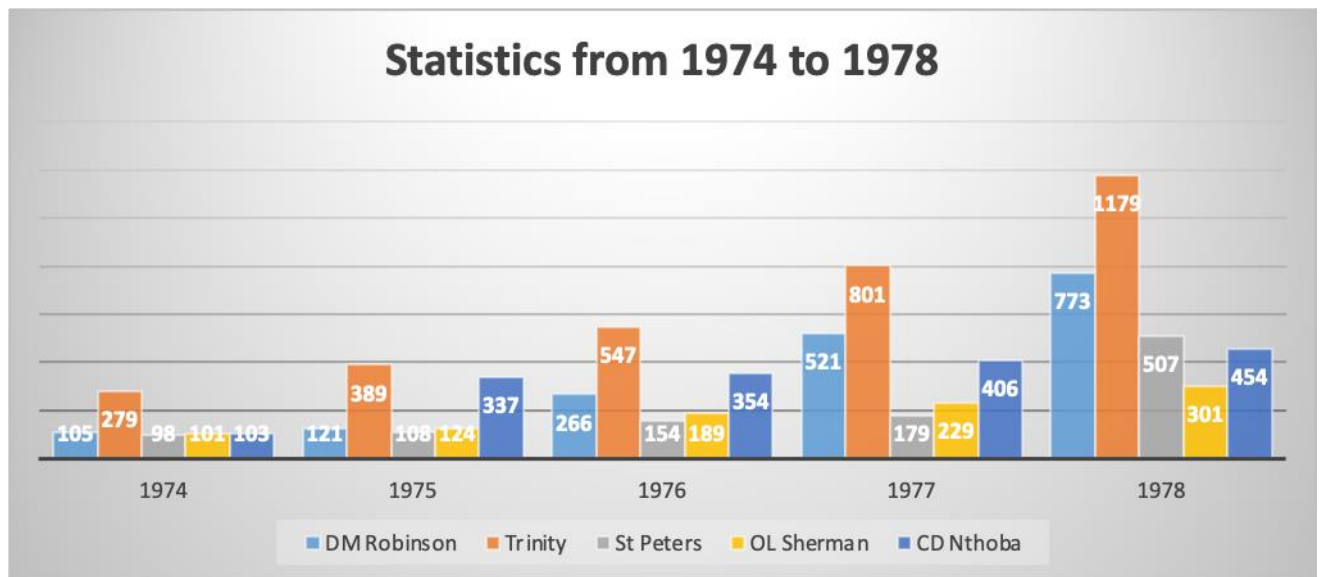


Figure 1.2: STATISTICS FROM 1974 TO 1978

The above comparison shows that the Church multiplied from 1974 to 1978. Trinity grew from 279 members in 1974 to 1179 members in 1978. This can be attributed to the growth of Wilberforce College, which attracted students and employees from around the country, and RR Wright Theological Seminary, which continued to produce high-quality pastors. This growth is not visible anymore; on the contrary, Churches stagnated or declined. DM Robinson grew from 105 members in 1974 to 773 members in 1978. This was influenced by the development of Zone 10 and its dual role (this Church was used as a school during the week and a Church on Sundays). Currently, the Church is only used on Sunday for Sunday worship services and seldom used during the week by auxiliaries of the Church.

A study of minutes of meetings held between pastors and Class Leaders of these five Churches between 1974 and 1978 suggests that Class Leaders were doing their work as prescribed in the book of discipline, and regular meetings were held with pastors for feedback and empowerment. As a result, habitually, the Class Leader Ministry was very successful in serving members. The Ministry was also an effective liaison vehicle between members and pastors.

There is evidence from both the doctrine and the discipline of the AME Church that indicates that the Class Leaders are not only expected to attend to Class members' problems but are also expected to inform the affected pastor of their meeting outcomes (AME Church, 2021:112). Such a role implies that a Class Leader should be a well-skilled individual. It further implies that such a person should continuously empower himself/herself. Details regarding this matter will be probed in greater detail in the study.

General literature on Church growth emphasizes the fact that there is a need for strategies for Church growth (Means, 1993:184; Malphurs, 1999:152, 153; Horton, 2011:163, 164). Horton (2011:165) also convincingly argues that the bible teaches that discipleship should play a critical role when formulating a Church growth strategy. This current study, accordingly, suggests that in the case of an AME Church, a biblical Church growth strategy in which discipleship is at the centre should involve Class Leaders. This is mainly for them to assist the pastor in ministering to non-members and make the Church more appealing in order to attract more people, retain current members and also to serve the spiritual needs of members. The work of attracting more members, feeding them spiritually, and sustaining their commitment cannot be achieved by the pastor, as the head of the local Church, alone (Alakija, 2015:76). It is essential to develop ministries that will assist the pastor to attract more members and to ensure spiritual growth and sustainability within the Church.

The AME Church has several ministries and auxiliaries to assist in promoting the Church's spiritual growth (AME Church, 2012:112). There are, of course, certain local Churches in which some of these ministries only exist in the documents clarifying the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church but not in practice. The work of the Church in the district depends on the pastor's ability, skills, and knowledge to ensure that a ministry such as the Class Leader Ministry is functional as part of a strategy for Church growth. The Class Leaders work closely alongside the pastors (AME Church, 2021:112), and they must be appointed by the pastor to lead Classes (AME Church, 2021:112). That is why pastors are concerned with getting the correct, competent individuals to work with them as Class Leaders. Most of the time there are competent but not the right people to assist (Alakija, 2015:76) or take up the role. These individuals have skills and knowledge, but they are not willing to serve in the Church, while some have negative attitudes towards the task or members of the Church. This can be interpreted using the exact words used by Engel & Norton (1975:14), that there is little or no harvest because the harvest equipment of the Church lost its cutting blade. The following section will present the problem leading to the need for this study.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND SUBSTANTIATION

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

Figure 1.2 above depicts an exciting growth rate in terms of membership between 1974 and 1978. In contrast, Figure 1.1 reveals that the Church is no longer growing. In light of this evidence, the Presiding Elder, as the head of the district, emphasized that there is a problem with Church membership and spiritual growth (Minutes, 2015:21).

For the years in which the researcher has been involved in ministerial duties (admitted and put on trial 2008-2011, Itinerant Deacon, 2011-2013, Itinerant Elder 2013 up to date), she has noted that the AME Churches strive for numerical growth, which is not even the Church's objective. She has also noted that the reason for striving for numerical growth rather than spiritual growth is due to the Church's inability to meet its financial obligations. As a result, some of the Churches lose focus on fellowship and community and instead focus on fundraising. She has observed that some AME Churches are losing the spiritual relationship they should maintain.

The dilemma facing the Church is a growing feeling of alienation amongst Churches. The Churches lost the essential sense of community and fellowship that Churches have maintained for centuries (Malone, 1985:14). According to Conn (1982:11), 60% of the unChurched believe that most Churches and synagogues have lost the fundamental spiritual part of religion, about half of this percentage say Churches are not effective in helping people find the meaning in life. The Church lost its first love, as put by Conn (1982:12); the Church saved the love for rainy days instead of showing love every day. The AME Church must redirect its energy towards fellowship with Christ, with one another, and a sense of belonging; that way, the Church will grow. Due to this real problem, the researcher investigates the phenomenon of Church growth so as to make proposals regarding the required strategy for AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. In view of the role that the Class Leader Ministry played in the history of the Church, the study will look at whether and how the Class Leader Ministry could become the backbone of the appropriate strategy for Church growth in the AME Churches within the Wilberforce District.

The AME Church inherited the Class Leader Ministry from the Methodist Church as this ministry was introduced by John Wesley (AME Church, 2021:65). Wesley broke his society into small

Classes according to their geographical area; this was to ensure that the members of the group are not far from one another for meetings, to increase attendance and to ensure that the Class Leader can access his/her members and they too can access each other with ease. According to Wesley, the Class Leader Ministry was an effective means of his principles of discipleship. The Class Leader Ministry was about members meeting once a week with the intention of teaching them to fear God and work righteousness while striving to enter at the straight gate to lay hold of eternal life (Wesley, 1872:250). Society increased and they continued to break groups into smaller groups; as soon as they grew bigger, each Class was to have twelve members (Wesley, 1872:457). Through the Class Leader Ministry, the Methodist Church grew both numerically and spiritually.

There are so many different terminologies used by different Churches for the groups established for the same purpose as the Class Leader Ministry within the AME Church. The early Church used the term House Church, while others used the term Small Groups; charismatic Churches called these Small Groups Cells, while Philip Spener called them the Cottage Prayer Meetings. More of these are presented in the third chapter of this current study.

Given the facts hinted at here, namely that the Class Leader Ministry or something comparable to it has often occupied an important place in Church growth strategies of many Churches, the main research question, therefore, is "what can be done regarding the Class Leader Ministry of the AME Churches in the Wilberforce District to ensure that it forms the backbone of their discipleship Church growth strategy?"

Based on the introduction and orientation, problem statement, and substantiation, the research aims and objectives are presented in the form of questions, as listed in the next section.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is an effort to provide answers to the following research questions:

- 1.4.1 What is the biblical and theological background and basis of the Class Leader Ministry?
- 1.4.2 What are some of the historical roots, and views associated with the Class Leader Ministry?
- 1.4.3 What is the historical overview of the Class Leader Ministry in the AME Church?
- 1.4.4 What is the place and role of Class Leaders and Class members towards membership growth in the Wilberforce District of the AME Church?

1.4.5 How could the Class Leader Ministry become the backbone of the appropriate strategy for discipleship and Church growth in the AME Church, Wilberforce District?

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 explore the biblical and theological background and basis of the Class Leader Ministry.
- 1.5.2 To provide some of the historical roots and views associated with the Class Leader Ministry.
- 1.5.3 To provide a historical overview of the Class Leader Ministry in the AME Church.
- 1.5.4 To give an understanding of the place and role of Class Leaders and Class Members towards membership growth in the Wilberforce District.
- 1.5.5 To offer recommendations on how Class Leader Ministry can become the backbone of the appropriate strategy for discipleship and Church growth in the AME Church.

1.6 HYPOTHESIS

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

“The inability to sustain membership growth by the AME Churches in the Wilberforce District is linked to Class Leaders’ lack of skills and knowledge to lead the Classes resulting in membership decline in the AME Churches.”

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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

1.7.1 Literature Review

Literature review, according to Moule and Goodman (2014:144), is part of the research study report and can also be part of the introduction of the journal article. Using the literature that is relevant to a topic, according to Moule and Goodman (2014:102), helps to refine a research question and should also confirm that it has not already been answered. The literature review is aimed at contributing to a richer understanding of the nature and meaning of the identified problem (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:123). Therefore, in the literature review, the researcher does not have to use all

available literature in the market but only the information that will add value to the study and assist in reaching a better understanding so as to suggest a solution to the identified problem timeously.

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 previously done into context, providing a framework for further research, and establishing the need for research. It assists the researcher in finding the material associated with the conceptual emphasis of the research problem (Du Plooy, 2009:60). Through literature review in this current study, the researcher anticipated broadening her horizons as well as being enabled to place existing literature into the context of the Churches in the Wilberforce District.

The theoretical part of this research is made up of systematically identifying, locating, synthesizing, and analyzing the available literature of books, journals, newspaper articles, archives, AME Church Conference and local Churches Minutes, the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, the AME Church book of worship and electronic database on existing approaches and techniques of Class Leader Ministry related to spiritual and membership growth, both nationally and internationally pertaining to the research problem. The synthesis of secondary data also consists of a historical analysis of the Class Leader Ministry in the 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. Data collection methods in research based on a qualitative study like this one can be categorized into structures, observation schedules, structured interview schedules, questionnaires, checklists, indexes, and scales (de Vos *et al.*, 2011:181). This empirical investigation's scope is limited to Participant Observation, Group Administered questionnaires and Oral History within the five identified AME Churches (DM Robinson, Trinity, St Peter, CD Nthoba, and OL Sherman) within the Wilberforce District. The researcher herein designed the questionnaire in line with the issues raised by the literature.

1.7.2.1 Group Administered Questionnaire

The study uses a group-administered questionnaire wherein the participants are provided with information as a group. In this case, each participant completes 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). Subsequently, a group discussion took place to solicit the view of the group.

The group mentioned in the previous paragraph consisted of Class Leaders of the selected five Churches. This group responded to questions about the efficiency of the Class Leader Ministry in their respective Churches and the efficient ways to use Class Leader Ministry to improve Church growth for the benefit of the whole congregation. The Class Leaders from each Church were grouped, put in the same venue, and at the same time so that the same information could be given to the group to facilitate the answering of questions without delays during the official board meeting.

The Official Board Meeting is the structure that calls for officers of the Church (including Class Leaders) to account for their actions/activities, advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort members (AME, 2021:73). In this meeting, all Church officers of the Church are expected to attend including Class Leaders to present their monthly/quarterly reports before the local Church's summary reports could be presented to the Presiding Elder during the Quarterly Conference.

1.7.2.2 Participant's Observation

Participant observation is a typical qualitative approach to data, implying that data cannot be reduced to figures (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:329). Empirical evidence suggests that participant observation is a research procedure or method used to study natural or daily activities of an identified field in which the researcher has full participation as a member without ignoring his/her role (Mahloko, 2015:127).

In this study, the researcher visited the five Churches for five months, observing how the Class Leaders led the Classes. She attended the Class meetings and participated. She also took notes.

While participating in all these Class meetings, the researcher had to take precautions and be discreet to avoid interrupting the normal running of these meetings. As a participant observer, the researcher feels that she is better positioned than any external observer or researcher to understand the actual reality behind the sequence of actions that contribute to the need for the Class Leader Ministry to be revitalized. This method granted the researcher access to the most important information, created more understanding, and expedited the development of the study.

The researcher has gained extensive knowledge in missiology through her educational background as she possesses a Master's degree in theology from North-West University and within the Church setting as she serves as the District secretary (2004- up to date), Church school superintendent at the local church (2000-2011) and Church School Superintendent at the District level (2004-2011 and 2022), as a Class Leader at local Church (2000-2008), and as a local preacher/Exhorter (2004-2009).

Her Local Church's official board recommended to the Wilberforce District that she be admitted into the itinerant ministry of the AME Church (Minutes, 2007:9). She was admitted by the East Annual Conference in 2008, ordained an itinerant deacon in 2011 (Minutes 2011a:28) and further ordained an itinerant elder at the sitting of the 2013 East Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and assigned to establish a Church in Poortjie within the Wilberforce District. She successfully established a Church that she served for three years (2013-2016). She was assigned to pastor JE Hunter AME Church in Mapetla, Soweto (2016-2020), then assigned to be the pastor of Mt Zion AME Church in Bekkersdal (2020-2022), and she is currently the pastor of AM Senatle AME Church in Johannesburg. She serves in the board of examiners of the West Annual Conference as the registrar (2022-2023).

1.7.2.3 Oral History

A number of scholars present different definitions of Oral History. Oral History can be defined as a method for historical documentation especially documenting undocumented historical events (Denis, 2005:88). According to Garaba, (2016:1390), Oral History is a "complex interaction between an interviewer and the interviewee about particular events of the past. According to Ngulube (2016:1674), Oral History is associated with storytelling through interviews and is described as the interpretation of memories of historical events. This study assumes that Oral History is the collection of historical information about a historical event or activity through an

interview, where the interviewee retells undocumented historical events/activity information from memory, and the interviewer transfers this information into a written form. More on oral history will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this study.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

As the statement of the problem implies, this study is limited as follows in terms of its scope:

1.8.1 Wilberforce District is made up of twelve Churches. Of the twelve Churches, only five Churches will be discussed as a sample of Churches in the Wilberforce district. It is crucial in the qualitative analysis to define the participants (Mahloko, 2015:175). The literature review presented several existing sampling methods. The researcher opted to use the purposive sampling method. More information on sampling is discussed in the appropriate chapter. The thought behind sampling theory is that a small set of observations can give an indication of what can be expected in the total population of the intended study (Royse, 2004:189-190).

The following Churches, DM Robinson, Trinity, ST Peter, CD Nthoba, and OL Sherman, within the Wilberforce District, in the East Annual Conference within the 19th Episcopal District of the AME Church, are used as the sample for this study.

1.8.2 The study does not consider all the aspects and the processes associated with the five AME Churches but focuses on the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy for Churches in the Wilberforce District.

1.8.3 The study uses the bible. The investigation focuses primarily on biblical texts, which the literature study indicated as most relevant to the issues raised in the research questions.

1.8.4 The role of the researcher in the study as an ordained minister in the AME Church, district secretary, and Participant observer: The researcher guards against being subjective when reporting her findings by ensuring that the research runs its course in an ethically correct manner.

1.9 RESEARCH ETHICS ISSUES

According to Creswell (2016:48), research ethics deal with means engaged and political issues fundamental to the component and use of research. Research ethics makes provision for the planning of research, the accountability for the project, institutional approval, informed permission by the participants, gathering, analysis, and utilizing of data, honouring obligations, and reporting of data without plagiarizing other people's work (Creswell, 2016:55-56). In terms of this research, Group Administered Questionnaires, Participant observation and Oral History were utilized.

Ethics is defined as a set of widely accepted moral principles that offer rules for, and behavioural expectations of the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants, and students (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:129). The following ethical issues were adhered to in the current study:

- 1.9.1 A letter was written to the Prelate of the 19th Episcopal District requesting written consent for the study to be undertaken within the Wilberforce District, in the East Annual Conference AME Church.
- 1.9.2 All sources are acknowledged in this study.
- 1.9.3 The researcher worked professionally by being accurate and honest in reporting on the information contained herein.
- 1.9.4 The researcher was not judgmental towards participant work meth.
- 1.9.5 No persons were forced into participating against their will.
- 1.9.6 The name and inputs of participants were always kept confidential.
- 1.9.7 All participants were protected from any physical, emotional and spiritual discomfort by ensuring that their responses remain confidential and unanimous once in the possession of the researcher herein.
- 1.9.8 Letters were written to participants requesting their written consent to participate in the project.
- 1.9.9 The researcher herein always adhered to the professional ethics referred to in the ethical application.
- 1.9.10 The participants were informed that the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality and anonymity since this is a group involvement.
- 1.9.11 The researcher did also inform participants that she will take all steps necessary, negotiate rules, and ensure that every participant signs a confidentiality clause.

1.9.12 The researcher further informed participants that they were more than welcomed not to share anything they are not comfortable in sharing.

1.9.13 The researcher took every reasonable care to make sure that high standards of integrity and morality will be taken and maintained during the study and when reporting findings.

1.10 GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY

Against the background outlined above, the organization of the research is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction, Orientation, and Research Method of the Study.

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

Chapter 2: Biblical and Theological background of the Class Leader Ministry

This chapter discusses some of the biblical roots, and views associated with the Class Leader Ministry.

Chapter 3: Historical Overview of the Class Leader Ministry

This chapter will explore the history of the Class Leader Ministry.

Chapter 4: Place and role of the Class Leaders and Class members in the AME Church

This chapter explores the place and role of the Class Leaders and Class Members towards membership growth in the Wilberforce District of the AME Church.

Chapter 5: Empirical Study

This chapter will empirically study the effects of the Class Leader Ministry within the Wilberforce district. It focuses on the design, data collection method, the processing technique of this study.

Chapter 6: Summary of the Responses

This chapter summarizes the responses from participants of this study.

Chapter 7: Finding, Summary, Recommendations, Conclusions, and Possible further studies

This chapter presents the findings of the study, the Summary of Chapters, Recommendations, Conclusions, and proposes further research study.

CHAPTER 2

2 BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF CLASS LEADER MINISTRY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the orientation and background of the study, the problem statement and the rationale for the research, the hypothesis, and the research questions, together with the objectives of the study. This chapter explores the *biblical* and *theological* background and or rationale for organizing and promoting Class Leader Ministry (small groups, home cells, wards, family Church, etc.) in the Church.

The study used only carefully selected passages from the Old and New Testaments books and the theological literature discussing the matter. The research assumes that small group ministry remains one of the most effective tools for learning the habits of faith, such as prayer, Bible study, and serving others. People who regularly attend small group meetings show an increased commitment to building their relationships with Christ and others (Dickie, 2019:1).

McBride suggests that the early Church reflected a solid Jewish Old Testament flavour, including its emphasis on groups. He further indicates that the individual family unit was the centre of Jewish religious and social institution, and this practice was carried through into the New Testament era." (McBride, 1990:18).

In the same fashion, Kageler (2018:36) said that the Kingdom of God spreads through multiplication. This author believes that it is adequate to intentionally use the small group ministry to multiply the Church of God to build His Kingdom. The same author indicates that when you have a powerful, growing small group, this group changes lives and impacts people's lives. Ideally, scholarly work also confirms that it may be a good idea to consider splitting the larger group into smaller groups to multiply that effect (Kageler, 2018:37).

To establish a *biblical and theological* basis or rationale for organizing and promoting the Class Leader Ministry in Churches, this chapter explores the literature regarding the Biblical and

Theological Foundation for Class Leader Ministry. To unravel this, the first section of this chapter describes the method to be followed to investigate the Biblical and Theological Foundation of Class Leader Ministry.

The second section examines the selected Old Testament passages to establish the Biblical and Theological foundation for Class Leader Ministry. Many passages and cases of a small group or Class Leader Ministry exist in the Old Testament. In pursuance of this current study, not all books in the Old Testament are considered. To be specific, this study explored the following passages of the Old Testament to provide the Biblical foundation for Class Leader Ministry: Exodus 18:13-27, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and I Chronicles 23-27.

In the third part, the research looks at Class Leader Ministry's Biblical and Theological foundation in the New Testament. This study delves into the New Testament passages that establish the Biblical foundation of Class Leader Ministry. Specifically, the relevance of "Mark 3:13-19, Acts 2:42-47, and Ephesians 4:11-16" is explored in order to establish both the Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry.

The selected passages in both the Old and New Testaments were also chosen based on their frequent use in the literature. The focus is mainly on passages that speak to the division of large groups into smaller groups for Ministry and leadership, e.g., Class Leader Ministry, small groups, small segments, groups that consist of leaders in clans within tribes, working groups, worship structures, etc. These passages are explored to get evidence that even during the Old and New Testament periods, it was essential to divide larger groups into smaller groups, assign a group leader with a specific key performance area, to train leaders, not everyone can lead for effective leadership and Ministry.

It is essential to begin the process of interpreting the scripture with valid assumptions to arrive at the correct conclusion. As an illustrative case in point, Millard Erickson (1984:593-612) illustrated that "If an airplane pilot assumes the wrong weight of the plane, the improper fuel load, wrong wind speed, wrong altitude, and wrong airspeed also relying on an unreliable compass, this pilot will terminate the flight in a rather unexpected way, and at an unknown destination".

To achieve the objective of this study, the Grammatical - Historical Method of interpreting the Bible is used in this study. This method is used to unfold the meaning of the scripture, which was in the mind of the inspired author, ensuring that there is no contravention to what is taught elsewhere in the scripture. That way, the study determines the views of the structure of progressive revelation and consequently influences the Interpretation of other passages and the role and value of both the Old and New Testament revelation for today and for the future. The method is chosen to affirm the Bible's Historical Character proving the foundation for Class Leader Ministry.

The conclusion of this chapter provides guidance as to how the Class Leader Ministry is effective in bringing the desired growth in the AME Church. According to Richards (1970:152-157), small groups were the building block of the local Church, vital for personal spiritual growth, and critical to Church renewal.

2.2 THE GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL METHOD OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

The Grammatical-Historical Method of bible interpretation is a modern Christian hermeneutical method that strives to discover the biblical author's original intended meaning in the text (Elwell, 1984:771). As the name suggests, the Grammatical-Historical Method presupposes that the historical analysis of the text is essential when attempting to unlock the meaning of the various texts within their life settings (Elwell, 1984:771).

Miller *et al.*, (2009:1) assert that the essence of the Grammatical-Historical method of bible interpretation is to uncover the meaning of the original author through the written text. This scholarly literature also affirms that this is achieved through scrutinizing the grammar, examining the syntactical relationship, defining lexical meanings, surveying the ancient Near East's cultural-historical background, and considering the literary genre (Miller *et al.*, 2009:1).

In grammatical Interpretation, the interpreter seeks to understand the meaning of the words, syntax, and grammar of a passage. Since the Biblical languages are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, interpreters stress the importance of knowing these languages. The text of scripture is composed of words, which necessitates comprehending their meaning, but this meaning is in the intention of the original author and the surrounding context.

Seeking the author's intent is a vital key to accurate understanding. This goal places a restraint on the interpreters in which they seek to draw out (exegete) the author's meaning instead of reading into the text (eisegesis) their own meaning. The interpreter will also consider broader contexts such as the surrounding chapters, the book, or related passages to gain further understanding.

2.2.1 Principles of Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutics

In interpreting the selected passages, the study will apply the following principles of Grammatical-Historical Bible interpretation methods:

The historical setting. As a starting point, in this feature, the research seeks to present the text in its historical context or "life setting." Going by the literature gathered, this will consider the individuals in the text, their theological understanding, their culture, their geography, and the surrounding nations that relate to the given context. Kevin Bauder (2012:13-14) states "Historical passages tell us what happened, but by themselves, they do not tell us what ought to happen. On the other hand, teaching passages are designed to instruct us in what to do (Bauder, 2012:13-14)".

When discussing the selected passages, the research will ensure understanding of the original text because God created humans in a way to reflect the understanding of each other's context and cultural setting, even if the cultural perspective of the original audience is different from ours. The scholarly text also emphasizes that all texts have contexts and do not happen in a vacuum (McCartney & Clayton, 1994:148). In supporting this view, Doriani (1996:44) also highlights the importance of considering the people and culture of people receiving the text and what they heard, emphasizing the identity of the author and that of the audience, as well as the author's intent on the words he uses. This author also gives hints on using other fields like archaeology (Doriani, 1996:48).

Comparing Scripture with Scripture. This principle seeks to ensure that the Bible does not contradict itself since it is inspired by an omniscient God (II Timothy. 3:16-17) who never makes mistakes. Considering these truths, the Bible is without error (John 17:17) in the original manuscripts and, therefore, never contradicts itself. The research will ensure scripture is compared with scripture to avoid holding a view in one passage that contradicts the teaching in another passage (Bauder, 2012:14)".

From the above vantage point, the research teaches that the Grammatical-Historical method of interpreting the Bible is necessary if the Bible is going to be interpreted correctly in the light of its nature. In simple terms, this means that during the interpretation of the selected passages, there will be sensitivity to the historical context, setting of the passage under examination, and its grammar or word usage.

The Grammatical-Historical method takes its cue from the presuppositions linked to the nature and importance of scripture. This study aligns itself with the same presuppositions adopting the following assumptions to undergird the study:

- authority of the Bible;
- dual authorship of the Bible;
- authorial intent of scripture;
- a singular sense of the Bible;
- distinct process of application of meaning, and
- The assumption of spiritual factors in the hermeneutical process (Shealy, 2002:161-178).

2.2.1.1 The assumption of biblical authority

The root of the Grammatical-Historical method of Bible interpretations is founded in the tradition of sola Scriptura (doctrine and discipline to be based on scripture alone), which Kaiser (1996:51) records as a "governing principle of all orthodox hermeneutics." In the same breath, Packer (1992:309) concludes that the Grammatico-Historical method is dictated by the doctrine of inspiration, which means that God inspired the authors to write the message after putting the message in the author's mouth. It is this solidified belief in the Bible as a God-breathed book that leads the Grammatical-Historical Bible interpreter to conclude that the Bible presupposes the divine authority of God Himself. This should remind us that the textual meaning of scripture is independent of any interpretation; interpretations remain commentaries without the same standard as the original text.

Scholarly literature maintains that the Grammatical-Historical Method of interpreting the Bible is a high view of the Bible that promotes the imperative of "Good Hermeneutics." The same literature

suggests that the literal method seeks the usual, ordinary sense of the passage under investigation (Corely *et al.*, 2002:190-191).

It is essential to learn about the Bible Author, what the passage is about, any other literature outside the Bible to support it, are the support material reliable, etc. The Bible appears like a symphony orchestra, with the Holy Ghost as its Toscanini; each instrumentalist has been brought willingly, spontaneously, and creatively to play his notes just as the great conductor desired, though none of them could ever hear the music as a whole. *The point of each part only becomes fully clear when seen with all the rest* (Packer, 1994:74); the same view is crucial in the implementation of the Grammatical-Historical Method of interpreting the Bible.

Rather than beginning the hermeneutical enterprise from the present-day cultural vantage point, those who are convinced of the Bible's uniqueness and divine authority begin their interpretational quest in the era of the text under consideration. In this way, timeless truths of the text might be mined and then examined for personal application (Corely *et al.*, 2002:191).

2.2.1.2 The assumption of dual authorship

In close association with a high view of scripture is the related topic of the dual authorship of the Bible. Dual authorship underscores the concurrent involvement of both the divine and human elements in inspiration. The Church has struggled with the hermeneutical implications of dual authorship, especially when it comes to how the Old Testament functions as divine discourse (Thiselton, 2005:597). The risk here is whether or not dual authorship implies that God overrode the human element by offering a deeper, hidden meaning (*sensus plenior*), i.e., "fuller meaning," which is a special instance of spiritual sense when literal and spiritual sense differs (Vanhoozer, 2005:56). An example of this is clear in Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22-23, presenting a literal biblical text or an authoritative doctrinal tradition confirming its presence (Vanhoozer, 2005:34-37).

This facet of the debate is crucial because divine and human meanings in the text should be the same. As this debate ensues, the question to ask is, "If divine meaning exceeds human meaning, how does one know or discern this?" Conversely, if human meaning exceeds divine meaning, then the doctrine of inspiration is compromised (Krabbendam, 1980:413-446). A study by Kaiser &

Silver, (2007:63-66) maintained that an interpreter could only uncover a text's meaning through the Grammatical-Historical approach. The implication of such a study concludes that both the divine meaning and human meaning must merge into the same; otherwise, the Grammatical-Historical methodology is eclipsed by a subjective element. This elevates the interpreter above the biblical author's meaning (Kaiser & Silver, 2007:65-65).

2.2.1.3 The assumption of authorial intent

The authorial intention is a way of describing the ultimate goal of Biblical Interpretation, namely: "to discover what the text meant in the mind of its original author for his intended audience" (Arp, 2000:39). In a similar way, Dockery (1992:171) also refers to this as the "author-oriented perspective. The objective of the author-oriented approach is to pursue textual meaning in the words and context of the one who authored the text, not outside of what was written. This is a constituent element of the Grammatical-Historical method of Bible interpretation. Another study by Hirsch (1967:5-6) warned that divorcing the writers from what they wrote is to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation. Hirsch indicated that once a text is separated from authorial intent, it can mean virtually anything the interpreter wishes it to mean as authority shifts from the meaning of the text to the interpreter. This implies that this literature also concludes that this is what the Grammatical-Historical method of Bible interpretation strives to avoid (Hirsch, 1967:10-11).

Doriani (1996:176) describes the reflections of the biblical narratives into the present life stating that they can reveal the relationship of Christ to the Church through the Kings and their subjects, the Church leaders and their groups through the judges and the nation, and between group leaders and small groups through the divisions of clans and serving teams of Levites and priests. Typology can be applied to illustrate the biblical reflections in today's Class Leader Ministries.

2.2.1.4 The assumption of the singular sense of scripture

The Grammatical-Historical method of exegesis emphasizes the importance of the principle of a single meaning of the text (Kaiser, 1996:158-170). According to Thomas (2002:141), this means that a given text has one meaning "and one meaning only." The same Thomas points out that a fundamental principle in Grammatical-Historical Exposition is that words and sentences can have

an importance in the same connection. Scholars such as Terry (1999:103) maintained that the moment this principle is neglected, we drift out into a sea of uncertainty and conjecture.

Theological literature is also of the view that Grammatical-Historical interpreters committed to this principle are careful to qualify their adherence to the singular sense of a passage with the age-old caveat that, while the meaning of a text is limited to one meaning unless the text indicates otherwise, the applications of that same text are many and varied (Ramm, 1993:113; Thomas, 2002:142). In this study, the research seeks the author's established and unalterable meaning before proceeding to the application of the consequent meaning.

2.2.1.5 The assumption of applying the text

It is vital to maintain a clear distinction between *the set of rules for biblical Interpretation* and the subsequent process of *application* (Shealy, 2002:166). Kaiser (1980:33-34) echoes essentially the same sentiment, seeing the application of an *author's word* as *distinct and secondary* from the Grammatical-Historical process. The literature points out that the desire to start the hermeneutical process from the point of application amounts to the proverbial *tail wagging the dog* (Shealy, 2002:176-177) or fronting the text with the present-day cultural milieu before adequately interpreting the text. The analogy of the cart before the horse fits well here.

The danger of introducing application too early into the Grammatical-Historical process is that it opens the door wide for the prevalence of subjectivity to cloud the meaning the author intended, thereby altering that meaning. This is not to diminish the application of a passage but rather to relegate it to its proper place so that the interpreter does not jump the gun, as it were. With this in mind, Shealy (2002:187) defines application as the use or practice of God's message in personal life, which lies outside the disciplines used to determine the meaning.

2.2.1.6 The assumption of spiritual factors in the hermeneutical process

The Bible is unique and of divine origin, having a distinct authority that transcends the would-be interpreter of the Bible. Given that the Grammatical-Historical interpreter is conscious that Scripture is God's divine revelation to humanity through human agency superintended by God's

Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21), a striking feature of the hermeneutical process should account for spiritual factors. Since the Bible is the result of the Spirit's (John 16:8-13; 2 Peter 1:19-21) attendance, a sinful but believing interpreter requires Holy Spirit illuminating to support the activity of Interpretation (1 Corinthians 2:6-14).

The Spirit's illuminating is not to be confused with revelation, as the two are distinct functions of the Spirit (Virkler & Ayayo, 2007:29). Illuminating this view enables the interpreter to discover the author's intended meaning but not to exceed that meaning. Revelation references the special divine disclosure of God to humanity.

When dealing with the selected passages of this study, it is important to submit to the Spirit of God, prepare spiritually for the hermeneutical journey, and acknowledge that education and human faculties are not enough. The study will follow the guidelines for interpreters outlined by Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutics to enable the interpreters to follow when preparing to study the Bible (McQuilken, 1992:75-78; Ramm, 1993:12-14; Zuck, 1995:22-26). This will be done to demonstrate the foundation of Class Leader Ministry from the Biblical and Theological views.

2.3 THE OLD TESTAMENT BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE CLASS LEADER MINISTRY.

This section will accordingly survey some relevant scriptural passages of the Old Testament in order to explore the foundation of the Class Leader Ministry. These passages will provide the grounds and role of small groups in the growth and Ministry of the Church. The Old Testament has a good base of organizing groups forming a firm foundation for Class Leader Ministry. Furthermore, existing evidence of the small group model is not a model that rose with modern people (Joel: 2017:289). According to McBride (1990:13), the Class Leader Ministry or Small Group Ministry can be traced back to the Old Testament.

In trying to check the authenticity of this statement, this study linked the passages found in theological literature supporting McBride's statement. Many passages present a foundation for small group or Class Leader Ministry in the Old Testament; therefore, not all books in the Old Testament will be considered. In pursuant to this study, only relevant passage(s) from the books

that make up the Old Testament will be considered. The researcher intends to show from these passages that even during the Old Testament period, it was important to divide large groups into smaller groups for effective Ministry and leadership. The study will present evidence that groups were assigned duties and leaders to oversee their activities even during the Old Testament period. The following Old Testament passages will be explored:

- Exodus 18: 13-27,
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and
- I Chronicles 23-27.

2.3.1 Biblical and Theological Foundation of Class Leader Ministry in Exodus 18:13-27

This section examines if the foundation of Class Leader Ministry can be derived from the role played by small groups in Moses' Ministry while leading the Nation of Israel to the Promised Land, looking at Exodus 18:13-27. Small group ministry is vital and necessary in every local Church. This importance and necessity are more impressed in the modern Church (Donahue, 2012:62).

2.3.1.1 The place and historical context of Exodus

The book of Exodus is one of the five books believed to be written by Moses while Israel was in the wilderness; it continues the story that began in Genesis (Fokkelman, 1989:56-62). The Hebrew title for the book is "And these are the names" (we elleph shemôt, the opening words of the book) and demonstrates the connection with Genesis in two ways (Longman III & Dillard, 2009:63). Firstly, Exodus is the sequel to Genesis, and one of its purposes is to continue the history of God's people and to elaborate the great themes introduced in Genesis (Sachar, 1982:16). The name "Exodus," is the Greek word which comes from the LXX name for the second book of the Pentateuch. The name "Exodus" means "exit, departure," or "exodus from Egypt" (Luke 9:31 and Hebrews 11:22). This name "Exodus" is more suitable for the first part of this book (1:1 – 15:21, where the concept of God, Moses, or Moses and Aaron "leading the Israelites out" of Egypt (the house of bondage) is a frequent assertion (e.g., Exodus,3:10 – 12; 6:6, 26, 27; 7:4; 12:17; 13:3, etc.). The second half of the book (Exodus, 15:22 – 40:38) speaks more of God's covenant with Israel (Longman & Garland, 2009:35).

Most scholars ascribe the authorship of this book to Moses. Moses was a Levite, born in 1525 B.C. Found and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter (Fuchs 2000:307). Moses was instructed to write both the episode of Israel's victory over Amalek on a scroll (Exodus, 17:14) And the Ten Commandments (Exodus: 34:4, 27 – 29). He wrote down everything the Lord had said" (Exodus, 24:4), including the book of the covenant (Exodus, 20:22 - 23:33). The claims that Moses wrote the book of Exodus are supported by a strong association of Mosaic authorship with these same materials in other Old Testament books, like Joshua 1:7; 8:31 – 32; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:1 – 13; and Malachi 4:4." (Longman & Garland, 2009:37).

The book of Exodus does not give specific information to link biblical events definitively with Egyptian chronology. Therefore, this material's date is unclear; many scholars date it after the giving of the law at Sinai, leading to many scholars projecting its current position backward (Currid, 2006:381). This study's selected passage (Exodus 18:13-27) serves as the prologue to the second half of Exodus (Carpenter, 1997:107 in Baker & Wenham, 2017:345).

The book of Exodus is included in this study to provide a background of Class Leader Ministry because it contains some of the substantial foundational theology in the Old Testament. Particularly, it lays the foundations for a theology of God's revelation of his person, his redemption, his law, and his worship. It also initiates the great institution of the priesthood and the role of the prophets and formalizes the covenantal relationship between God and his people (Longman & Garland, 2009:648).

2.3.1.2 The literary context of Exodus 18: 13-27

In the literary context of Exodus, as much as Exodus is the continuation of Genesis, it is important to discuss it outside other books to get more information on its structure, genre, and style.

2.3.1.2.1 Structure

The book of Exodus begins with the account of the Israelite's life in Egypt as slaves and then presents a scenario of how God's divine intervention sent Moses to lead them out of bondage (Exodus 1:1-14), followed by the Israelites violating their relationship with God, the first half of this book (Exodus 18:13-27) ends with the formation of the judiciary system for the Israelites, geographically at the mountain of the deity after they crossed the Red Sea walking in the

Wilderness of Shur and temporally before the revelation of the Covenant Code and Moses was their leader. God was personally providing them with their daily needs (Sherley, 2019:227). The last section of this book (Exodus 19-40) includes the era when Moses gives the Israelites the ten commandments, the time he gives them the moral laws, and lastly, the construction of the tabernacle, receiving of the priesthood, the temporal worship of calf (Longman III & Dillard (2009:70; Joen: 2017:289). This structure presents a clear picture that this book's main focus is salvation, law, and worship.

Exodus 18:13-27 indicates that, on the arrival of Jethro, Moses was the only one responsible for all the administrative duties of the Israelites. Exodus 18:13-17 further suggests Moses' leadership style was not serving the Nation of Israel effectively. The litigants stood around Moses from morning till evening, with Moses alone handling all issues among the Israelites (Sherley, 2019:227). This happened before Moses established small groups and leaders.

In the literary context of Exodus 18:13-27, we must take note of the following two things that lay the foundation to justify the need for a governing structure or small groups amongst groups, especially this group of Israelites led by Moses alone, looking at the pressure faced by Moses. Firstly, we must briefly look at Exodus 15-17, where the Israelites come to Moses in numbers complaining about the lack of water; secondly, we look at Exodus 19:1-23, where the Israelites received the moral and civil laws. Once the laws are in place, Moses will definitely need people to assist him in administering those laws (Robinson, 1988:139).

2.3.1.2.2 Setting

The sophisticated structure of the juridical administration suggests an origin in court, which would be capable of sustaining an intricate organization rather than in the loose structure of the early confederacy (II Corinthians 19:5-11). The report of the meeting between Jethro and Moses, leading to a covenantal bond, shows the interest of the cult in overshadowing the heroic element. Deeds recited by the ritual are Yahweh's, not Moses' (Coats, 1999:148).

2.3.1.2.3 Intention

The latest level of the unit intends to justify the origin of professional judges under the stamp of Mosaic authority and, thereby, the decentralization of Mosaic authority. It thus has an etiological function. The earlier level focuses more directly on the cult, intending to express a praise response

to a recitation of God's deeds. This function is in all probability, tied with covenant-making between two parties of equal status, in this case between Jethro and Moses (Cody, 1968:153-154).

2.3.1.3 Genre

The book of Exodus is made up of many different types of literature, and it has narrative, law, and poetry; the primary generic label for the book of Exodus is prophetic or theological history (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:72). The book intends to inform its readers about God's great acts in the past (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:72).

Exodus is somewhat different from many other books of history in the Bible because of the important role that law plays in it. It is not within the scope of Exodus to discuss the important work that has been done on a formal analysis of law, but we must point out the integration of narrative and legal materials in the book. The law is not just an appendage or separate part of the book but flows within the history of redemption (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:72).

In Exodus 18:13-26, the basic structural workout is dialogue. The dialogue itself begins as a legal exchange. But the legal character of the dialogue breaks off in Exodus 18:17-18. There is an instruction that model as advice for a new administration takes their place. This unit is essentially dependent on Exodus 18:8-12. Formulas and stereotyped expressions include the etiologies in Exodus 18:3 and 4, both type I (Long). The blessing formula in Exodus 18:11 constitutes a prayer conceived as a reaction to God's deeds, not as a contribution to God's power. The dialogue in Exodus 18:14 - 18 has been stamped with the procedure of the pro-official legal process (Coats, 1999:147-148).

2.3.1.4 The Theological Message of Exodus

Exodus 18:13-17 provides a context that Moses spent the whole day (from morning till evening) solving the problems of the Nation of Israel. He had several duties to perform alone, and he had to act as a judge to arbitrate disputes between Israelites; Moses was a source of divination to whom the people come to inquire of God, and Moses was the law-giver, he had to ensure that Israelites knew the statutes of God and God's ordinances (Durham, 1987:239). There were long queues of people waiting for him. Many of the people wanted to see Moses; some of these people had minor problems that could be delegated, while others had serious problems. Moses was wearing himself out, and the people would become impatient. These people needed Moses to advise them, solve

their problems and intercede on their behalf. God sent Jethro to counsel his son-in-law to practice servant leadership and delegation only with qualified personnel (Adeniji, 2008:24).

In this pericope, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took time to observe Moses' leadership style and did not get joy. He realized that Moses was making himself very tired. He was trying to do everything by himself (Durham, 1987:250). Jethro expounded on a potential solution for the problem. He taught Moses to delegate authority. Jethro advised Moses to break the big group into smaller groups. Jethro had to ensure that Moses understood that effective leaders know their limitations and know that *leadership is not a one-man show* but must be shared for optimal results (Durham, 1987:250).

There was only one huge group; Moses had a responsibility to appoint leaders. Following the appointment of leaders, Moses had to divide this group into smaller groups and assign groups to appointed leaders. Leaders cannot lead themselves; they must have followers to be effective and institutions to be efficient (Ishola, 2012:261).

Exodus 18:13-27 provides some insights into Church leadership and Ministry, particularly the Class Leader Ministry. Exodus 18:13-17 comprises the totality of what happened in the past, is still relevant today, and presents the progressive realization of God's Eternal council. Small groups were part of the justice system that Moses required. Moses distributed the workload to leaders he appointed/chose/identified in the same way pastors appoint Class Leaders, and this was necessary for his Ministry and leadership. Moses' good attributes made it easy for him to appoint leaders. His expectation was that *all appointed leaders be men of stature* following in his footsteps. Moses selected men who best met the prescribed criterion mentioned above, men of stature, God-fearing men, men of trust, and those who hate bribes (Cook, 1977; 48-49).

God worked through small groups during Moses' era, and the small group method is still relevant today. Moses appointed leaders during the Old Testament; pastors appoint Class Leaders today. Moses divided people into small groups during the Old Testament Era; pastors divide Church members into groups even today for effective management (Van Rensburg, 2015:7).

The events of Exodus 18:13-17 and Jethro's advice to Moses to divide the Nation of Israel into small communities and appoint leaders over them can serve as important lessons for the Christian Church today. This method applies the ancient history text. In this case, it seeks to shed light upon the historical process giving rise to the biblical text, a diachronic process that was complex and involved a long period of time. The breaking of big groups into small groups created a sense of belonging, accountability, and small group governance, justice structure, worship, and everyday tasks. People depended on each other for their daily activities while in the Middle Eastern deserts.

Moses' life depicts a constructive experience of a man who is an ethical leader, and his actions validate the extent to which a leader can perform in what are often trying and highly perplexing situations (Van Rensburg, 2015:7). Looking at this passage from the Historical Redemptive point of view, it is realized that the method suggested by Jethro, is still relevant to Class Leader Ministry today as it was relevant in the Old Testament and forms a foundation for the AME Church Class Leader Ministry. This is more prominent when Moses, a good servant of God in Egypt and a good leader during the Exodus and in the wilderness, is not exempted from being worn out if he does not delegate other duties. It is also evident that small groups enhanced his performance, and he was able to have time to teach the word of God (Adeniji, 2008:93).

2.3.1.5 The Exposition of Exodus 18:13-27

This passage depicts four basic elements of structure, namely, Element I. an exposition- Introducing the principals of the unit with a lengthy explanation of Jethro's appearance within the wilderness company; Element II describes a cultic event, it provides a narration of Jethro's response to the events of the Exodus and the Wilderness; Element III begins with a general statement of setting it as a transition from element II, it presents a dialogue between Moses and his father-in-law setting out a new order in the administration of justice; and Element IV stand in parallel with Element I, Element I presents Jethro's arrival while Element IV present Jethro's departure, it provides a conclusion. Unity in this structure is nevertheless problematic. Elements II and III stand out as virtually independent units, drawn together into a single body by the coordination of elements I and IV. Yet element II provides a crucial foundation for the legal counsel in element III (Coats, 1999:146-147).

It is critical to bring the discourse that defines the picture of who Jethro was in order to understand his influence on Moses. Jethro (also known as Reuel or Raguel) is translated as "friend of God" (Douglas & Tenny, 1987:525). According to Douglas and Tenny (1987:525), Reuel is possibly his

real name, and Jethro is a priestly title. When Moses came to Midian, he knew more about the gods of Egypt than about Jehovah, "The I am that I Am" (Exodus 3:14). No wonder when God Spoke to him from the burning bush, God Had to introduce Himself first (Exodus 3:6). However interestingly enough Jethro (also known as Reuel or Raguel) who descended from Abraham (Genesis 25:1-8) just like Moses, rejoiced and praised God after he heard the testimony of Moses (Exodus 18: 9, 10). He also declared that God was greater than all the gods of Egypt (Exodus 18: 11). Lastly, he took a burnt offering and offered a sacrifice unto God (Exodus 18:12).

The interesting part is found in Exodus 18:12b, which says: "and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God." Eating before God, whether figuratively or in an expression, simply shows that the sacrifice was something acceptable unto God (Meyer in Newsom *et al.*, 2018:81-83).

This proves that Jethro was not just a priest of Midian, as stated in (Exodus 3:1; 18:1), but a priest that knew God and could differentiate between God and other gods. Jethro is not to be confused with his son Hobab (Num 10:29-32), who was asked by Moses to go with them to the Promised Land and asked him that they will be like eyes unto Israel to show Israel the way through the wilderness. In Judges 1:16, the children of Jethro are mentioned as part of those that shared inheritance with the tribe of Judah (Albright, 1963:5).

Jethro saw that process of solving the social problems of the nation was a tiring and exhausting process for Moses. Moses was doing the job alone, and there was no one assisting or complimenting him. Due to the lack of a complementary approach or delegation of tasks, the work was tiring to both Moses and the nation, for they stood from morning until late in the evening. Jethro then suggested that Moses appoint Judges of various grades to help him decide the cases of minor importance (Douglas and Tenny, 1987:525). This is a delegation of the legislative work from the judicial function to the community responsibility (Guthrie & Motyer, 1996:130).

Jethro was careful not to give directives to Moses but rather suggested a secondary support structure. His advice can be broken into six areas of importance. Firstly, he should continue to act as a mediator between God and the people (Exodus 18:19). Secondly, he should continue to instruct people in all *ordinances and laws* (Exodus 18:20). Thirdly, he must show the people the

true way to walk before God and men while showing them the work they must do (Exodus 18:20). Fourthly, he must appoint *able leaders* as rulers of thousands, hundreds, the fifties and tens (Exodus 18:21); fifthly, he must establish a *lower court* where the leaders will judge all small matters (Exodus 18:22). Lastly, he must establish a *supreme court* where Moses himself will judge serious matters (Coogan & Chapman, 2018:109). In this passage, we note that Moses establishes the judiciary that will assist him to judge cases.

Looking at the above, one can infer that the general qualifications and qualities of these appointed judges included but were not limited to the abilities and skills, true religious God-fearing men, Honest and Just men who are truthful, they must abhor covetousness, they must do all things for the sake of God and His people and must labour to promote the public good (Exodus 18:21). Moses took the advice seriously and went to do what his father-in-law told him (Exodus 18:24 - 26). The Class Leader Ministry as a subject of discussion is drawn from examples such as these to support the senior pastors so that they can concentrate on the bigger vision of Ministry.

The sharing of Moses' workload did not stop in Exodus 18:13-27 but continued. When the children of Israel started to complain about the food and even said that Egypt was better than the Wilderness, Moses couldn't stand their moaning and the criticism. He went to speak with God in Numbers 11:14 and said, "I am not able to bear all these people alone because it is too heavy for me." The Lord responded to Moses in Numbers 11: 16-17 *"Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of the meeting so that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone."*

When Moses had done all that in terms of Numbers 11: 25, the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with Moses, and the Lord took some of the power of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied but did not do so again. The Numbers scenario was different from the one where Jethro was giving some advice to Moses. Even though there are similarities, there are different outcomes. In this instance, the leaders began to prophesy. This form of complementary partnership continued throughout the journey. We see these seventy elders in many other roles. The delegation of duties to the elders helped to relieve Moses of the stress of doing the work alone.

The choosing of wise men under Moses' leadership did not end in Exodus 18:13-27. Deuteronomy 1:9-18 states that Moses commanded Israel to take the wise men, who had understanding and were knowledgeable and reputable, to lead them. This is supportive to call to what Jethro initiated earlier on. In that Moses starts by indicating that they have grown in number as a nation and that he cannot bear their problems alone anymore. Judges ruled over Israel for about 450 years before the Kings did. Yet still, even during the reign of Jehoshaphat, he appointed judges to rule over people.

2.3.1.6 Summary

Section 2.3.3 examined the foundation of Class Leader Ministry and the role played by small groups in Moses' Ministry looking at Exodus 18:13-27. The subsequent are lessons that can be learned from the analysed Biblical passage:

- The story of Jethro and Moses gives advice regarding the importance of delegating responsibilities to reduce workload from one leader.
- Appointment of suitably qualified Leaders who will execute the task once duties are delegated and can be trusted with the commander's duties.
- How to divide the huge group into groups.
- Moses developed structures that would ensure the knowledge of God in Israel is retained and strengthened, enhanced and diffused, etc.
- How to organize God's work.
- The importance of teaching people.
- How to ensure that the leader does not wilt and become weary.
- How to assist leaders from being overwhelmed by the strains.
- Ensure that the people are instructed/ taught the word of God, statutes, and laws.

Moses did not lose his leadership by delegating some daily tasks to others; instead, he had more time to teach important spiritual principles to support those he led (Exodus 18:19-20, 22). It was important for Moses to start by teaching people because *delegation should be accompanied by training for optimal results* (Sherley, 2019:231). Jethro made sure that Moses imparts the skills to the leaders he appointed. Moses had to teach these leaders principles, model their behavior, and

demonstrate processes and procedures that work. Moses as a leader, made time to pray and ask God for wisdom, direction, and insight to reach the intended objective.

Through Exodus 18:13-17, we also learned that without delegation and focus on one individual, those around this person will wilt and become weary because of the delay in one person doing everything; secondly, this one person will be overwhelmed by the strains. Looking at this, Jethro questioned the wisdom of Moses alone in handling all the cases and causing delays and discontent among the people. Moses followed Jethro's advice and appointed some judges.

This advice was not a form of taking away Moses' authority or moving him away from his position as a leader but a way of giving Moses enough time to perform other important duties and recuperate (Mackay, 2018:331). Following the appointment of leaders, Moses divided the huge group into groups of thousands, hundreds, the fifties, and tens (Exodus 18:21). The small groups were important for Moses' leadership success, and Exodus 18:13-17 demonstrates the foundation of Class Leader Ministry.

2.3.2 The Biblical and Theological basis of Class Leader Ministry in Deuteronomy 6:4-9

This section examines if the biblical and theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry can be derived from Deuteronomy 6:4-9

2.3.2.1 The Place and Historical Context of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 1:1 claims that the book of Deuteronomy was written by Moses (Grisanti, 2017:52). The book does not have signs of being written by more than one person when looking at its uniformity of representation, character, style, and method. There were no other disputing facts to this authorship of Moses, even when tracing in both Christian and Jewish literature from the second century after Christ back to the time of David until recently. Recently Merrill (1994:33) outlines the view of De Wette that Deuteronomy was most likely to have been written by pious conservatives around the time of King Josiah, who was concerned about the apostasy of Josiah's predecessors. There is a belief that this book was attributed to Moses to give it weight and authority and that it was hidden and then found to produce the desired effect in King Josiah's religious reforms (Merrill, 1994:33). The scope of this study does not allow for a full discussion on authorship, however, looking at the weight of the available evidence as well as historical acceptance of Moses as the author, in this study Moses is taken as the author of Deuteronomy.

2.3.2.2 The literary context of Deuteronomy

The English title "Deuteronomy" derives from the Septuagint, τὸ δευτερονόμιον τοῦτο, in Deuteronomy 17:18, meaning "copy of this law" (Harrison 1969:635). This interpretation is not correct because Deuteronomy is not a mere repetition of the Law already given to the Israelites by Moses in Exodus, but an amplification and advancement of the covenant texts (Merrill 1994:22). Deuteronomy is hortatory in its genre.

The book of Deuteronomy is about the Nation of Israel led by Moses after 400 years of slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt and 40 years spent in the Wilderness. Moses wrote this book re-emphasizing the Covenant to this nation which is to enter the promised Land and carry new responsibilities (Merrill, 1994:26).

2.3.2.2.1 Structure and setting

The book of Deuteronomy can be divided into four main sections. The first section, chapters 1-4, is about the historical review from the time of the giving of the Covenant at Mount Sinai to the time of the address. The second and longest section consists of chapters 5-26; this section expounds on the laws of God given to the people for their daily living. The third section consists of chapters 27- 30, which is about renewing the Covenant and commitment to God. The last section consists of chapters 31-34, which are appendices, the close of the address, a song of Moses, and a blessing, and then the book ends with an account of Moses' death and Joshua's taking up of leadership.

2.3.2.3 Theological Message of Deuteronomy 6:4-9

God established a covenant with Abraham, and this Covenant extends to his posterity. The blessing of the Covenant included obedience to God's instructions so that the promises that need to extend to the seed of Abraham are manifested. At a later stage, on the way to the Promised Land, Moses received the Law that would govern Israel. That Law was, in essence, a guarantee of the maintenance of the Covenant. The families of Israel were given the commandments so as to practice and teach them from generation to generation. They were commanded to share their faith with their children to enforce the teachings. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and talk of them when you sit in your house, walk by the way, lie down, and rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). The children must also teach their children (Deuteronomy 4:9, 10). Every family had to ensure that their faith was to be kept and observed, and that was to become a lifestyle. They were supposed to write the Word of

God on their houses' doorposts and even on their homes' gates (Deuteronomy 11:19, 20). The family was in this way, a learning institution, a behaviour and conduct sculpting workshop, a social building platform, an instruction-manual classroom, and a worship-training home cell or Class.

2.3.2.4 The Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 provides the central theme of Deuteronomy. It sets a pattern that helps human beings to relate the Word of God to daily lives. Human beings are to love the Lord their God, think about the Word of God all the time, teach the commandments to their children, and live each day by the guidelines of the Word of God. This passage emphasizes the importance or need of parents to teach their children the Word of God at home.

Deuteronomy 6:4 begins with 'Hear, O Israel' (in Hebrew Shema' Yisrael)—the same introductory formula used by Moses to convey great emphasis when introducing the Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5:1. The emphasis was made to grab the attention of the people of God. The verb 'to hear' in Hebrew means to listen and carries the idea of obedience. There must be action taken on what is heard. The second part of Deuteronomy 6:5 delineates the extent or intensity of the love God demands the Israelites to have for Him: “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” Love God with all their hearts (in Hebrew heart is the very essence of a person, the persona, the very core of a human, the entire inner being; The heart often signifies the seat of a person’s intellect, emotion, and will (Deuteronomy 4:29; 10:12; 11:13; 26:16)), soul (love God with each and every breath they take, their wants, desire, and needs must be to love God; The soul designates one’s entire being or person (Psalm 103:1) and strength (In Hebrew “might” is a common word meaning very, in Old Testament is used in that adverbial sense, they must love God with all their very-ness and muchness, (II Kings 23:25) connotes “might); much vigour and force” (Currid, 2006:116).

Moses is instructing people to keep the commandment (Love the Lord your God) on their hearts (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). The very basis of loving God is to know his Word and to be obedient to it. Moses further makes Israelites realize that true religion is not individualistic but covenantal. God established a covenant with Abraham, and this Covenant extends to his posterity. The blessing of the Covenant included obedience to God's instructions so that the promises that need to extend to the seed of Abraham are manifested. God had a covenant relationship with Abraham, and the covenants included Abraham's descendants (Genesis 17:1-2;7). The descendants are his family; in

this regard, the Covenant implies a group. A covenant brings two or more persons together in a binding agreement to do or not do certain things.

When God called Abraham and made, a covenant gave him and his descendants (generation after generation) a sense of purpose. A small group of Christians will make sense of purpose and be healthier if it has the sense of being called into being by God and having a relationship with God (Currid, 2006:116).

On the way to the Promised Land, Moses received the Law that would govern Israel. That Law was, in essence, a guarantee of the maintenance of the Covenant. The families of Israel were given the commandments so as to practice and teach them from generation to generation. They were commanded to share their faith with their children to enforce the teachings. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children; shall talk of them when you sit in your house; when you walk by the way; when you lie down; and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). The children must also teach their children "one generation to the next" (Deuteronomy 4:9, 10; Crenshaw, 2010:75).

This loving devotion to the one Lord (Deuteronomy 6:7) must be shared in the home (Motyer, 2015:143). It is essential that the Word of God be taught to children in their homes. The common Hebrew verb for 'to teach' is not used here, but rather we see the Hebrew term *Shanan*, which means 'to sharpen, hone'. The thrust of the verse is to command that Israel 'sharpen' or 'hone' their children with the Torah. The sense is that of teaching them incisively with the Word of God (Currid, 2006:116). Moses delineates the inward perspective (Deuteronomy 6:6) and the generational perspective (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

Moses cannot be the only person teaching these God-given truths, but also every parent in Israel (Deuteronomy 6:7) is to ensure that children and grandchildren would learn and keep God's decrees and commands (Deuteronomy 6:2). Parents were to impress this Word on their children's minds and make it the subject of natural everyday conversation within family life (Hamilton, 1991:352-356). Every family had to ensure that their faith was to be kept and observed, and that was to become a lifestyle.

The instructions about carrying the Word on the hand (the hand symbolizes personal action and commitment) and the forehead (the forehead symbolizes personal direction and deliberate) are, by contrast, more personal (Motyer, 2015:144). They were supposed to write the Word of God on the doorposts of their houses and even on the gates of their homes (Deuteronomy 11:19,20). Heads of families may not always get this right, but that does not mean they should despair; they must continue to love God and teach as their ultimate goal (Nelson, 2006:18). There is a danger in modern Christian homes that either or both parents can be so fervently absorbed in 'the Lord's work' (often among children or young people) and forget about the spiritual welfare of their own children. (Motyer, 2015:143-143).

It has been wisely said that 'the family that prays together stays together (Proverbs 22:6). In earlier generations, family worship was an important aspect of spiritual devotion. The family was in this way a learning institution, a behaviour and conduct sculpting workshop, a social building platform, an instruction manual classroom, and a worship-training Class (Proverbs 1:8-9). The family was to start teaching or training their children at a young age on the way they should go to ensure that when they are old, they do not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6). The family had a responsibility to teach love (Deuteronomy 6:5; Psalm 133:1). Before or immediately after a meal, parents and children met together for reading from God's Word, a brief application of its message, and prayer for the Lord's guidance and help in matters of everyday family concern. It presented a regular opportunity for teaching, sharing news, mutual encouragement, and united dependence on God (Motyer, 2015: 143).

The moulding and formative carving of children with the Word of God stresses and focuses on loving God with all their hearts, souls, and vigour. It is a teaching that emphasizes that, no matter what one does, it is to be done with the goal and purpose of loving God. And it is teaching that is firmly grounded in God's Word. It is important to learn the Word of God, and Psalm 119 gives a picture of the excellence of the Word of God and its effect, strength, and happiness it gives to those who engraved his words upon their hearts (Brooks, 1990:10).

There is an emphasis that heads of families must teach children in their homes. The teaching in this scripture is not a once-off thing; it implies that teaching must be repeated until the children learn what is being taught (Nelson, 2006:19). They are to speak of God's Word when sitting in their

houses and when walking outside, and when they are lying down and when they are standing up. This is a double merism that signifies that they are to talk of the Scriptures all the time, especially in their homes with their family members. They are always to be a model of scriptural principles for children in the way they live. The teaching must take place as soon as the child is in a position to hear; the younger, the better. Once the child can talk, they must be encouraged to talk since teaching is done through dialogue (Nelson, 2006:19).

Teaching should take place during times dedicated to teaching sessions and in everyday conversations between family members in their homes (Currid, 2006:116). This implies that teaching can be done through formal sessions and through modelling, where a person or child observes an older person reading the Word of God, a parent praying, etc., and start to imitate or follow what they observed.

The Word of God must govern the Christian life (words and deeds). This government must not only take place in our Churches but must be extended to our homes and in our communities (Deuteronomy 6:8-9). Teaching is a complicated endeavour that involves more than just learning the rules through imparting of skills. It involves engaging in a range of familiar and communal rituals and activities (Miller, 2008:45).

2.3.2.5 Summary

- In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Moses summarizes the importance of the Law with its two most fundamental and important truths (i) the Lord's uniqueness and humanity's obligation to love him. (ii) He goes on to challenge them to make these truths central in every part of their lives and pass them on to their children in their homes. (Grisanti, 2017:190).
- Section 2.3.3 examined the biblical and theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry as derived from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and the following are the lessons learned from the examined Bible passages:
 - Love God as instructed in Deuteronomy 6:5-6 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Christians must love the Lord their God with all of their beings and keep God's commandments.

- Appoint or elect good Class Leaders to delegate responsibility to "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:7). The main leader cannot go house to house to instruct the children but appoint or elect sub-leaders to do the groundwork.
- Strengthen the teachings in the family for Church growth as indicated in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 *"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house when you walk by the way when you lie down, and when you rise up"* This passage gives a clear indication that the family was a unit in which people were instructed and also served God together under a leader or leaders. The teaching must also take place in homes. This passage gives a clear indication that the family was a unit in which people were instructed and served God together under a leader or leaders.
- Ensure that the specifications are clear when delegating authority. Deuteronomy 6:7 is very clear on what needs to be done and when *".... and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up"*. Communication is key in all these.

2.3.3 Biblical and Theological Foundation of Class Leader Ministry in I Chronicles 23-27

This section examines if the foundation of Class Leader Ministry can be derived from 1 Chronicles 23-27. For purpose of this exercise, 1 Chronicles 23-27 is examined as the main discourse supported by other texts to determine the Biblical and Theological foundation for Class Leader Ministry. The book of Chronicles is almost like repetition, and it emphasizes the themes of the books of Samuel and Kings. There is some harmony that exists between these books (Chronicles, Samuel and Kings). The book of Chronicles is composed as one unified literary work.

In this study, both the historical and literary context of the book of Chronicles will be discussed. Secondly, the theological message of this book will be presented, followed by the Exposition of the selected passages. This will be followed by a discussion of each Chapter of the selected passages; lastly, a summary that presents the book of Chronicles as a foundation of Class Leader Ministry.

2.3.3.1 *The place and historical context of the books of Chronicles*

The two books of Chronicles were originally one book, the same as Samuel and Kings (Walte & Yu, 2007:754; Hill & Walton, 2009:311), and in the Hebrew canon, I and II Chronicles are counted as one book (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:190). The title of Chronicles in Hebrew is *dibre hayyamzm*, that is, chronicles of events, happenings of the days, and records of the days or times (Meyer: 1968: xvi). This title emphasizes the nature of Chronicles as official annals (Ester 2:23, I Kings 14:19). This title of Chronicles comes from the statement by Jerome, who said the book of Chronicles contained “the chronicles of the whole of sacred history (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:190; Waltke & Yu, & Yu, 2007:754)). *Dibre hayyamzm* is a generic term that also appears repeatedly in the book of Kings as part of the title of sources used by Deuteronomistic Historians, like in I Kings 14, 19, and 29 (Coogan & Chapman, 2018:432).

There are different opinions regarding the authorship of this book. According to Peltonen, the early Rabbis said, “Our fathers said that Ezra wrote this book” (Peltonen, 1996:21). However, by the late twelfth century A.D. Rabbi David Kimḥi and Archbishop Stephen Langton had both rejected Ezran authorship in favour of a much earlier date. According to Langton, Ezra’s contribution was merely to add in the cross-references (Langton & Şaltman, 1978:204-205).

The genealogies of I Chronicles trace the heritage of the Covenant from Adam to David, paying attention to the Hebrew patriarchs and the twelve sons of David. The history of this book spans the Hebrew united monarchy from the close of Saul’s reign to the Babylonian Captivity of Judah (Hill & Walton, 2009:313).

2.3.3.2 *The literary context of the book of Chronicles*

The source of the author of the book of Chronicles is Deuteronomistic History, and it also uses other biblical sources and other works which are not in use anymore. These other sources in Chronicles allow Chronicles to provide details not found anywhere else in the Bible (Chapman, 2018:433-434). In the Jewish tradition, the books of Chronicles are placed last in the Writings. Then follow Ezra-Nehemiah, making them part of the final book of the Hebrew Bible (Coogan & Chapman, 2018:433).

2.3.3.2.1 Structure

The book of Chronicles was divided into I and II Chronicles during the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) in order to make it easier for the reader and copyist to handle this book. This book is divided into four sections, namely (1) Genealogies (I Chronicles 1:1-9:34), (2) United Monarchy (I Chronicles 9:34-II Chronicles 9:31), (3) Divided Kingdom (II Chronicles 10-28), and (4). Reunited Kingdom (II Chronicles 29-36) (Hill &Walton, 2009:310-311; Waltke & Yu & Yu, 2007:755).

The first part of this book is about genealogical and graphical history, which was not appealing to scholars and the general audience (Golb, 1996:337). This book consists of parallel texts which were unjustly considered dull, worthless repetitions, or re-writing of the earlier books. (Kalimi, 2009:408-409). The non-parallel text part of the book was also not attractive because of the form, language, and style of the narrative sections of Chronicles that have no parallels in other biblical books and additional geographical and genealogical lists scattered throughout the composition of this book (Kalimi, 2009:2).

2.3.3.2.2 Setting

The setting of the book of Chronicles is a post-exilic work that depicts the pre-exilic period. This book does not have specific references on it, does not have absolute synchronisms, and does not have extra-biblical citations that could definitely place the writing within a specific period. The specific time of the writing of Chronicles remains open to debate. Those wishing to see the Chronicles date pinpointed to a specific period face an impossible challenge (Knoppers, 2004:109). The Maccabean period has been suggested, though most scholars support the period of the late Persian or early Hellenistic (Schniedewind, 1995:249).

The text's language and content of Chronicles do not seem to reflect a Greek setting, implying that it was composed prior to 333 BC (Johnstone, 1997:11). The book of Chronicles and the book of Ezra, as well as the book of Nehemiah, are associated by the theological traditions of Christianity and Judaism and by scholars (Kalimi, 2009:6).

2.3.3.2.3 Intention

The intention or purpose of I and II Chronicles is to write real history relying on many sources (Waltke & Yu, 2007:754). According to Merrill, this book was written to review the history of

Israel from the dawn of the human race to Babylonian captivity as well as the restoration of the edict of Cyrus (Merril, 1994:158-185). The Chronicles highlighted the kingship of David to communicate the centrality of the Temple and the succession of Solomon directly tied to the proper worship of Yahweh (Hill & Walton, 2009:316).

2.3.3.3 Genre

The book of Chronicles is made up of many different types of genres which include list, linear and segmented genealogies, speeches, prophetic oracles, a letter, legislation regarding the cultic organization and practice, source citations, poetry, and narrative (Graham & McKenzie, 2009:101-103). According to Sarah Japhet (1993:1), the title of this book describes its genre or its type of literature, which is unusual among the Old Testament Books.

2.3.3.4 Theological Message of the book of Chronicles

The author's theological message drives the selection of material, making this more than a record of historical events. This book constitutes the interpretation of history that presents a "mosaic, eschatological, and faith-oriented theology (Shepherd, 2009:2). The main theological themes of the Chronicles are (1) Restoration and rule of the Davidic dynasty, (2) Renewal of the everlasting Covenant made with Abraham and Affirmed at Sinai, and (3) The new Temple as a symbol of reconstituted and reconsecrated people (Ackroyd, 1991:273-289).

2.3.3.5 The Exposition of 1 Chronicles 23-27

The first book of Chronicles gives another foundation for the Class Leader Ministry. This book refers to what was done during the time when David was king of Israel. 1 Chronicles was written for the post-exilic community that was rebuilding a lot of things, and the book is clearly making use of material and details coming from an earlier period when David was king. The Israelites had the responsibility to rebuild the Temple that was destroyed. The Temple was to remind them of the sins of their forefathers and how they had to build a temple of inferior quality in comparison to what their fathers had built. The Israelites were led by David (Descended from Jacob's Son, Judah) and there was a lot of work to be done (Zvi, 2014:29).

Israel had by then flourished in terms of the service of David. People knew God and His Word. The many Psalms composed and sung in David's times show that Israel's spirituality was at a high

point. There was a need to maintain the spirituality of leaders and make sure that the people participated in services. The various units of Levites played an important part in equipping families and people in general. The broad leadership ensured that Israel prospered and grew; their numbers were not diminishing. It was a time of growth, but this was a function of good leadership and effective service due to the organization these chapters are revealing. When David exited; they were at a high point, and the challenge for Solomon and those to lead Israel with him was to sustain that level of growth and effective organization (Johnstone, 1998:87-189).

I Chronicles 23-27 focuses mainly on David and His Son Solomon. It focuses on the activities surrounding the transition from David to Solomon. I Chronicles 23-27 depicts David's foundational establishment of temple personnel. The selected passages function within the Chronicles succession narrative to depict David's organization of his kingdom in preparation for Solomon's succession is examined in order to establish if it can present a good structure that the AME Church should follow in establishing the Class Leader Ministry. In the selected passages, David announced the division of labour according to different groups (Levites, Priests, Singers, Gate Keepers, Administrators, Army, and Leaders). Each group must have a great leader to lead it (Smith, 2016:192); this is discussed in detail in the following sections.

The age may vary according to the numbers available and those that must be served. There are places where the able men would start to work in the Temple at the age of twenty (I Chronicles 23:24), some at the age of twenty-five. Numbers 8:23-32 indicates that during this organization, male Levites could only start to join the company in the work of the tents of meeting at the age of thirty and retire at the age of fifty (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:228). This suggests the understanding that in David's instruction, the male Levites at age thirty understand what must be done because they have undergone in-service training between age twenty and twenty-nine.

This is the most important foundation; all leaders must be trained for the service of the Lord before being appointed to Churches to lead other people. In I Chronicles 23:27, David further ordered that those at the age of twenty be counted, even those that were given minor jobs (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229). This is important at all stages of leadership in the Church, starting to train them at an early stage for future responsibilities. The inference here is that the age varies according to the tasks allocated.

2.3.3.5.1 THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CLASS LEADER MINISTRY LOOKING AT THE I CHRONICLES 23.

When David was at an advanced age (old) and full of days, his time was almost coming to an end. He had accomplished quite a lot to establish his throne of forty years. Israel was beginning to be at peace after many wars of victory and conquest. Many Israelites voluntarily joined and supported David (1 Chronicles 11:1-3). In their declaration, they mentioned, “we are your bones and flesh.” David also made a covenant with them that Covenant was an important milestone in strengthening a kingdom (Johnstone, 1998:143).

Considering his age, David brought about a succession plan for the kingship of Israel. The program of the plan included setting in order the Levitical protocols and clear standards. David as a king and a prophet was qualified “to set in order the things that were wanting (Henry & Scott, 1978:141). The first thing he did was to declare Solomon, his son, King over Israel (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:228); he gathered all the princes of Israel, including the priests and the Levites (I Chronicles, 23:1-2).

He called all the princes of Israel, the priests, and Levites so that they could understand the order of the work and services of the Temple, put systems of worship in the Temple in place, and appointed his son, Solomon, to be king (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:228). The inference would be that the king remains the king until he dies, but David decided to anoint his son Solomon king while he was alive for a smooth transition of kingship. Looking at what is happening these days, he anointed him king while he was alive to avoid confusion after his death.

God is the one who chose Solomon to be King (Smith, 2016:192). Declaring Solomon publicly as his successor was a decisive move by King David in that it was clear who should receive the kingship baton. The challenge of succession remains a challenge in many institutions even today. There is a saying that when experienced leaders leave leadership positions, they take with them not only the capacity to do the work but also the wisdom acquired (Rothwell, 2005: xviii).

David was ensuring that the transition to the new kingdom was free from competition and strife. Adonijah, one of David's sons, tried to make himself a king without that orderly appointment but failed (1 Kings 1:5-30) after Bathsheba reported this incident to king David and also reminded the king of his promise to Solomon. Then David called Zadok, the priest, to come over and anoint Solomon in the presence of the leaders to make him king over Israel (1 Kings 1:33-39; 1 Chronicles 29:28; Walsh, 1995:474). This teaches the Church in modern times that a leader must be installed officially with well-deserved recognition. The inference would be that this is a public declaration and not a secret or behind-the-scenes leadership installation. The starting point after a leader has been appointed is to appear publicly so that all people should know their leader. This would also prevent a situation where leaders appoint themselves in secret with few acquaintances that would endorse them. David had to finally be anointed publicly in front of all people, while in the first instance, he was anointed by prophet Samuel in the presence of his family only (1 Samuel 16:11-13; 2 Samuel 5:1-5; 1 Chronicles 12:38). David called together the princes, priests, and Levites to demonstrate the transfer of power to Solomon. David had to do this "before a parliament of princes, priests and Levites first" (Henry & Scott, 1978:143).

Secondly, David commissioned a census of the Levites. There were thirty-eight thousand Levites between the age of thirty and above (1 Chronicles 23:3; Numbers 4:3; Numbers 8:25). Not everyone was counted, only those males at a specific age and above; the inference is that they must be able to perform certain tasks that those below the age thirty cannot perform. Once David had a number of Levites, he devised a strategy of going into small groups of leadership ministry for the empowerment and sustenance of the highest level of order and worship. David as a leader laid a foundation of how people should work to ensure that what has to be done is achieved timeously. He divided the thirty-eight thousand Levites into four groups. Each group was assigned specific duties to perform. Twenty-four thousand were appointed overseers/supervisors of the building of the Temple, six thousand were appointed Judges of the people and scribes/officials, four thousand were appointed as gatekeepers and an equal number to sing and praise God with accompanying instruments made by David (Begg & Josephus, 1993:12-18).

The inference would then be that the biblical census was not just head counting of people to register people by name and lineage according to the tribe and household. It involved various purposes like being assigned to different services (the Levites being appointed to duties in the sanctuary, Military

services taxation, etc.). The inference would also be that different services required different maturity levels, leading to some starting at age twenty, twenty-five, thirty, etc. Practically in Class Leader Ministry, young people should also be included in leadership, and in certain instances, it might work best if we look at the age differences of members and divide the Classes according to age category among others. In the groups, it might work better to find uniformity when making classifications same as David did with his groupings.

Thirdly, David divided them into three Classes. David had a method to divide these Levites (Smith, 2016:192). The three divisions came according to families. Families are part of the groups that form a strong Church if they are positive. The Levites were grouped by their descent from the Sons of Levi and Solomon was anointed king. The high priest could deliver edicts to guide the nation (Numbers 27: 21). David was the only person permitted to enter the Most Holy Place (Barker, 2020:221), divided by a curtain from the rest of the Tabernacle and contained the Ark of Testimony/Covenant the symbol of God's very presence (Hebrews 9:3, I Kings 8:6; Exodus 25:22). The high priest could only enter the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of atonement to offer sacrifices for all the people, including himself (Barker, 2020:49). There was only one high priest at a time.

Exodus 28:1-4 indicate that God had made Levi's tribe priestly before that time (Kuger, 2009:124). When Jacob was about to die, he issued a stern malediction against his son Levi (Genesis 49:5-7). Patriarchal prophecies such as these were not taken lightly, and Jacob's words must have dealt Levi a sharp blow. Genesis 49:7 indicates Jacob's prophecy that Levi's descendants would be scattered throughout Israel, and this prophecy was fulfilled when God appointed Levi's descendants as the priestly tribe which would not inherit any land (Kuger, 2009:124). In God's sovereign and mysterious way, this prophecy of Jacob turned out to be a blessing to these descendants of Levi because Levi's inheritance was better than land; it was God Himself (Numbers 18:20). And God promised to provide for the Levites from the abundance of all of the other tribes (Deuteronomy 10:9; Kuger, 2009:125).

Fourthly, David assigned them their proper work; when allocating duties, David allocated the first duties to the Levites. The book of Exodus (28:1-30) teaches us that the Levitical priesthood began with Aaron, the older brother of Moses (Rockwood, 2007:1)). Aaron's descendants served as the

priests in Israel with the responsibility to minister in the Tabernacle and later ministered in the Temple mediating between man and God. The Levitical priests bore the responsibility of offering the sacrifices required by the Mosaic Law (Ehrlich, 1968:37). Some of the Levitical priests in the Bible are Ezra; Eli; and Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. The following are most of the roles played by the Levites (Smith, 2016:192-193):

- 2.3.3.5.1.1 Firstborn substitution/cultic debt-slaves (Numbers 3:5-13, 40-43, 44-51; 8:14-19). The term Levitical is derived from the Israelite tribe of Levi. Levi was the third son of Leah and Jacob (Genesis 29:34) and the father of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of Moses and Aaron (Zimmerman, 1972:8). Originally, it was the firstborn son of every family who was consecrated to God and inherited the birth right, leadership, authority, etc., (Exodus 13:2). We see this institution of “first” things being what God requires as far back as in Genesis 4:4 when God was pleased with the firstborn of Abel’s flock that he offered to God (Proverbs 3:9, Romans 11:16). Later, when God made Israel into a nation, He called them His firstborn son (Simango, 2013:3), and each individual Israelite was called to be holy, priestly, and royal (Exodus 19:5-6). Out of the nation of Israel, God chose the tribe of Levi to serve Him and the sons of Aaron to be the priests. Thus, all priests were Levites, but not every Levite was a priest (Zimmerman, 1972:10).
- 2.3.3.5.1.2 Construction and maintenance of cultic structures and furnishings (Numbers 1:47-54; 3:5-10; 1 Chronicles 23:4; Ezra 3:8-9; Nehemiah 3:17; Nehemiah 11:16). The Levites, who were not priests, were given various duties in the caretaking of the Tabernacle and its furnishings (Numbers 3:21-26).
- 2.3.3.5.1.3 Guarding sacred space and rites from lay Israelites, e.g., as gatekeepers, keepers of storehouses and/or the treasury, and overseers of purification rites (Numbers 1:47-54; 3:5-10; 31:30, 47; 1 Chronicles 9:26; 23:5; 26:17, 20; 2 Chronicles 15:14-15; 23:4, 19; 29:15-19; 34:11-13; Nehemiah 12:25; 13:13, 22). Judicial service (1 Chronicles 23:4; 2 Chronicles 19:8-11; 34:11-13).
- 2.3.3.5.1.4 Transporting, maintaining, and/or storing cultic items and resources (Numbers 4, 7:4-9; 1 Samuel 6:15; 2 Samuel 15:24; 1 Kings 8:4; 1 Chronicles 15:2, 11-15; 2 Chronicles 24:11; Ezra 8:30).
- 2.3.3.5.1.5 Assisting the priests in performing cultic rituals, usually the aspects of service that did not involve contact with the altar or sanctuary furniture, e.g., offering preparation or

some blood-handling. The Levites work in the courts, in storage rooms, purification of the Holy things, temple service, showbread, grain offering, flour, unleavened wafers, pan-baked items; mixed items, thanksgiving, and praise, to burn the sacrifices unto the Lord in the Sabbaths, in the moons, and on the set feasts, by number according to the order commanded unto them. (Numbers 18:2-4; I Chronicles 23:28-32; II Chronicles 23:6; 29:34; 30:16-17; 35:11-15; Ezra 6:20).

- 2.3.3.5.1.6 Accounting for measured goods (1 Chronicles 9:31; Ezra 8:33).
- 2.3.3.5.1.7 Musical service. He ensured that they understood that they have to thank and praise God every morning and every evening (1 Chronicles 9:33; 15:16; 23:5; 2 Chronicles 7:6; 20:19; 29:25, 30; 30:21; 34:11-13; Ezra 3:10; Nehemiah 11:17, 22; 12:8, 24).
- 2.3.3.5.1.8 Scribal duties (1 Chronicles 24:6; 31:12; 34:11-13).
- 2.3.3.5.1.9 Teaching Torah and/or administering covenant renewal (2 Chronicles 17:7-9; 35:3; Nehemiah 8:7-9; 9:1-5). The priests among the Levites were given the immeasurable privilege of doing service in the Tabernacle. The Levitical priests also served as judges (Deuteronomy 17:8-13) and teachers of God's Law (Deuteronomy 33:10).
- 2.3.3.5.1.10 Non-cultic bodyguards, e.g., of the king (2 Chronicles 23:5).
- 2.3.3.5.1.11 Collecting money from rural areas (2 Chronicles 24:4-7).
- 2.3.3.5.1.12 Distribution of tithes to rural Priests and Levites (2 Chronicles 31:11-19).
- 2.3.3.5.1.13 Although the antiquity of several roles is difficult to verify and some types of cultic slaughter seem to have undergone a change in the agency.
- 2.3.3.5.1.14 Keep the charge of the Tabernacle of the congregation, the holy place, the Sons of Aaron, and their brethren in the service of the house of the Lord (Smith, 2016: 194-197).

The Levites were not just performing these duties according on their own accord. David ordered the times of how, when, and what should happen. The division of duties gave clear instructions to the groups formed through the Levites by David (I Chronicles, 23: 30-32). This division of Levites into the groups facilitated the participation of many in Israel; the many full-time ministers in the form of Levites and priests meant that the people in general gave a lot to ensure that the Church and their services were provided. Every part of the Levites' work was important and had to be performed carefully (Smith, 2016:92).

In the past, Moses had also made use of the Gershonites as Levites, who at that time were responsible for the care of the Tabernacle and tent (Numbers 3:25). Their duties included the outside and the Gate (Curtain at the entrance of the Tabernacle) as well as the brazen Altar. As children of Levi, their whole clan had their camp on the western side of the Tabernacle. It is important to see that they were the heads of the families (1 Chronicles 23:7-11). Meaning that families were the fundamental groups in this whole mission. We also see that Jahath and Ziza did not have sons and for that reason, they were counted or grouped together as one family for the same assignment.

Among these Levitical priests, there was a high priest. Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the first high priest (Numbers 26:59) and his sons and their descendants were to serve as the future high priests of the nation of Israel (Exodus 29). The high priest held the leadership position. Though the high priest could participate in ordinary priestly ministries though, there were specific functions assigned to him, like to oversee the responsibilities of all the subordinate priests (II Chronicles 19:11). God held the priests to the most stringent standards of behaviour and ritual purity (Leviticus 21). The priests did not have special training on purity and moral requirements, but they were expected to meet conditions of physical purity. They had to be circumcised and washed in cold water twice a day and twice a night; before entering the sacred places had to rinse their mouth with a mixture of diluted water and natron and were expected to remove hair from their body. They had to abstain from sex, maintain a specific diet and were restricted from wearing certain types of Clothes (Sauron & Lorton, 2000:36-42). The priest is to be discussed in the next section (Section 2, 3.5.5.2) in detail.

2.3.3.5.2 THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CLASS LEADER MINISTRY LOOKING AT THE I CHRONICLES 24

The division of labour among the priests is examined to determine another good foundation for Class Leader Ministry. When the Jews received the Law of Moses at Sinai, the Lord gave them commands regarding a formal priesthood for Israel. 1 Chronicles 24 focuses on the duties of the priests. Firstly, it makes clear that David appointed the descendants of Aaron, the high priests of Israel, to the privileged status of priest and the descendants of Levi, the Levites were given the subordinate status (Coogan & Chapman, 2018:155-156).

The office of the priest was only designated to the descendants of Aaron. Nehemiah correctly barred priests who could not demonstrate that they were descendants of Aaron from serving in the rebuilding of the second Temple (Nehemiah 7:63-65). The sons of Aaron were four (Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar). The Lord killed Nadab and Abihu before they could even have children (Godby, 2005:399-400). Figure 3 below depicts the genealogy of the priests up to the time of King David.

Secondly, in I Chronicles 24:3-5, David divided the priests into groups for the service under heads of families. I Chronicles 24:1-3 indicate that the death of Nadab and Abihu left Eleazar, Ithamar and their families to do the work of the priests and keep the priesthood going (Godby, 2005:399-400).

Thirdly, according to Kroeger & Evans (2002:229), David took it upon himself to divide priesthood duties into small groups; he divided them into twenty-four divisions and sixteen were given to the leadership of Eleazar, Eleazar gets more because he received the birthright (Leviticus 10) and because of his brothers' death, he had more descendants with leadership abilities. The remaining eight duties were given to the leadership of Ithamar (I Chronicles 24:4-19). This division led to more chief men being found from the sons of Eleazar (sixteen chief men) than the chief men found from the sons of Ithamar (eight chief men) according to the house of their fathers as recorded in I Chronicles 24:4 (Godby, 2005: 402). The bigger the group, the more leaders are needed as the foundation for Class Leader Ministry. Impartiality and fairness were emphasized in dividing the duties.

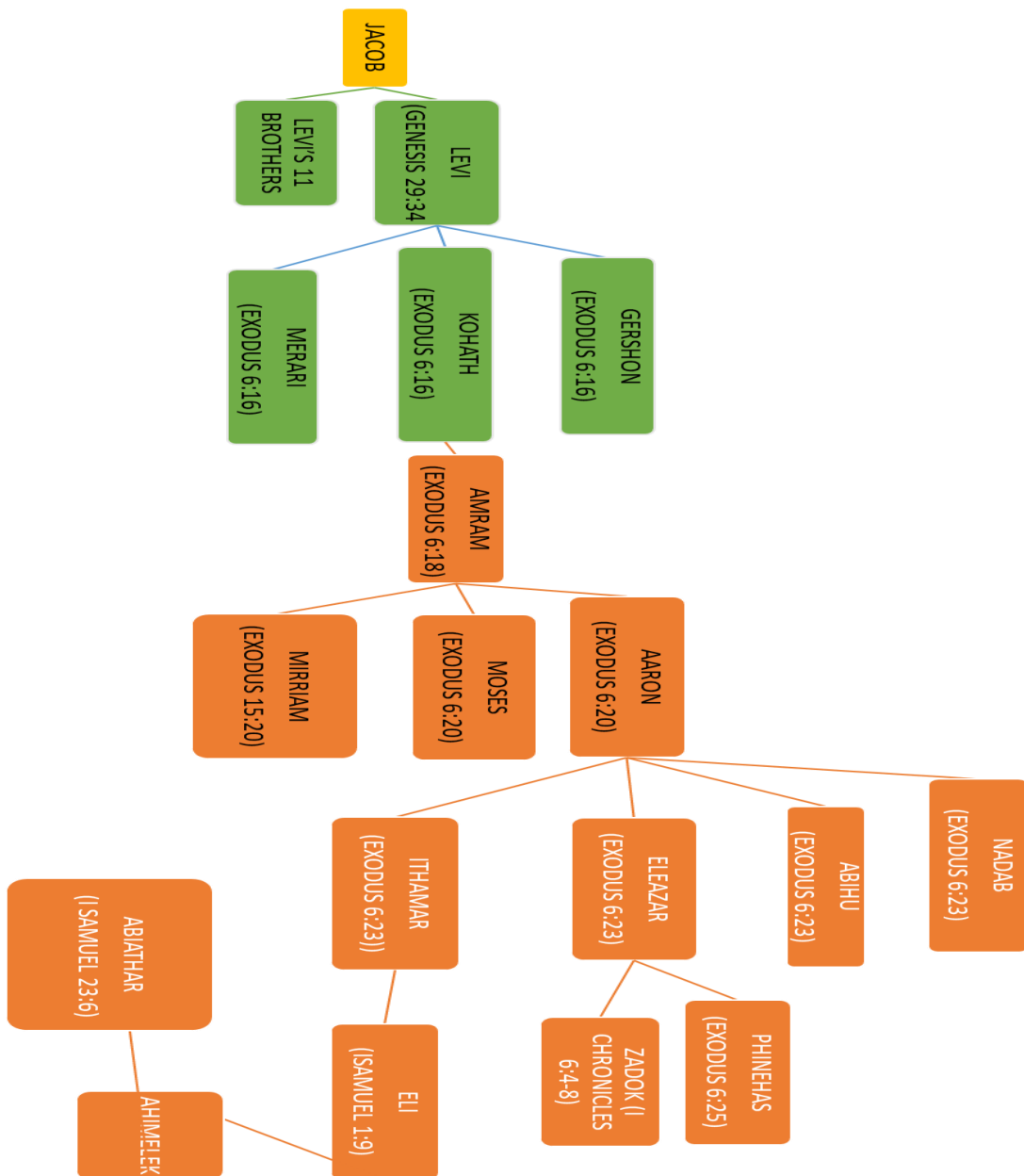
Fourthly, David ensured that the division of duties amongst these twenty-four groups was made in a fair process (I Chronicles 24:3). The duties were divided by lot (I Chronicles 24:5-6, 31), as an ancient way of dividing work or discerning God's will (Proverbs 16:33). Each group after the casting of the lot was given their duties in line with I Chronicles 24: 19-31, that way each group knew what to do and cannot interfere with the other group's duties. The lot was cast publicly with great solemnity in the presence of the king, princes, and priests. The lot was cast in front of these leaders to oversee that there was no room for any fraudulent activities and for authenticity (Smith, 2016:199).

As much as they were divided into two groups that were not the same size, the other one with more and the other one with less, both branches had functionaries of high order and there was no preference given over to either of the two (Smith, 2016: 199). For the purpose of order and record keeping, these groups appointed a scribe. This scribe was to record in the official record list of priestly families in the order of the heads (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229).

Fifthly, I Chronicles 24 presents the structure of the service of the Temple of the Lord. The family that comes out first when drawing the lot was instructed to be the first to serve the second and will follow up the twenty-fourth. That was the order of ministering whenever they were to enter to Temple of the Lord (I Chronicles 24:6-19). The priest had to rotate as the order of ministering to the Temple of the Lord without hindering the Holy Spirit of True worship as indicated in the New Testament (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229). Each family served one week in a fixed order in line with David's twenty-four courses of priests (Vries, 1988: 619-639; Williamson, 1979:251-268).

There were different ranks among the priests, and the Temple enterers always took precedence over the brewers, bakers, butchers, and minor priests who provided general services in the Temple. The priest allowed closer to the cult image were highly regarded and were also required to meet the highest purity standard. Lower-ranking priests were confined to the courtyard and surrounding workshops. The priests, as officers of the sanctuary or holy officials, these priests were officials of God; they had to remain ceremonially clean to perform their duties, served as mediators between the Israelites and God, and performed animal sacrifices on behalf of the people (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229).

Figure 3: The Genealogy of the Priesthood



Source: Own Work

Those assigned the service of the house of the Lord or the Temple were to also divide themselves according to their duties. Some were to assist the priests in killing sacrifices, flaying, washing,

cutting, and burning them to have the meal offering and drink offerings ready to carry out and dispose of ashes from the Altar and keep all vessels and temple utensils clean (Smith, 2016:192).

2.3.3.5.3 THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CLASS LEADER MINISTRY LOOKING AT THE I CHRONICLES 25

I Chronicles 25, where David is dividing musicians will also be examined in order to establish a Biblical and Theological foundation for the Class Leader Ministry. I Chronicles adds details on how David created a crop of musicians to make music at the house of the Lord. This detail is not found in II Samuel and I Kings.

Musicians were grouped under three family heads (I Chronicles 6:24-32 (Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman) who were descendants of Levi; these family heads were under the order of the king (I Chronicles 25:5); they became the Chief Ministers of music. Asaph was a Gershonite (I Chronicles 6:39-43), Heman a Kohathite (I Chronicles 6:33), and Jeduthun (Ethan) a Merarite (I Chronicles 6:44- 47),) were responsible for music "prophesying" (I Chronicles 25:1), like singing praises to God and leading the people in doing the same.

The re-establishment of temple worship was important in post-exilic Israel, and music played a large part in it. Consequently, David's organization would have been of great interest then. David organized the worship personnel focusing on the musical teams that led in praises (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229).

The Chief Ministers of music were to prophesy with harps, psalteries and cymbals. He also separated the number of workmen according to their services (I Chronicles 25:1). David selected those capable of worshiping God through music (I Chronicles 25:7); he loved music. Asaph, Herman and Jeduthun were also divided by lot into 24 courses (I Chronicles, 25:9-31), the same number as priests and Levites (Smith, 2016:206).

Musicians were chosen according to their skills. We note that fathers, as leaders of the family, presided over the music ministry while their children, as protégé, were under the direction of their fathers. Music was also divided into different classes, and there were those who were appointed to prophesy/sing (Smith, 2016:204). There were those who were playing instruments. All musicians

were trained to play instruments and provided skills to perform their temple duties. The musical instruments are amoral, either good or bad. The reason for training and skilling those who are to sing and play instruments was to ensure that musical instruments are not misused. They must not overpower the message of the hymn or the sacred song (Smith, 2016:204).

All these three groups praising and worshiping the Lord in the Temple were doing so according to the order of the king (I Chronicles, 25: 2-6). Again, they had to cast the lot in order to determine the work of the great and the small, the teacher and scholar (I Chronicles 25:8-30). They were also divided into twenty-four groups and given their duties with no difference between teacher and student (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229).

During the reigns of David and Solomon, the Israelites reached the zenith of their power. David envisioned that there was a need to maintain that high level of spirituality by appointing spiritual leaders and by making sure that the people participate in services. The various units of Levites played an important part in equipping families and people in general. The broad leadership ensured that Israel prospered and grew; their numbers were not diminishing. It was a time of growth, but this was a function of good leadership and effective service due to the organization. (Finkelstein 1963:56; Soggin 1977:332; Wood 1979:13).

When David exited, they were at a high point, and the challenge for Solomon and those to lead Israel with him was to sustain that level of growth and effective organization. The covenant community was transformed from a 'tribal confederacy to a dynastic state' (Bright 2000:184). As a result of God's blessing in the lives of its inhabitants, the nation came to dominate the surrounding region (Wood 1970:271, 273).

2.3.3.5.4 THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CLASS LEADER MINISTRY LOOKING AT THE I CHRONICLES 26

I Chronicles 26: 1-32 is surveyed in order to determine a classical Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry where gatekeepers are given duties and their duties are also divided. David organizes the officers of the Levite as gatekeepers (I Chronicles 26:1-19; Ezah 2:24; Nehemiah 11:19) as part of his administrative organization, treasurer (I Chronicles 26:20-28;

Coogan, 2007:612), and leaders in external affairs like regional officers and judges (I Chronicles 26:29-32).

The first group David organized in this section was the gatekeepers; the gatekeepers were the descendants of Kore and Merari, and they were responsible for guarding the Temple. In I Chronicles 26:17-18, David makes sure to specify how many guards are to watch over each temple gate (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229). He does not leave anything to chance. The family members did not choose the gates they were to mend, but the casting of the lot was used to determine which family of gatekeepers was to mend each gate as a fair method to distribute duties then (I Chronicles 26:13-19; Coogan, 2007:612-613).

There were rosters comprising three classes of Levitical duties. (I Chronicles 26:17). The gatekeepers were also divided and given different duties according to their capability and strength (I Chronicles 26:8). There were those gatekeepers responsible for giving instructions to those going into the courts of the sanctuary in decorum. There were those encouraging those who were timorous, those who set back the strangers and the unclean, and those who guarded against the thieves and were enemies to the House of God (Smith, 2016:208).

To ensure that gatekeepers do not fight for the gates, there were those responsible for casting a lot for gatekeepers. They ensure that each gatekeeper knows his gate and believes that God assigned them to that particular gate, not those casting the lot (Smith, 2016:208). There were twenty-four chief gatekeepers, and each gatekeeper had a group of gatekeepers to lead (Smith, 2016:210). These regional officers were assigned to oversee the West of Jordan and others were assigned to oversee the East of Jordan, doing important civil works and ensuring that the Holy Temple was not defiled by anything profane or unclean (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:229-230).

The second group David organized in this section was treasurers. Looking at the wealth in and outside of the Temple, there was a need for tight security (I Chronicles, 26:27-28); the other group of Levites was assigned the broad responsibility of looking over the two treasuries. The first treasuries were the treasuries of the house of God (I Chronicles, 26:22-23) under the house of Gershon, and these were handling the temple revenue. The second were treasuries of dedicated

things, which are described in detail in I Chronicles, 26:24-28, under the descendants of Amram (Smith, 2016:21).

The last group David organized in this section were the regional officers and Judges. David introduced administrative duties in addition to the religious duties (I Chronicles 26:29-32), which seemed to be extremely important under his leadership, especially during the Maccabean period; these administrative duties were assigned to the regional officers and Judges (Barton & Muddiman, 2001:281). The services of the administrators were to administer the wealth until the goods were needed (I Chronicles 26:20-22). Their order of service was based on David's plan and was partly carried out in the post-exilic period when spiritual and secular elements were closely intertwined (II Chronicles 19; Barton & Muddiman, 2001:281).

2.3.3.5.5 THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CLASS LEADER MINISTRY LOOKING AT THE I CHRONICLES 27

This section explores the Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry in the process followed by David when organizing his military and civilian government I Chronicles 27. It lists various military and Israelite civic leaders under the leadership of David (I Chronicles 27:1-15).

It also presents the tribal Israelites' leaders (I Chronicles 27:16-24) and further lists the stewards of the king's property (I Chronicles 27:25-31; lastly, it presents the list of the royal cabinet (I Chronicles 27:32-34). In this, both the military and the civic leaders represent the group that was present when David announced the appointment of Solomon as his successor (I Chronicles 28:1). This was an assurance to Solomon not to worry about his position as the successor once David is no more because these military and civic leaders took part in Solomon's anointing as king (I Chronicles 29:22).

The first 24 verses of this Chapter spells out clearly how the army should work. Labour of 12 courses is divided into 24000 men. David had to know how many persons an army should be composed of, each member's responsibility also had to be spelt out, where to execute their duties and how often (Smith, 2016:214). We note that there were commanders or sub-officers who commanded units of thousands, hundreds and fifties and a general officer for each division. Those chosen were among David's worthies and champions (Smith, 2016:215).

This part expands the description of the organization and foundation of how Class Leaders in the Class Leader Ministry should be appointed and the skills necessary as found in I Chronicles 27:25-31. In these passages, David is more concerned about the leadership of the above-formulated groups, and he appoints the Royal. These were property overseers. The overseers were also formulated into small groups, namely, the vineyard manager, David's Olive and sycamore-fig tree overseers, and the keeper of David's camels (Smith, 2016:218). There was also the staff of the king, which was also divided into smaller groups of the king's private scribes, companions of the king's sons, the king's counsellors, the king's friends, and the captain of the king's host (Smith, 2016:218-219). These leaders were also made of four groups: commanders, tribal leaders, stewards or administrators and advisors (Kroeger & Evans, 2002:23).

2.3.4 Summary

The book of Chronicles is mainly about David's last initiatives before his death. The Chronist in I Chronicles 23:1-2 juxtaposes two important elements: the Aged David appointing his son, Solomon, to be a King and, secondly, David assembling the Israelites' leaders and Cultic Officials. The second part which is the longest in this section is I Chronicles 23:3 to Chronicles 26:28, which features David's assignment of various categories of cultic officials to their tasks.

The Chronistic unit starts this section (I Chronicles 23:3) by indicating that David commissioned the census of the Levites thirty years and Older. Once he got the results of the census, David divided up the whole corps of Levites. I Chronicles 25 speaks of the casting of a lot to organize the Levites into groups (I Chronicles 25:31) following the organization of priests in Chronicles 24. The Chronist in I Chronicles 26 concludes the organization of Levites by David and lists the responsibilities of those assigned as gatekeepers, financial, judicial, stewardship, tribal oversight, etc. The Chronist in I Chronicles 27 records David's appointment of military leaders (I Chronicles 27: 1-15), tribal chiefs (I Chronicles 27: 16-22), Royal Treasures and stewards (I Chronicles 27: 25-31), concluding with the list of major state officers (I Chronicles 27:32-34).

The 'international respect and recognition' experienced by God's people remained 'unchallenged by foreign powers (Schultz 1970:127). After the death of David, there was great prosperity as Solomon's reign attracted foreign investors like the Queen of Sheba (Mabie, 2017:192). However,

amid the accumulation of wealth during Solomon's reign, the level of spirituality declined dismally because of the influence of his concubines with idol worship which led to the kingdom being divided. From hindsight, David's time was the pinnacle of the best kingdom in Israel regarding the level of worship and high spirituality. In contrast, Saul's divinely chosen successor, David, is described as a 'man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22; Arnold 2005:867; Merrill 1998:209; Wood 1979:173), in which the 'heart' denotes 'will' or 'choice' (Gordon, 1997:505).

Looking at the 120-year period in Israel before and after David, one would see that David had brought Israel closer to God than Saul and Solomon. During Saul's reign, it was like God was still waiting for a man after His own heart. Dumbrell (2013:57) explains that 'unlike Saul, David is a King by divine choice alone and not by popular demand.' Similarly, Hill & Walton (2009:259) maintain that while 'people may choose Kings, as they did with Saul, God chooses dynasties.' The people that came to join David in his kingdom were also holy. They came with a perfect heart (1 Chronicle 12:38). Day after day, David received honest and faithful men who increased and became mighty like the army of God (1 Chronicles 12:22; Mabie, 2017:145). Admittedly, David was not a perfect person in his personal life and Kingly reign (1010–970 BC); nonetheless, he stood out as 'something of a saviour figure (Williamson 1997:469) whom others lauded as a 'shepherd, musician, poet, warrior, politician, [and] administrator' (Howard, 2007:41).

In order to ensure that these great achievements and a high level of spirituality are continued, David improvised the strategies of going into small groups of leader ministry for the empowerment and sustenance of the highest form of worship unto God.

1 Chronicles 23-27 was examined as the main discourse supported by other texts to determine the Biblical and Theological foundation for Class Leader Ministry. Finally, the following lessons can be learned from the explored Biblical passage:

Ensure that there is a succession plan in place. David made it his responsibility to ensure that not everyone was doing everything. David appointed the overall leader and ensured that this leader was made known. The Church must have a head pastor (I Chronicles 23:1-2).

Appointment of team leaders. He divided Levites into twenty-four divisions and sixteen were given to the leadership of Eleazer, Eleazer gets more because he received the birthright (Leviticus 10), and because of his brothers' death, he had more descendants with leadership abilities. The remaining eight duties were given to the leadership of Ithamar (I Chronicles 24:4-19). The inference here is the appointment of team leaders in Israel facilitated the appointment of sub-pastors to deal with sub-problems; sub-pastors had specific duties to perform at a specific time and place. The appointment of more Class Leaders can lead to more groups and the expansion of the Class Leader Ministry and a more organized Church.

Dividing duties to specific teams before his son Solomon could take over his reign, David ensured that everyone under his leadership understood that the worship of God must be orderly and not haphazard. Whether priests, gatekeepers, musicians, or temple workers, each must honour God in ministry, for God had to dwell in Jerusalem. David ensures that once he is called above (die), there will be no trouble or confusion about who has to do what and how (I Chronicles 23:3- 27:34).

Involving more people. David laid the foundation that more people must be involved when there is a lot of work. This emphasizes the saying that when the harvest is plenteous, why should the labourers be few (Matthew 9:37)? Since the Temple in Jerusalem attracted more people during David's reign, more hands were needed for the temple service, and he did ensure that he distributed work evenly.

Train people for work and the importance of appointing capable persons to do the work while continuing to train others. There is something unique about the Levitical singers, and they are presented as being trained for their occupation, some as teachers and some as students (I Chronicles 25:8-30).

Develop a method to distribute duties. He did not just divide, but the duties were divided by lot (I Chronicles 24:5-6, 31; I Chronicles 25: 2-6; I Chronicles 26:13-19)

Be flexible and observe the trend that can improve the Church services for the glory of the Lord. David was a flexible leader. He did not stick to the old organization in the book of Kings, and he introduced the appointment of administrators because of the need of the time. The Kings that came

after David did well as they ensured that the people were taught and knew God's Law or Word and also strove to follow it.

2.4 THE NEW TESTAMENT BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE CLASS LEADER MINISTRY

This section will examine some relevant scriptural passages in the New Testament to scrutinize the foundation of the Class Leader Ministry. These passages are explored with the hope that they shed light on the biblical and theological foundation of the Class Leader Ministry toward the growth of the Church. The role played by small groups within early Churches showed a significant increase. Some congregations do not value the small groups and their impact, while other congregations are convinced that small group ministry is the Pillar of Church Growth (Schwartz, 1996:33). The New Testament Churches consisted of community Churches that assembled in houses (Townes *et al.*, 2007:34).

This section of the study surveys the Biblical and Theological background of Class Leader Ministry in the New Testament. To unravel this, the first section will examine Mark 3:13-19, looking at the method used by Jesus Christ to organize the small group for Ministry. The second section will scrutinize Acts 2:42-47, looking at how the early Church formed small group ministry following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Lastly, the study will survey the Epistle to the Ephesians 4:11-16, looking at how Paul applied group ministry through the delegation of ministry responsibilities to lay people.

2.4.1 The Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry in Mark 3:13-19

This section explores the *Biblical* and *Theological* foundation of Class Leader Ministry by looking at Mark 3:13-19. This passage provides an account of one of the first actions taken by Jesus when creating a group of twelve disciples who were to accompany Him during His earthly Ministry. The twelve received intensive training through the model of Jesus' daily life.

2.4.1.1 *The place and historical context of Mark*

The book of Mark is one of the first four books of the New Testament called the Gospels. This book is anonymous; the early tradition of the Church identified Mark as the author. It is believed that Mark was closely associated with Peter, and Peter gave Mark information about Jesus; Mark, in turn, put that information in writing (Strauss, 2010:82). Eusebius supports the statement that Mark was closely associated with Peter and quoted from the Exegesis of the Lord's Oracles (lost work) written by Papias in about 140AD and said "Mark, who became Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been one of his followers, but afterward, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to" (Strauss, 2010:82-83).

It must be noted that behind Mark, there are eyewitness accounts and the apostolic authority of Peter; No chronological sequence was followed when accounting for Jesus and His Ministry; Mark recorded what Peter said accurately (Strauss, 2010:83-84).

The Bible did not provide a specific date when the Gospel of Mark was written (Carson *et al.*, 2009:607). There is some evidence that suggests that it could have been written between the 50s and 60s of the first century: (1) Clement of Alexandria claimed that Mark wrote while Peter was ministering in Rome. Eusebius says Peter came to Rome when Claudius was emperor between A.D. 41–54. (2) Acts 15 presents Peter, in Jerusalem around A.D. 49, which makes it possible that he could have been to Rome after that date, which could be in the early 50s. (3) Church tradition tells us Peter was martyred during the persecutions of the emperor Nero, around A.D. 64–67. All these statements support a date anytime from the mid-50s to the early 60s (Carson *et al.*, 2009:178). Mark has been dated in four decades, the 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s (Carson *et al.*, 2009:178).

The book known as the Gospel of Mark initially did not have a title. The title was probably added to the canonical Gospels when they were put together to distinguish this book from other Gospels (Carson *et al.*, 2009:179).

2.4.1.2 *The literary context of Mark*

Mark wrote Jesus' story in an action-oriented manner. He uses the word *immediately* many times when linking events. This book presents Jesus in action, moving from one place to the other, healing the sick, exorcising demons to the possessed, confronting opponents, and instructing His disciples (Carson *et al.*, 2009:170). Mark invented the Gospel Genre, which served as the earliest historical narrative of the story of Jesus. Its information is based on eyewitnesses (Wessels & Strauss, 2017:79).

2.4.1.2.1 **Structure**

The Gospel of Mark can be divided into seven sections. The first section is about the preliminaries of the Ministry (Mark 1:1-13). The second is about the Galilean Ministry (Mark 1:16 – 3:6). The third section is about the second Galilean Ministry (Mark 3:13-5:45). The fourth section is about the concluding phase of the Galilean Ministry (Mark 6:7 – 8:26). The fifth section is about the way of glory and suffering (Mark 8:27- 10:52). The sixth section (Mark 15:1-16:8) is about final Ministry in Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-13:37), and the last section is about the controversies, Passion, death, the empty tomb and the expected Parousia in Galilee (Carson *et al.*, 2009:171).

2.4.1.2.2 **Setting**

Mark is seen as a self-effacing narrator because of the way he tells the story. His story has minimum editorial comments and says nothing about his purpose of writing and his intended audience. Looking at the early testimonies and extra-biblical sources, The Gospel of Mark was written for a Greek-speaking audience who did not know Aramaic (Mark 3:17–22; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 9:43; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34). This audience was made up of Christians who were familiar with the Gospel traditions (Stein, 2008:9).

There was a general consensus that Mark wrote this book for the Church in Rome until the second half of the twentieth century (Carson *et al.*, 2009:182), where a number of locations were suggested like Galilee, Decapolis, the Christian community in Asia, etc. (Stein, 2008:9). These readers were familiar with various Old Testament characters and had considerable knowledge of the Jewish religion (Stein, 2008:33).

2.4.1.2.3 Intention

The intention or purpose of the Gospel of Mark is primarily catechetical, pastoral, or theological. Catechetical means the need to preserve the apostolic tradition for posterity, Pastoral means a call to the Church to persevere through persecution, and theological means the need to correct false or inadequate teachings within the Church (Wessels & Strauss, 2017:102-110).

2.4.1.3 Genre

It is necessary to identify the form or genre because each literature type has certain particular rules and guidance (Duvall & Hays, 2008:64). The Gospel of Mark is not a biography. The story of the Gospel of Mark, like the story of the other Gospels (Matthew, Luke, and John), came to be known in the early Church as the "Gospel. "The Gospel of Mark is the earliest of the Gospels and constitutes the beginning of this new genre called the Gospel in the sense of both messages of the good news and as a written document (Hagner, 2012:163). There was an intense debate recently about the Gospels' genre and their relationship to other ancient literature. Some form critics who considered the Gospels to be non-literary have maintained that the Gospels are unique in the ancient world; they represent a *sui generis* created by the early Christians and were particularly popular among critics, who considered the Gospels to be non-literary collections of oral traditions, or "folk literature" (Wessels & Strauss, 2017:79-80).

2.4.1.4 Theological Message of Mark

There are several theological emphases in the Gospel of Mark; Mark's central and dominating theme is Christological in nature. Every account in Mark focuses the reader's attention in some way on Jesus. The Theology of Mark's Gospel is enclosed in Mark 1:1, "the Gospel of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God," and ends up in Mark 15:39, "Truly this man was the son of God". It can be said with certainty that the affirmation that Jesus is the Son of God, as Mark expresses it in his first words, is a summary of the whole Gospel.

While one could accept this double theological framework, Jesus and the disciples, this is far too limited and restricted. The teaching of Mark covers many fields in addition to this theme of Jesus and the disciples, which is the main focus of this study; there are other themes like the Kingdom of

God, Salvation, Faith, Prayer, etc. Theological questions around Mark are the ones on the Gospel as a literary genre, the Messianic secret, the Priority of Mark, and the ending of Mark. One can also talk about more complex theological themes like Christology and eschatology (Balaguer, 2013:132-137).

Mark shows that Jesus is the Messiah. The first sentence of the Gospel proclaims it that way, and the confession of that truth earned Jesus the condemnation to death. Jesus followed a divine pedagogy (Jesus preferred to call himself the Son of man) to avoid false interpretations. This expression is also seen in Daniel 7:13-14, where the title "Son of Man" is assigned royal roles of importance, kingship and glory. It did not give rise to any nationalist interpretation but pointed to a more transcendent religious value. Other messianic titles, such as "Son of David" or "Messiah," could give rise, in those circumstances, to understanding the mission of Jesus as a predominantly earthly messianism (Strauss, 2011: 366).

Jesus Christ revealed himself clearly to His disciples. He prepared them to recognize Him as the Saviour, the redeemer of men, and the reconciler of men to God, not through the power of armies or political force, but through His sacrifice on Mount Calvary. Mark 10:45 says, "*For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" Many authors, including Mark Strauss, consider Mark 10:45 as the key verse of the Gospel (Strauss, 2011:164).

The mystery of Jesus was only understood by His disciples. Jesus performed many miracles before the people, and many people received these miracles, but only the disciples knew their true meaning (Messiahship of Jesus). Jesus taught many people in many places, but they did not understand His teaching; only His disciples received an explanation. There are facts that are only known by those who follow Jesus closely (prayer in the garden, the Transfiguration). *Discipleship is a key theological theme and teaching in Mark.* Mark records the call of Peter, Andrew, The Twelve, the rich young man, Levi, etc., to Christian discipleship (Strauss, 2011:162).

2.4.1.5 The Exposition of Mark 3:13-17

In the New Testament, Mark 3:13-17 presents the model of Jesus Christ of making disciples as a foundation of Class Leader Ministry. Jesus Christ called to himself those He wanted; He appointed the twelve men whom He named disciples. Jesus chose these disciples from among the many

disciples who followed Him (Luke 6:12-13). His group was unique compared to the rabbinical students of the time. The differences between the rabbinical student's groups and Jesus' group were (1) Rabbis did not seek out disciples, and (2) rabbis were not itinerant ministers, and they had schools and taught in one place" (Peace, 1999:164).

Being with Jesus means (1) those who see the works of Jesus, (2) hearing the words of Jesus, and (3) being disciples that are prime witnesses to Jesus' Ministry to the multitudes (Meyer, 1968:102). Jesus appointed His disciples so that they could be with Him and He could send them out to preach. He sent them to preach and gave them authority (Mark 3:13-15); Jesus gave them instructions (Matthew 10:6-42) and His power for Ministry (Mark 6:7-13).

Jesus led the twelve disciples for three years. This group had one leader (Jesus) and twelve members (disciples). The disciples were trainees under the tutorship of Jesus rather than active participants. Their places of learning were not limited to houses, synagogues, and schools or taught in one place. Jesus taught them everywhere they went, such as in fields, on a mountain, at a lakeside, in a boat, at a tomb, etc. The training was to ensure that the disciples could do the work once they were sent. Every call of God into a group is a call to bring the members of the group into leadership and discipleship (Lohfink, 1984:47).

Jesus evangelized in the presence of his disciples and sent them afterward. Jesus gave the disciples experiences and allowed them to observe him so they could use the experiences and the observed skills when the time was ripe. The disciples learned while doing but were also guided to carefully reflect on what they did. Sending them was to make them experience the apostolic Ministry. Jesus took advantage of real-life situations to carefully explain complex doctrinal issues (e.g., the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:23). Christ knew that theoretical information separated from practical experience would have little lasting value (Wessel & Strauss, 2017:245; 356-357).

Disciples coming back from missionary assignments, e.g., the mission trip in Galilee, were expected to provide Jesus, their leader and tutor, with a report of everything they had done and taught. The disciples gathered around Jesus after every missionary assignment and reported all they had done and taught. The authority that they exercised over demonic powers made them see that it was not by their might, wisdom, or power.

Mark 6:30 presents the seventy returning from the missionary assignment. Jesus received their reports, praised them wherever they did well, pointed out their mistakes, and exhorted them where necessary. Jesus seized the opportunity to instruct them further and to offer additional guidelines, like in Luke 10:17- 20 when Jesus said, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Wessel & Strauss, 2017:487). It is evident from these passages that Jesus did not only criticize his disciples but offered words of appreciation where they were due and reproof when the need arose. A parabolic manifestation climaxes the didactic leadership of Jesus. The disciples have learned who Jesus is and become the chosen witnesses of His Gospel (Meyer, 1968:85). It must be noted that going out and coming back with the report was part of the training for disciples.

Christ was constantly reviewing the experiences of His disciples and then offering additional commentary (Mark 9:17-29; 6:30-44). The training of the disciples gave them the courage to go forth as Christ's witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and heard; they held the office second only to that of Christ, which human beings had ever been called to, had a responsibility to stand as representatives of the Gospel Church (White,1949:19).

Mark emphasizes that "they had to be with Him," and then he would send them out to preach after they had been with Him (Wessels & Strauss, 2017:254). The emphasis is on being with Jesus for some time first, to observe him, to follow his sayings, to see how he does things, how he heals the sick, how he answers the Sadducees and the scribes, how he drives out demons and the message of good tidings. After that then, he would send out to preach. If the Ministry or ministry leader can take a leaf out of the book of Mark, then the Class that follows that Class Leader will certainly have similar good results.

The disciples of Jesus Christ had different backgrounds, Peter, John, and James were fishermen; Matthew was a tax collector; Simon was a fiery nationalist; Andrew was the one of untroubled faith, Thomas was doubtful, and Judas was the untrusted one, the one to betray Jesus (Mark 3:13-14). Jesus took time to train and nature them in discipleship and service. He taught them how to pray and the importance of reading the scripture. These twelve men chosen by Jesus were called disciples, implying "one who is being influenced" (Gorelik, 1982:401). The main reasons for small

groups of Jesus can be summarized as building relationships for growth and accountability and accomplishing the mission of God, which provides a good foundation for Class Leader Ministry.

Mark 6 presents an example of Jesus working with the disciples. Jesus had carefully prepared his disciples for the mission. Jesus called disciples with the promise that He would make them fishers of men (Mark 1:17). The disciples witnessed Jesus' mighty acts and listened to His wise words. He had withdrawn on several occasions to give them special attention (Mark 3:7; 4:10). Now it was time for them to be sent out. Jesus sends them out to enter homes, preach repentance, heal the sick, anoint them with oil and drive out demons (Mark 6:7-13; Wessel & Strauss, 2017:358).

Jesus and the disciples wanted to get a quiet place (solitary place) and rest. They took a boat to the other side, but many people from different areas saw them and ran towards the place they wanted to rest. They could not rest because multitudes of people were already waiting for them when they reached the other side. Jesus did not return people; he welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing. The disciples advised Jesus to send people away because it was late, but Jesus did not return people; instead instructed the disciples to feed the multitude (Wessel & Strauss, 2017:422). One may exegete this to say that Jesus refused that the people be fed spiritual food outside of the physical food; hence He directed the disciples to feed them.

Jesus took five loaves and two fish, prayed, and then broke it and then gave the food pieces to the disciples who had the duty to set it before the people in the various groups (Mark 6: 37-41). There was a need for a structure or method to be used when feeding the people. Jesus Christ preferred to organize big groups into smaller groups. In the process of feeding them, He instructed His disciples to organize them into groups of fifty each (Wessel & Strauss, 2017:422).

This is where small group ministry manifests, and this organization forms a good foundation for Class Leader Ministry. Though fifty people or even a hundred is a big number if one compares with five thousand men (not counting children), one would see that proportionally fifty is a small number as one would have about 100 groups of fifty or 50 groups of hundred people. The division of members into Class Leader Ministry will suit every size of a Church, small, medium or mega-

Church. Members of the Church can be divided according to the size that is appropriate to their houses or meeting venues.

Jesus would sometimes take only three disciples with him (Peter, James, and John) and even tell them not to disclose to others what they saw or heard (Matthew 17:2; Matthew 26:37; Mark 9:5; Mark 14:33). It can be inferred that this was the inner circle of Jesus. In Galatians 2:2-9, the same three disciples were recognized as senior Apostles. It would then say the leadership of Class Leader Ministry needs to have an inner circle that will deputise the senior leader.

The New Testament indicates that Jesus had groups of disciples. The small group led by Jesus called the twelve disciples represent the ultimate foundation of the Class Leader Ministry and is a good model for small groups in the Church. This group engaged in three major group activities (1) One goal of Jesus' mission was calling people into the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). (2) Training of disciples to be like Christ. Although Jesus had many disciples, He invested much of His time and energy in developing His own small group of twelve chosen disciples. He taught them to be utterly dependent on Him and on each other. Jesus chose and trained twelve men as a pilot group because the small group is an ideal environment for learning and practicing and (3) sending out or commissioning disciples. To fulfil this goal, His main priority was creating disciples through small groups (Anderson & Anderson, 2014:94-112).

He led and taught at different times for different reasons. There were crowds that followed His teachings whereby He taught things, in general, using parables mostly (Matthew 5 & Matthew 13:10, then we read of the time when the seventy disciples are sent into the mission (Luke 10:1; 10:17), then there were about the twelve where He taught important things and mysteries and commissioned to preach (Matt 10:5; 11:1), yet within the twelve there was the inner core of three Peter, James, and John (Matt 16:20; 26:37 Luke 9:28,35).

2.4.1.6 Summary

Section 2.4.1 explored the *Biblical* and *Theological* foundation of Class Leader Ministry by looking at Mark 3:13-19, and some lessons were learned. The following elements laying the foundation of Class Leader Ministry were learned from the explored Biblical passage:

Jesus commanded the disciples before His ascension to go and make disciples of all nations; He gave assurance that He would be with them at all times through the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:16- 20). The reason for the existence of the Church was to go forth and make disciples among all nations. This message comes to Christians with the authority of the risen Lord (Burrill, 2004, 22). All believers need to go out and proclaim the Gospel earnestly by calling laborers for the harvest.

Jesus did not simply gather them once a week for a “discipleship class/course.” He lived with them. They stayed in homes, visited Jerusalem, and camped in the mountains (Mark 8:31- 10:52). They shared their financial resources. Jesus did not only teach His disciples about prayer. He also asked them to accompany him to prayer meetings. He allowed his disciples to see Him praying. Jesus quoted scripture in his dialogue and then explained the scripture's meaning, and there are sixty-six references to the Old Testament in Jesus’ dialogue with the disciples (Wessel and Strauss, 2017:254-255).

The Book of Mark depicts Jesus ministering with his disciples in homes like “Jesus in the house of Jairus (Mark 5:35-38), Jesus teaching his disciples in a house (Mark 7:17-18; 9:33, 10:10), Jesus in the house of Peter (Matthew 8:14), Jesus in the house of Matthew (Matthew 9:10), Jesus in the house of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), Jesus in the house of Lazarus and his sisters (Luke 10:38-42), Jesus healing two blind people in a house (Matthew 9:28-30), Jesus in the house of Simon, the leper (Matthew 26:6), Jesus forgiving and healing a paralyzed person in a house (Luke 5:19), Jesus in the home of a Pharisee (Luke 14:1), Jesus instituting the Lord’s Supper in a house (Matthew 26:18), etc. These home gatherings may be regarded as a foundation of Class Leader Ministry.

Jesus spent time mostly on the mountains, praying on the mountain and at times out in the field, and made use of homes to teach. Luke 9-10 indicates that Jesus assigned the twelve and the seventy-two disciples to go from village to village and to enter homes, offering peace to the inhabitants. The Church today can learn that entering the homes was the primary focus area in every village or city they entered and the disciples grow; even today, the Church can grow through entering the homes.

Mark 3:13-17 provides insights into forming small groups and small group ministry, like the Class Leader Ministry. The selected passage (Mark 3:13-17) is as old as the Church and as recent as the supermarket (O'Halloran, 1984:99). Mark 3:13-17 was part of the system required for Church growth then; it is still relevant today because it is Bible-based, forever it will be. Jesus distributed the workload amongst his appointed/chosen/identified disciples by sending them out, and the same way pastors are to appoint Class Leaders. This appointment by Jesus was necessary for His Ministry and leadership, as it is essential for pastors today. Although in today's context, where people have other vocations except for those who are in full-time Ministry, it may look challenging to spend more time sitting down under day-to-day training.

The next section will explore the foundation of Class Leader's Ministry by looking at the Book of Acts 2:42-47.

2.4.2 The Biblical and Theological Foundation of Class Leader Ministry in Acts 2: 42-47

This section seeks to explore the foundation of Class Leader Ministry by looking at how the early Church experienced small group ministry after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:42-47.

2.4.2.1 The Place and Historical Context of Acts

The book of Acts of the Apostles (*Praxis Apostolon*) is the fifth book of the New Testament, and it tells the story of how the Christian Church was founded and how the message of the Gospel was spread to the Roman Empire. The title "Acts of the Apostles" the title used was not the title given to this book by its author (Matthews, 2011:12). It accounts for the Ministry and activity of the apostles of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem and other regions following the death, resurrection, the ascension of Jesus Christ and outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and ends with the arrival of Paul in Rome (Burkett, 2002. 63). It also provides insight into the valuation of missionary activities among the exotic races (Friedman 2000:59).

The book of Acts was written to Theophilus (Acts 1:1-2). The author was concerned with true history; he referred to "the things that have been fulfilled among us," that is, historical events that had taken place. He also mentioned that he had consulted eyewitnesses and that he carefully

investigated the details he recorded. This book was written by Luke either in 63 A.D. or 64 A.D. while he was in Rome (Averkey, 2017:7). The scope of this book covers thirty years of Church history (Averkey, 2017:8).

The book of Acts of the Apostles continues the story of Christianity in the first century, starting with Jesus Christ's ascending to Heaven. The Gospel of Luke and Acts make up a two-volume work that scholars call Luke-Acts; the better part of this book is attributed to a single author, who provides the framework for the liturgical calendar of the Church and the historical outline into which later generations have fitted their idea of the story of Jesus and the early Church (Boring, 2012:556).

Other scholars have a strong feeling that this book was written around 62 A.D, when Paul was a prisoner in Rome, but most scholars date the work to 80–90 A.D. The date of the 80-90 A.D. is based on the destruction of Jerusalem and does not show any awareness of the letters of Paul (Boring, 2012:587). The author tells the story of the early Church within the framework of the first century. The author uses regional Roman governmental titles, which can only be used by a person living at that time. It is logical to date this book's writing about 62. A.D, this is based on the fact that this book does not say anything about the persecution of Christians by Nero, which began in 64 A.D, and its silence about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

2.4.2.2 The literary context of Acts

The book of Acts of the Apostles presents many tasks performed by the apostles as they work towards fulfilling the Great Commission. This book presents a series of home services like the service in the upper room and commissioning of apostles in Acts 1:8; the replacement of Judas in Acts 1: 12-26; organizing of the new Christian Church in Acts 6:1-8; the spreading of the Gospel and changing the Church practices in Acts 10; the conversion of Lydia and her household Acts 16:14-15; the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his family in Acts 16:23-32; worship in houses Acts 2:46; Acts 12:12; and beyond the book of Acts, Paul repeatedly referred to meeting in Churches for worship like in Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15; Philippians 2. The Churches during the New Testament era were small and often met and worshipped in private homes (Jones, 2004:55).

2.4.2.2.1 Structure

The book of Acts of the Apostles starts with a preface addressed to Theophilus (Acts 1:3) to encourage faith in what happened and what it all means (Green 1995:36). The book of Acts of the Apostles is divided into two sections. The first section is about the labors of the Apostle Peter amongst the Jews in Palestine (Acts 1-12), and the second describes how Christianity spread beyond Palestine as well as Paul's preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 13-28). The structure of the book of Acts of the Apostles is signalled by parallel scenes like (1) Paul's utterance in Acts 19:21, which echoes Jesus's words in Luke 9:51, and (2) the roles of Peter and Paul, firstly, representing the Jewish Christian Church, secondly, representing the mission to the Gentiles (Boring, 2012:565-570).

2.4.2.2.2. Setting

The book of Acts of the Apostles was written for groups of people who followed Christ, gathering in houses to share the Gospel and Holy Communion (Balch, 2003:104). This audience was made up of educated Greek-speaking people, though focusing attention mainly on the Greco-Roman world at large (Green. 1995:16-17). Most critics agree that the book of Acts was written by the same author who wrote the book of Luke. Luke is the author of the book of Acts, and this is affirmed by the heretic Marcion about the middle of the second century, by an ancient prologue to this gospel (often called the anti-Marcionite prologue) written toward the end of the second century, and by the Muratorian Canon. The book of Acts appears to be the second volume of a two-volume work (Carson et al., 2009:143).

2.4.2.2.3. Intention

The intention or purpose of the Book of Acts of the Apostles is to present the active Ministry of house Churches (Fitzmyer, 1998:55-5). Believers in the Jerusalem Church scattered into small gatherings in houses for prayer, fellowship, or nurturing. The book of Acts is intended as a work of "edification," meaning "the empirical demonstration that virtue is superior to vice" (Fitzmyer, 1998:55-56). This book tells what the risen Lord continued to do and teach through the Holy Spirit (Hayford, 2002:1486).

2.4.2.3 Genre

Genre serves as a hermeneutical key to the Interpretation of the text. It helps to unlock the intended meaning of the text (Schreiner, 2011:11). The Acts of the Apostles (Praxis Apostolon) is a genre of early Christian literature describing the lives, deeds, and achievements of the great men (praxis), Apostles of Jesus Christ. The Acts (Latin: Acta, Greek: Πράξεις Práxeis) are important for many reasons, one of them being the concept of apostolic Fathers (Ehrman, 2003:167).

2.4.2.4 Theological Message of Acts 2: 42-46

The book of Acts summarises the life of the believers internally (Acts 2:42) and those outside (Acts 2:43-47). One of the theological interests of the book of Acts is the Holy Spirit's role in the life of Christ and the early Church. This book presents the embryonic Church in the Edenic state, just after the Day of Pentecost and before persecutions challenges and persecutions start. They were Spirit inspired, united, living in a communal, holding their possessions in common amongst themselves, and reflecting their embrace of the Messiah (Bock, 2007:185).

Believers were distinguished by their devotion to the four key activities: learning (Apostles Teachings), fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer (Larkin et al., 1995:61).

2.4.2.5 The Exposition of Acts 2:42-46

The other model of Class Leader Ministry is depicted in the book of Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47. Following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the birth of the early Church, Christians gathered in small groups in homes. These groups afforded people an opportunity to be converted, nurtured, and taught the word of God; the groups were worshiping and fellowshiping. When Peter was delivered from prison by an angel of the Lord, he did not go to a Church building; instead, he went to Mary's home (Acts 12:12), where a small group gathered praying for his deliverance (Longma III & Garlan, 2007:901).

The message of Acts 2:42-47, where Christian worship in houses follows the model that Jesus Christ used when sending his disciples to houses in Luke 9:1-6 and these two methods provide for a good foundation of Class Leader Ministry.

The Bible teaches that when group members were filled with the Holy Spirit, they become powerful witnesses of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, before His ascension, gave His disciples a commandment to stay in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. Jesus said His apostles would be His witnesses by the Holy Spirit's power (Acts 1: 8). A group of 120 Christians joined together constantly in prayer (Acts 1:13-14). On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit baptized the people gathered in the upper room. They heard the sound of a strong wind, saw tongues of fire, and then spoke in various tongues (Acts 2:2-4). After receiving the infilling of His Holy Spirit, Peter delivered a powerful evangelistic message to the amazed crowd teaching that the coming of the Spirit is a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy from Joel 2:28-32, especially the part that says, "That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." The message was not only for the Jews but also for all people (Reginald, 2015:136). This provides for the universality of the missionary character of the Church.

Peter called on top his listeners to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ; immediately, three thousand people accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This number of disciples increased after the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:47; 6:7). The Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Hearing this, the disciples gathered all the converts together and advised them that it would not be right for them to neglect the Ministry of the word of God for them to serve people, including the widows. Instead advised the converts to choose seven men from among themselves who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom to mend the table. At the same time, the disciples continue to pray and the minister of the word. This advice was welcomed by the whole group, which in turn chose Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas to mend the table. According to Acts 6:1-7, the message of God kept spreading and the number of followers in Jerusalem grew quickly. Many priests also started believing in the faith, as noted by Reginald (2015:136).

The converts did not meet in the temple daily, but the main early Church gathered at the temple, while small groups met in private. The small group in Acts 2:42-47 engaged in the following activities:

1. Teaching: Those who participated learned the Gospel and applied it to their daily lives (Acts 2:42)

2. Fellowship: "having in common" such as the breaking of the bread together (Acts 2:42, 46)
3. Worship: "corporate fellowship of believers in worship," including the Lord's Supper and praising God (Acts 2:42, 47)
4. Prayer: the thrust of Church growth in private as well as public settings (Acts 2:42)
5. Ministry: distributing proceeds, as any had need (Acts 2:45)
6. Evangelism: The Lord increased to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2 47) (Barker, 1985:1648).

These activities are summarized into five activities: charismatic elements, "offering of enthusiastic praise and prayer under the direct influence of the Spirit" (Martin, 1975:7), kerygma "preaching" (Martin, 1975:88); Didache "teaching" (Martin, 1975:44); koinonia "spiritual fellowship" (Martin, 1975:44); and Diakonia "service" (Martin, 1975:7).

Looking at the New Testament Church, Jesus asks his disciples, "whom do people say I am?" They come with different answers until Peter responds, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the Living God." He told him that not human knowledge revealed the mystery to him but the Father in Heaven through His Spirit. And Jesus said that upon that revelation, He would build his Ekklesia (Matthew 16:16-19). "The Septuagint uses the term [ἐκκλησία] to translate the Hebrew word קָהָל (qāhāl), which means 'assembly' or 'congregation' and often refers to Israel's religious gatherings. The New Testament use of ekklēsia reflects both of these uses of the term, though it probably deliberately applies the image of Israel's congregation to the gathering of believers (Davis, 2019:67)

While the translation of the word ἐκκλησία can be done with one word - "Church" - it is helpful to expand this definition. Louw and Nida (1988:125) state, "the term ἐκκλησία was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership.

In general Greek usage, it was normally a socio-political entity based upon citizenship in a city-state (see ἐκκλησία, 11.78) and, in this sense, is parallel to δῆμος (11.78). For the New Testament, however, it is important to understand the meaning of ἐκκλησία as an "Assembly of God's people." They add by warning that "In the rendering of ἐκκλησία a translator must beware of using a term which refers primarily to a building rather than to a congregation of believers. In many contexts, ἐκκλησία may be readily rendered as a 'gathering of believers' or 'group of those who trust in Christ."

Comiskey (2012:87) also notes this tendency to confuse the Church with the building, "Most people do think in terms of Church buildings, Church meetings, and specific Church days. Today when we read the New Testament, it's almost impossible to avoid these modern-day images and experiences of the Church."

Mack (2012:22) adds by saying that people claim to go to Church while they mean a building or possibly a structured programme of some sort. The New Testament never uses the word Church that way. Rather it refers to "God's people called to carry out his mission." Towns et al. (2007:27) say, "we don't go to Church; we are the Church." In Acts 1, before His ascension, Jesus gathered His disciples to Mt Olives, where he told them that they should receive power after the Holy Ghost had come upon them and then they shall be his witnesses (martyrs) first in Jerusalem, the Judaea, then Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. This propelled the fulfilment of this in Acts 2, whereby on the Day of Pentecost, the promise and the prophecy of Joel 2:28 took place. They started to witness thousands of people from various countries and tongues and three thousand were converted (Acts 2:38-41).

Between Chapters 3 and 8 of the book of Acts, the Apostles' Ministry started in Jerusalem, Judaea, and Samaria, then spread to the uttermost parts. The Gospel was preached to all Jews and Gentiles equally. Phillip was still busy evangelizing in Samaria, so the Spirit of God directed him to go to a road that was not often travelled. He saw this Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53 but with no understanding. He came to him and started to preach, and Christ made him understand. The first person outside the Jerusalem-Judaea-Samaria region, which falls under the 'uttermost part of the world' category, to receive the Gospel was this African from Ethiopia returning from Jerusalem as it was his annual pilgrimage (Acts 8:26-40).

2.4.2.6 Summary

The book of Acts continues the story of Christianity from the first century; It starts with the ascension of Jesus Christ to Heaven. The early chapters, set in Jerusalem, describe the day of the coming of the Holy Spirit and how the Church grew in Jerusalem.

Section 2.4.2 explored the foundation of Class Leader Ministry, looking at how the early Church experienced small group ministry after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:42-47. The following elements laying the foundation of Class Leader Ministry were learned:

Acts 2:42-47 can provide the foundation of Class Leader Ministry because of its ability to answer questions on how to be devoted to God and each other daily. It gives an understanding that people are to gather to study the word of God, pray, and socialize (Acts 2:42). This provides the premise for this study. It proves that small groups like those in the Class Leader Ministry provide an integrated model that allows an intimate setting, fellowship with one another, and the environment to pray together like the one Church established on Pentecost. An integrated model is a small group system in which the small group leaders connect directly between the pastor's teaching and the members' lives by reproducing what they learned from the pastor weekly in their small group meetings" (Lee, 2003:112).

First, it is important to understand the historical-cultural context of the text, as one may make a mistake and model the small group ministry out of this text incorrectly. There is a need to understand the context of that era first and learn the setting in terms of not only how gatherings were conducted but also understand why they met in small gatherings or in houses. The 21st-century setting is way different from the 1st-century world. The emphasis is on the "how" and not the "why," and certainly. Michael Mack (2012: 22) notes this tendency to focus on the pragmatic at the expense of proper exegesis when he writes, "it is fascinating to me that the Holy Spirit did not inspire New Testament writers to give methods or systems for doing small group ministry. Instead, there are instructions for how to be the Church, live together in the body of Christ, and successfully reach a world that needs God and a biblical community".

It is important to catch the full understating of the history to avoid pretexts. A proof text without a context is a pretext (Doriani, 1996:43). It is a biblical truth that the first Churches were held in homes and even the letters that Paul wrote were directed to specific congregations that met in homes (Comiskey, 2000:31). Comiskey (2000:32) said "although there is evidence that the early Church met in homes, it will be unwise to try to build an exact pattern for every modern Church. This is what I call proof-texting because no absolute pattern for house Churches exists. Rather than using proof texts, we have to do the hard work of putting the pieces together and filling in a few

gaps to define principles for today's Church" (Comiskey, 2000:32). The 21st-century Church has numerous options and facilities. Nevertheless, all available resources do not negate the small group ministry but find a contemporary way of forming models that are appropriate to reach every soul and every group with the Gospel (Comiskey, 2000:32).

In certain countries, for instance, where the context is such that it is not easy to openly gather or minister the Gospel, like in Islamic countries or China, the small group ministry is indispensable. Even in this modern-day discourse, gathering in the homes is certainly to be the highest. The first concept of Home-cell ministry in the modern years proved to flourish in far east countries, i.e., South Korea, China, and other neighbouring islands. Those countries were not many Christian de facto nations and Christianity reached them after centuries since Pentecost. Being a Christian was accompanied by being killed for your faith or facing persecution.

The context of the early Jerusalem Church was also in a hostile middle east where Judaism was persecuting Christians. This is similar to Christians living in Islamic countries. Just as Islamic culture is entrenched in the lives of Muslims today, Jewish culture was entrenched in the lives of the Jews of Acts 2. As Muslims come from supportive, communal backgrounds, their social needs must be recognized. This is essentially the same with the Jews of Acts 2. The Jews of Acts 2 risked losing their families, their place in their community and their livelihoods and even their lives by choosing to follow Christ. They gathered in small groups because this was natural for them in their cultural environment. These new Christians meeting together became a new family and a new community.

The main reason, therefore, was not just a strategy for Church growth, or as the way for holding the harvest or for a Class Leader Ministry in the contemporary understanding. The cradle upon which those gatherings were built was the new family, the new community, the new people of God. Every model built upon the misunderstanding of following the correct methods of hermeneutics in Acts 2 passage may need a rethinking. Without the proper theological groundwork, the foundation of small groups is built on sinking sand, quick results and a methods-oriented approach that is far from the powerful move of God in the lives of believers that was experienced in the Early Church and throughout history (Comiskey, 2000:33).

The next section will explore the foundation of Class Leader's Ministry by looking at Ephesians 4:11-16.

2.4.3 The Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry in Ephesians 4:11-16

This section seeks to examine the Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry from Paul's method of delegating responsibility to lay people,

2.4.3.1 The Place and Historical Context of Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians is the tenth book of the New Testament. According to tradition, the Epistle to the Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome (around A.D. 62). The Biblical Scholars provide four main theories that address the question of Pauline authorship (Barth, 1974, 38).

Firstly, the scholars like Barth, M., Bruce, F.F., Sander, J.A., Stoot, J.R., etc., support the traditional view that this book was written by Paul (Hoehner, 2002: 2-61). Secondly, scholars like Holtmann, H.J., O'Connor, etc., suggest that Paul dictated the Epistle to the Ephesians with interpolations from the author. Thirdly, Allan, Beare, Brandon, Bultmann, R. Conzelmann, Dibelius, Goodspeed, Kilsemann, J. Knox, W.L. Knox, Kümmel, etc., think it improbable that Paul wrote this Epistle to the Ephesians. Lastly, scholars like Cadbury, Julicher, McNeile, and Williams suggest that there is a lack of conclusive evidence that Paul authored this Epistle (Barth, 1974:38).

2.4.3.2 The literary context of Ephesians

Epistle to the Ephesians presents more information on the Church than any other writing in the Pauline corpus (Carson et al., 2009:493). This Epistle start by emphasizing the divine action in bringing salvation. The Epistle indicates that believers' salvation did not take place because of their doing but got it because it was in God's plan to save them. This Epistle at the beginning has reference to sonship through Christ (Ephesians 1:5), redemption through the blood (Ephesians 1:7) and sealing with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). This gigantic attention on the place of the divine expanded with continuing reference to grace (Carson et al., 2009:494).

This Epistle to the Ephesians also emphasizes the importance of Christian growth in knowledge. This Christian growth in knowledge is expressed in a number of ways like (1) the mystery of the Gospel (Ephesians 6:19), (2) manifest wisdom (Ephesians 3:10), enlightenment (Ephesians 6:19), ((Ephesians 6:18), and all these speak to divine disclosure. There is no way to study this letter and doubt the importance of growing in knowledge presented by this Epistle (Carson et al., 2009:494). The Epistle to the Ephesians gives a considerable section to emphasize the importance of lives lived in conformity with the salvation that God has given to believers.

2.4.3.2.1 Structure

When Ephesians is assessed, five sections emerge as “peaks” (Ephesians 1:3-14; 1:15-23; 3:14-21; 4:1-16; 6:10-20). Even with the consistent presence of a flowery, ornamented style, rhetorical underlining can be detected in each of these sections. Larkin (2009:xxi) indicates that Johnstone (1998:160-173) suggests the use of metaphor as an indicator in Ephesians 1:3-14 concludes each subsection with εἰς ἔπαινονδόξης (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14); 1:15-23 has the repeated theme of “wisdom, knowledge, understanding” (Ephesians 1:17-18); in 3:14-21 there are the repeated themes of the divine qualities of glory and power (Ephesians 3:16, 20-21); 4:1-16 underlines its unity theme with the repetition of “one” seven times (Ephesians 4:4-6) and "all, every" twelve times (Ephesians 4:2-16); and 6:10-20 repetitively deals with the strength and wickedness of spiritual opponents (Ephesians 6:11-13).

Clarity via metaphor is consistently present; Larkin (2009:xxi) indicates that Johnstone (1998:180-189) suggests the use of metaphor as an indicator in Ephesians 1:15-23 ("eyes, feet, head, body" in 1:18, 22-23); 3:14-21 (extent of love in 3:18); 4:1-16 ("mature man, children" in 4:13-14); and 6:10-20 (the extended metaphor of a soldier's armour in 6:10-17). As for the change of pace, each section either comprises one long sentence (1:3-14 [202 words]; 1:15-23 [170 words]) or utilizes long sentences (3:14-19; 4:11-16; 6:14-20).

Two other characteristics mark the five sections as "peaks." In the doctrinal or expository portion of the Epistle, each peak contains a worship element subgenre: a eulogy (1:3-14), thanksgiving and prayer (1:15-23, as part of the epistolary opening), a prayer report and doxology (3:14-21). All are also strategically placed either at the beginning (1:3-14; 1:15-23; 4:1-16) or conclusion (3:14-21;

6:10-20) of the letter's two main discourse elements: expository (doctrine) and hortatory (parenthesis). "Peaks" repay careful study since their content will often summarize the main purposes of the work.

2.4.3.2.2 Setting

The English Bible indicates that the Epistle to the Ephesians was addressed to the saints who are in Ephesus (Ephesians 1:1); the words "in Ephesus" do not appear in the best and earliest manuscripts of the Epistle, leading most textual critics regarding these words as an interpolation (Ehrman, 2004:381–84). This lack of any internal references to Ephesus in the early manuscripts may have led Marcion to believe that the letter was actually addressed to the Church at Laodicea (Bruce 1988:156-180). Once more, this letter's impersonal; character (Lacks personal greetings) is incongruous with the account in Acts of Paul, who stayed more than two years in Ephesus, leading most scholars to regard Ephesians to be a circular letter intended for many Churches (O'Brien, 1999:5).

If they believe that Paul is the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians, then it was probably written in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment (Ephesians, 4:1) and probably soon after his arrival there in the year 62, four years after he had parted with the Ephesian elders at Miletus. Scholars were disputing that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians, dating the letter to between 70 and 80 A.D. within the Church of Ephesus (Barth, 1974:50-51).

2.4.3.2.3 Intention

There is no unanimity in understanding the aim of the Epistle to the Ephesians. According to Bruce, the intention or purpose of Epistle to the Ephesians and to whom it was written are matters of much speculation (Bruce, 1991:229). The author exhorts the Church repeatedly to embrace a specific view of salvation, which he then explicates. Thompson (2000:512) argues that the main theme of Ephesians is in response to the newly converted Jews who often separated themselves from their Gentile brethren. The unity of the Church, especially between Jew and Gentile believers, is the keynote of the book.

2.4.3.3 Genre

Some scholars identify the genre of Ephesians as a sermon that intends to motivate the thoughts and emotions of the reader with theological realities and concepts of Ephesians 1-3 like “Christ, `salvation, and reconciliation with the intention to encourage a response expressed ethically or behaviourally like in Ephesians 4-6 (Jeal, 2000:65; Larkin, 2009:76; 81-85; Lincoln, 1990: xxxix, xl, xli.). The call for a specific behavior (Ephesians 4:1-6:9) is based on the facts of Ephesians 1-3. Lincoln (1990: xxxii) also say that Ephesians does not give a clear-cut classification in terms of ancient epistolary and rhetorical categories. Some scholars say Ephesians is an Epistle.

2.4.3.4 Theological Message of Ephesians

According to certain interpretations of Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter four marks the beginning of the second part of the letter (Barth 2011:453; MacDonald 2008:285, 295; Schlier 1971:177). This Epistle follows the same characteristic pattern of Pauline letters as the letter to the Romans, which is divided into two sections, with the second as the rare section, introduced by the verb παρακαλέω (Ephesians 4:1; cf. Romans 12:1; 1 Thessalonian 4:1, 10). Lincoln (1990:227) clearly stated that the use of παρακαλέω in Ephesians differs from the usual way Paul used it. In Ephesians, it does not contain the vocative ἀδελφοὶ (Romans 12:1), and secondly, it includes the phrase ἐν Κυρίῳ, 'where it underlines the apostolic authority behind the exhortation.'

Ephesians 4:1–16 is divided into three sections. Ephesians 4: 1–3 is about ethical instruction, Ephesians 4: 4–6 could be interpreted as a confessional statement celebrating unity in poetic terms, followed 'by what is essentially an explanation of the origins of this unity in Ephesians 4:7–16: it is the result of Christ's giving gifts to believers. The explanation involves an 'intriguing midrash on Psalm 68:18 (Ephesians 8–10) and a description of the work of various ministers (Ephesians 11–13), (MacDonald 2004:132; 2008:295).

Schlier (1971:16) points out that in the second part of this Epistle, readers are called upon to be what they become "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one

baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people. (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers to equip his people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead of speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him, the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:1–16).

Barth (2011:451) said, "Although the word Church is not used in Ephesians 4:1–16, this passage deals with its life, order, and purpose". In the form of imperatives and confessional and exegetical, narrative, eschatological, and polemical statements, the constitution of the Church is described under diverse aspects of the broader pericope Ephesians 4:1–16, in which Ephesians 4:11 -16 occurs:

Ephesians 4 begins with an ethical instruction (Ephesians 4:1–3). The call for the readers is to *walk* (περιπατῆσαι) according to their *calling* (τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε). Lincoln (1990:64) explains that the verb to walk (literally) in this Epistle refers to how someone who believes behaves in a public space where everyone can see compared with others. To 'be called or chosen by God required an appropriate way of life, to resemble Christ.' The virtues found in verse 2 are also found in Colossians 3:12–13, but Ephesians added in love (ἐν ἀγάπῃ) (MacDonald 2008:286). The important meaning included in the participle σπουδάζοντες "being eager" depends grammatically on the verb to walk and 'excludes passivity, quietism, a wait and see attitude, or a diligence tempered by all deliberate speed' (Barth 2011:428). It does not allow procrastination but requires immediate action.

Maintaining a relationship with the Spirit through the bond of peace is important to maintain spiritual unity. There is a clear link between the unity of the Church and the various acclamations of oneness in Ephesians 4–6. The call to Spiritual unity goes together with peace amongst the people; hence the unity of the Spirit is maintained (MacDonald 2008:287). The unity in the Church and the Spirit is motivated ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἐν Πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν 5 εἷς Κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα 6 εἷς Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν [There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all, who is Lord of all, works through all and is in all] (Ephesians 4:4–6).

Ephesians 4: 7–16 indicates how the 'diversity of Christ's giving of grace, and particularly his gifts of various ministers of the word, is meant to contribute to the unity and maturity of the Church' (Lincoln 1990:265).

2.4.3.5 The Exposition of Ephesians 4:11-16

Ephesians 4:11-16 lays a good foundation for Class Leader Ministry, especially where the Apostles delegated their authority to lay leaders to carry out the house-to-house ministry. Believers' needs were taken care of in their homes. The author gave clear instructions for pastors and laypeople, respectively, in Ephesians 4:11-16. Pastors are to equip laypeople for the work of Ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

The author of the letter to the Ephesians points out that each one of us has received a gift according to what Christ has given (Ephesians 4:7) (Ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ). The thought is picked up in verse 11 again by explaining what was previously meant. The αὐτός in Ephesians 4:11 (καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν) picks up the αὐτός of Ephesians 4:10, making clear that it is the exalted Christ whom the Psalm referred to when he said “He gave gifts to men” who fills the universe (Lincoln 1990:248).

MacDonald (2008:299) says Ephesians 4:1–16 opens a window into the transitional period between the early times of the Church when Paul conducted his Ministry and later periods. According to Arnold (2016:6475), Ephesians 4:7–16 means that Christian groups are essential for growth to maturity; Christ has sovereignly endowed every individual with special abilities to minister to all

the other members in groups and out of groups. It is the responsibility of the divinely gifted leader(s) to equip the members for a life of mutual service. The goal of Ministry is to help all believers grow in a knowledge of Christ and the core doctrines of the faith, mature to a greater Christlikeness, and manifest love for one another in the community's life.

Hirsch (2017:4775) believes that the best way for us to grasp the multiple dimensions of Jesus' Ministry is to broaden the typology from the somewhat reductionist threefold characteristics to that of the perfect embodiment of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, and Teacher. Ephesians 4:11–16, presented as a foundation of Class Leader ministry, means that the apostolic task of the Church should involve identifying Church members or elders who have missionary leadership gifts; these leaders be trained to be servants or stewards of God, who will participate and lead missionary work.

The author of Ephesians 3:2 identifies himself as the steward of God in God's mission. The term *oikonomia* is employed by this author in Ephesians to indicate the role of Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the Church in participating in the mission of God. In the Pastoral Epistles, the term *oikonomia* has in view the dual function of missions and the missional function in the Church. The term is used in 1 Timothy 1:4 for missions or pastoral roles and in Titus 1:7 to express the elder's leadership role in a Church's missional structure. The calling and function of the eldership in the Church is to lead a Church to fulfil its missional calling. (Hirsch, 2017:4775).

2.4.3.6 Summary

Section 2.4.3 examined the Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry from Paul's method of delegating responsibility to lay people and the following elements laying the foundation of Class Leader Ministry:

Ephesians 4:11-16 provides for pastors to help individuals find their spiritual gifts, train them, and provide opportunities for Ministry. All of God's people, as active witnesses, share the Gospel to reach the world. When this role-sharing is done effectively, the Church properly fulfils God's mission. Ephesians 4:16 lays a good foundation for Class Leader Ministry. The author of the Epistle to the Ephesians, especially Ephesians 4:16, intends that everyone should participate in Church ministry or Ministry of God, and all believers (Class Leaders and Class Members) should

act as a living organism, joined and knitted together. According to the Bible, grace and gifts are given by God to all believers, and every Christian should be involved in the Ministry as a member of the body of Christ.

Becky Scoggins was quoted in the Adventist News saying that the Christians who are more likely to remain in Church are the ones participating in small groups (Puni, 2003:2). According to Johnson (1991:31), for Church members to stay in the Church, they at least need to have seven friends and at least one special friend. People want to belong. The Class Leader Ministry is more personal and facilitates strong bonds between members, which is not readily achievable in big groups. It is important for the Church to have the Class Leaders and Members meeting during the week and large group meetings on Sundays. The Class Leader Ministry provides greater intimacy, stronger relationships, more confident worship,

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the *biblical* and *theological* background and or rationale for organizing and promoting Class Leader Ministry ranging from small groups, home cells, wards, and family Church in the Church. Chapter 2 also extensively reviewed selected passages from the Old and New Testament books, which formed the basis for the discussion on the Historical-Grammatical method of Bible Interpretation.

In Chapter 2, the place and historical context, literary context, structure, setting, intention, genre, theological message, and exposition were key factors used to measure the Biblical and Theological Foundations of Class Leader Ministry across the selected passages from the Old and New Testaments books.

The selected Old and New Testament books, namely: Exodus 18:13-27, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Chronicles 23-27, Mark 3:13-19, Acts 2:42-47, and Ephesians 4:11-17, are the biblical and scripture readings used to gauge the Biblical and Theological foundations for Class Leader Ministry.

The house Churches/small groups portrayed in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Chronicles, Mark, Acts, and in the Pauline letters are expressions of small groups. Jesus, His twelve disciples, and the small group in Ephesus performed the same six basic elements of a small group in Acts 2:42-47. These six basic elements are also evident in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Chronicles. The dynamics of Jesus' group, of course, were quite different compared to those of the house Church. The Class Leader Ministry is modelled around the methods and elements employed by all the groups discussed in this chapter.

The next chapter investigates some historical aspects relevant to the Class Leader Ministry using the traditional approach to Church history of dividing Church history into four periods: Early Church, Medieval Period, Reformation and Modern Period. The main events and personalities of each period are also described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CLASS LEADER MINISTRY

3.1 INTRODUCTION.

The previous Chapter 2 explored the Biblical and theological background for the rationale for organizing and promoting Class Leader Ministry (small groups, home cells, wards, family Church, etc.) in the Church by looking carefully at selected passages from the Old and New Testaments books and the theological literature discussing the Class Leader Ministry (small groups, home cells, wards, family Church, etc.).

Chapter 3 investigates some relevant historical aspects relevant to the Class Leader Ministry. The traditional approach to Church history is to divide it into four periods: Early Church, Medieval Period, Reformation, and Modern Period and to describe each period's leading events and personalities (Dreyer & Pillay, 2017:124). The division of Church history into four periods used in this study was used by among others, Bromiley (1978), Bakhuizen (1980), Reventlow (2009), and McGrath (2013). This chapter accordingly explores the use of small groups or Class Leader Ministry in the Church. It covers the history of small groups up to the protestant period and the rapid developments after that. The investigation focuses on the possible role that such small groups played in the growth of the Church within the context of the challenges that the Church faced at particular time intervals.

The history of small groups has been written extensively in the literature, but not all historical texts on the subject will be discussed. Only those applicable today will be discussed. Those discussed will be composed of groups, events, movements, and role players in the History of the Church formed to promote evangelism, fellowship, ministry, prayer, teaching, worship, and presenting a historical overview of Class Leader Ministry. The logical conclusion to the chosen representatives will be explored in terms of their formation, their characteristics, and their role in the Church and its growth.

To establish the basis or rationale for organizing and promoting small groups (Class Leader Ministry) in Churches, this chapter explores the historical literature that varies from one period to

another. To unravel this, the first section of this chapter will describe the method to be followed to investigate the History of small groups. In line with such a method, this section will also give a historical overview of the small group in the early Church period. The periods under the spotlight will vary from the days of the apostles (A.D. 33-100) and apostolic fathers (AD 100-200) to the times of the Church fathers. Eventually, this section will end with a summary.

The second section of this chapter 3 examines the historical overview of small groups by discussing the Middle age and Renaissance periods. Based on such discussion within these periods, this section will dwell on the monks in terms of their contribution to the history of the Church.

The third section of this chapter 3 looks at the historical overview of small groups during the Pre-16th Century Reformation Period. This section glance at the three pre-16 century reformation groups (the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Hussites) as key groups laying at the heart of this section of the study. The section will conclude by summarising the similarities between the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Hussites.

The fourth section of this chapter 3 concentrates on the historical overview of a small group during the Reformation. This section will focus on the small groups during the era of Luther, Bucer, Anabaptists, Puritans, Pietism, and the Moravian Church.

The last section looks at the Methodist Church Small Group and presents the conclusion of this chapter.

3.2 Small groups in the Early Church Period

This section explores issues pertaining to small groups of the early Church period. The early Church period is approached as being made up of three eras. The emergence of these eras culminated in the apostle's era (A.D. 33-100), the small group during the Apostolic Father's era (AD 100 – 200), and the small group during the Church father's era (AD 339-397). The focus is on how apostles, apostolic fathers, and Church fathers made use of small groups for new spiritual life and growing Churches. This section discusses how Church members were mobilized to confess and spread the truth.

Looking at Section 2.1 above, Dickie (2019:1) is of the opinion that people who attend small group meetings regularly show an increased commitment to building their relationships with Christ and

others. This is consistent with the study by Kageler (2018:36), who advocated that adequate small-group ministry multiplies the Church of God to build His kingdom.

3.2.1 The Small groups in the days of the Apostles (A.D. 33-100)

This section pays particular attention to the historical overview of small groups during the days of the apostles. It focuses on the role played by the apostles contributing towards the growth of the Church.

The Christian Church was established by the apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit. They were heeding the message of Jesus Christ to ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations’ (Matthew 28:19-20). Section 2.4.1 above indicates that the first apostles were the twelve Disciples of Christ. These disciples were despised by people at the time but were charged with the responsibility to implement the Great Commission “to make disciples of all nations” (Fanning, 2009:3).

The apostolic era goes beyond the day of Pentecost to the death of St John, and this is the period between A.D. 30 to A.D. 100. The apostolic age is the fountainhead of the Christian Church. It is the era of the Holy Spirit, the era of inspiration and prescript for the following eras. During the era of the apostles, the Christian Church was made up of a group of believers who were obedient to the command of Christ as taught by the apostles. The Apostles travelled East and West and to all parts of their known world to spread Christianity. Their meetings between A.D. 30 and A.D. 70 took place in temples as well as in houses to make disciples of all nations. The disciples were called Christians (Brumback, 2007: 7). The apostles believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the suffering Servant who was God incarnate and made Himself the perfect sacrifice for all human beings (Fanning, 2009:3). This is in line with Mark’s thinking in section 2.4.1.4 above and certainly affirms that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 1:1; Mark 15:39).

The apostles evangelized all people, including the Gentiles in Jerusalem. Matthew headed towards Egypt, Bartholomew went to Armenia, and Thomas continued evangelizing in traditional states and spreading the Gospel to India. Peter, Paul, and John played a major role during the apostolic era; they wrote a variety of books in the Bible (Fanning, 2009:4).

One of the apostles, the youngest, named Saul in A.D. 36, later called Paul, was converted on the way to Damascus to persecute Christians (Fanning, 2009:4). He became a good example of a small group leader. Paul declared that his doctrine of the Church and salvation does not come from the

other disciples but from Jesus Christ Himself. In his implementation of the great commission, Paul undertook his first missionary journey with Barnabas between A.D. 45- 48. This missionary Journey targeted major cities in Central Asia (Fanning, 2009:5).

In the second missionary Journey around A.D. 51, Paul went to the eastern provinces of the empire "Phrygia, Galatia, Greece, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia (Acts 16:6). The third missionary journey of Paul (A.D. 53-57) was in the Ephesian synagogues, and with time Paul's bold preaching aroused opposition from the Jews, leading Paul, not out of his personal or theological choice, to moved out of the synagogues to a nearby lecture hall (Acts, 19:9).

Paul in his life made disciples through his three missionary journeys which lasted for less than fifteen years in Galatia and Asia, in Asia Macedonia and Achaia in Europe. To continue his teaching, Paul wrote a number of letters. In A.D. 57, Paul wrote the epistle to Romans from Corinth, which is the sixth book of the New Testament, and He planted Churches (Fanning, 2009:9). The Gospel spread from Asia, Europe, and the Isles through a group of people that Paul established and had an encounter within Asia. Paul's way of making disciples through his preaching included friends, relatives, and trade contacts, reaching many people. He reached Rome to make it his evangelizing base for the western half of the empire, but his missionary days were coming to an end, and was sent to prison (Kane, 1978:9).

In his missionary journey, Paul was not alone. He worked with Pricilla, Aquila, and Barnabas. This team worked together, moving from one area to the other, preaching in synagogues, and establishing Churches (Acts 18:18-23). During his missionary journey, Paul, before leaving the place, ensured that he left prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). These officers were to look after the Church in his absence and perform different tasks according to the office they held, for an example: Prophets will prophesy. No area was left without an overseer.

3.2.2 The Apostolic Fathers (A.D. 100-200)

Apostolic fathers become the leaders of the Churches following the passing of the apostles. The Apostolic Fathers were a group of early Christian writers who knew one of the Apostles and lived during the first and second centuries A.D., and sought to define, organize, and defend the faith as modelled by the apostles of Jesus Christ (Ehrman, 2003a:1). The Church was not always led by an

ordained pastor like today, but local Churches had elders. Some of the Church elders had the responsibilities that are associated with those of an ordained pastor today, as listed in the next paragraph.

Scholars such as Brumback, 2007:12; and Strauch, 2009:16 summarised the role and function of elders to include leading the Church, supplying spiritual food, and attending to all the works of the Lord's House (II Corinthians 5:18-19; Galatians 6:2; I Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:7; I Peter 5:1-2); teach and preach the Word of God (I Timothy 3:2; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9); protect the Church from false teachings (Acts 20:17; Acts 20:28-31) Exhort and Admonish the saints in sound doctrine and each other to faithfulness and to do all the works of the Church with the fellow elders of the Church (I Timothy 4:13; II Timothy 3:13; Titus 1:9); visit the sick and pray (James 5:14; Acts 6:4) and judge doctrinal issues (Acts 15:6).

Strauch (2009:16) summarizes the role and function of elders as "elders edify themselves, exhort and admonish, lead, Shepherd, and take care of the local Church. "The early Church was characterized by way of admonishing each other through psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, allowing the word of God to grow (Colossians 3:16-17; Ephesians 5:19). The religious favour of apostles amazed the Jewish nation as disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem (Strauch, 2009:16).

The early Church mainly worshipped in houses than synagogues or Church buildings, which remained the most significant framework of ecclesial form and structure they worshiped from house to house. The first house Church in the New Testament was made up of the disciples of Jesus Christ, who met together in the "Upper Room" of a house as indicated in the book of Acts 1: 13. This house is traditionally believed to be where the Cenacle is today (Filson, 1939:106-109).

The Christians continued to make disciples in these house ministries. Most of the teachings of the early Church were through other Church members ministering to each other in the absence of apostles and the apostolic fathers (Johnson, 2011:159).

This is consistent with the Great Commission as outlined in Matthew 28:16-20. The early Church leadership was not about hierarchy. Some members led out of their character, their knowledge of God learned from the apostolic fathers and their love for one another. A group of people was assigned to lead the small group meeting in houses, and the Church continued to grow (Atkins, 2018:72).

Both apostles, Paul and Peter, were martyred in Rome. Clement of Rome, one of the apostolic fathers, became a Church leader; to be specific, he became the Bishop of the Church after these two apostles were martyred. Clement accepted the Christian faith while he was a young man. He worked as a missionary and preached the word of the crucified Jesus. Clement was ordained a bishop by the apostle Peter and served in leadership roles while he was in the Roman Church. Clement was exiled to Crimea, where he died in 101 A.D. (Holland, 1897:69).

As an apostolic father, Clement continued to utilize the small group as part of his ministry. In I Clement 1:1, Clement wrote a letter to the Church in Rome, Corinth, and those called and made Holy by the will of God through the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Clement calls on Christians to maintain harmony and order (Will, 1972:15).

3.2.3 The Small Group in the times of the Church Fathers.

This section will explore the small group in times of the Church fathers looking at the Clergy. It will also focus on the role Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 339-397) played in the small group of Clergy and his expectation from the group he led.

It must be noted that the building centre approach to Christian life and functioning dominated the Churches ever since, including the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Denominations (Hadaway *et al.*, 1987: 7). As the Church became more building-centered, worship also shifted from being the cooperate celebration of all people to Clergy performing ceremonies. An ecclesiastical hierarchy began to form, and Constantine merely made sure that the Christian Churches were no longer the objects of state persecution (Comiskey, 2015:30-32). Conn & Ortiz (2001:65), in section 2.3.1.4 above, present a counter view that suggests that the mega-Churches do not abandon the small groups but achieve success in their growth and sustain that growth through effective subgroupings.

The hierarchical view of the Church separated the work of the Clergy from that of the laity. In short, some lay people who were involved in ministry were removed from ministerial duties, and ministerial duties remained in the hands of the few, mainly the Clergy. This development led to the priesthood and the free flow or use of the gift of the spirits by the Clergy, with the laity becoming spectators. There was little interaction between the ordinary members of the Church and the priests; instead, the Church slowly but surely became ritualistic and eroded from the inside (Comiskey,

2015:33-37). This led to the emergence of a small group of Clergy. This section will zoom into the small groups of the Clergy during the leadership of Ambrose of Milan.

Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan (339-397), was born in the official residence at Augusta Treverorum (now Trier, Germany) and changed from an unbaptized layman to a bishop in eight days (Rusch, 1977:48). He continued to study both the Scriptures and pagan literature, became an accomplished preacher, writer and devoted himself to prayer (Di Bernardin, 1986:145). Ambrose occupied the Basilica Porciana together with several his followers when refusing to be assigned as the Basilica to Bishop Auxentius for his services (Di Bernardin, 1986:147). As a Christian, Ambrose defended the full divinity and humanity of Christ (Di Bernardin, 1986:187). He believed that justification is found by solely believing in Christ "*sole fide, sine operibus legis*" (Di Bernardin, 1986:189).

Ambrose led a small group of Clergy to fill their own spiritual needs and mentor other clergymen into a Holy life. Ambrose mentored several clergymen, including St. Augustine of Hippo, who was influenced by the small group meetings led by Ambrose (Comiskey, 2015:38). Ambrose mentored a number of Clergy through his participation during Church Councils through his behavior outside formal structures and through writing letters which were circulated amongst the Clergy.

He demonstrated a passion for orthodoxy based on the correctness of scripture to the Clergy, and this passion for orthodoxy was a common practice during Emperor Theodosius era (Smither, 2009:74). Ambrose taught each group by modelling and practicing his teachings (he was a role model to those he taught); during his teachings, he emphasized the importance of focusing on the issues that are at hand, the current challenges, and refraining from quarrelling. He taught of the importance of being far from the accused and avoiding involving more influential persons in discussion during problem-solving (Smither, 2009:77). This is to ensure that no one dominates the discussion and moves the verdict to favour them.

Ambrose used a mentor discipleship relationship. Ambrose had a paternal or fatherly relationship with the Clergy. In this relationship, he had to ensure that he struck a delicate balance of authority, grace, and discipline. He was bound to keep the Clergy in discipline, taking care to avoid extreme looseness and/or harshness (Homes-Dudden, 1935: 122). Ambrose, solicitude for the Clergy, went the extra mile when instructing the Clergy to ensure that they understood his teachings. He went further and composed a series of addresses in the form of letters, and these letters were put together in the form of a treatise called "on the Duties of Ministry" for the Clergy's benefit. These letters,

with time, were converted into a book for a wider clerical audience (Homes-Dudden, 1935: 125-126).

Ambrose observed the protocol. He supported his understanding of the hierarchy between mentor and disciple, citing the relationship between Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Barnabas and Mark, Paul and his disciples Timothy and Titus (Smithey, 2009: 87). He encouraged the small groups of Clergy to remind each other of the Good News of Jesus Christ. He encouraged Clergy to relate to one another as a community, open their hearts to each other, and bear each other's burden (Mayer, 1976:298) following the example of disciples and apostles in the book of Acts.

He taught that it is important for the Clergy to be Holy. He wanted the clergy group to be a small group of people who pursue a Holy life whose conduct follows models of Saints in the scripture, and these characters dominated his teachings. He continued to exhort them to be humble, gentle, mild, serious, and patient; he also demonstrated the virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. He urged his small groups of Clergy to show love, mercy, kindness, and goodwill, giving freely without expectation and not being pressured or forced. He called them to be sexually pure and have a good testimony before secular authorities. He advised them to show modesty in speech, tone of voice, praying and even in walking (Smither, 2009:80). He encouraged them to live to please God.

Ambrose was leading this group as a disciple (Leader-Disciple) and continued to grow spiritually through his career as a bishop. He emphasized the importance of continued learning as a clergy. They must also keep busy, avoid being idle and use free time for reading (Smither, 2009:82); he led an exemplary life. He did not take the office of Bishop the first time he was promoted and this sharply contradicted any impure pursuit of this position (Ramsey, 1997:42). Upon his ordination as Bishop, he renounced all his personal property, and this act made him different from others who wanted ordination for material gain (Ramsey, 1997:43). He maintained a celebrated lifestyle and praised virginity. He was known for fasting and praying. He guarded in confidence what the confessors confessed to him (Smither, 2009:83).

Ambrose did not keep everything to himself. He involved the Clergy in ministry activities and trusted them with a number of responsibilities at different levels of ministry. He was committed to developing and advancing the Clergy. He believed that the Clergy should be assigned to ministries that correspond with their temperaments and their natural abilities to ensure that duties are

discharged with greater grace (Homes-Dudden, 1935: 124). Once a clergy's performance is satisfactory and he passed the training, he was not kept but released to their own ministries (Smither, 2009:89).

Ambrose wrote ninety-one letters, and of the ninety-one, forty-three were written to the group of Clergy. He believed that by writing to the Clergy, he was ensuring his teachings remained with his protégé in his absence. In these letters, he taught the Clergy the Practical Church Matters: His letters focused on the following subject.

- To respond to theological and exegetical questions: Most of the forty-three letters he wrote to the Clergy were dedicated to this subject.
- To encourage and exhort the Clergy to the work of Ministry: His seven final letters were dedicated to this subject. He encouraged the Clergy and exhorted them to their Ministry (Smither, 2009:77-78).

Ambrose led the clergy group and mentored by writing books and treaties related to practical Church matters, spiritual leadership, and doctrinal issues. These meetings ensured the strength and vitality of the Church (Comiskey, 2015:38). Ambrose was more involved with a small group of assistant Clergy. These assistant Clergy were to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ to each other (Mayer, 1976:298).

3.2.4 Section Summary

This section examined the history of small groups in the early Church period, zoomed at the apostle's era (A.D. 33-100), the small group during the apostolic father's era (AD 100 – 200), and the small group during the Church father's era (AD 339-397). Finally, the following lessons about small groups can be learned from this section:

- The apostles established a Church with the instruction to “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:19-20). Believers have a responsibility to make disciples of all nations.
- The believers were obedient to the command of Christ as taught by the apostles. The Church must teach obedience to the disciples.

- The believers' and the early Church meetings took place in temples (the building) as well as in houses to make disciples of all nations. For the Church to grow, believers must meet continuously in the Churches and in homes.
- The apostles evangelized all people. The Church should not discriminate.
- Salvation does not come from the other disciples but from Jesus Christ Himself.
- Paul's way of making disciples through his preaching included friends, relatives, and trade contacts, reaching many people. The Church should preach to everyone in order to make disciples.
- Paul was not alone in the ministry. Shared responsibility produces better results.
- Paul, before leaving the place he established a ministry, ensured that he left prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Even during the era of the Apostolic Father, the Church was not always led by an ordained pastor like today, but local Churches had elders. The pastors must appoint leaders (Class Leaders) to take care of the believers in the absence of the pastor.
- Clement as an apostolic father, continued to utilize the small group as part of his ministry. The Church must utilize small groups.
- When the Church separated the work of the Clergy from that of the laity, the Church became ritualistic and eroded from the inside. The Church must involve the laity to avoid erosion.
- Ambrose taught each group by modelling and practicing his teachings. The Church leader must be a role model.

The next section discusses the small groups during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period.

3.3 Small groups during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period

The preceding section provided a brief historical overview of Class Leader Ministry exploring the small groups that existed during the early Church period. It concentrated on small groups during the days of the Apostles, the Apostolic Father period, and the small group in the times of the Church fathers. This section provides a historical overview of Class Leader Ministry through the presentation of how in the history of the Christian Church small groups were used as tools for evangelism and discipleship.

It is difficult to be precise about when one era ends and another begins, the same with the "Middle Ages. "A number of Historians debate the starting date of the "Middle Ages. "Most answers depend

on circumstances. Others define it by the practically simultaneous suppression of the Athenian Platonic academy as well as the establishment of the great monastery at Monte Casino in 529 (McGrath, 2013:78), although not in themselves causing the transition from late antiquity to the medieval period. Others believe that the medieval period is regarded as having been initiated through Alaric's conquest of Rome in 410, resulting in a gradual shift in the centres of intellectual life from the Mediterranean world to the northern European world of Theodoric and Charlemagne, followed by the time of abbey and cathedral schools of France, and the universities of Paris and Oxford (McGrath, 2013:78).

For the purpose of this study, the Middle Ages is a period between the sixth century and thirteenth century, while the Renaissance covers the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Middle Ages represented an immensely creative and innovative period in Christian theology (McGrath, 2013:77). The terms “medieval” and “Middle Ages” are modern, signifying the period of transition between the intellectual glories of antiquity and those of the modern period (McGrath, 2013:78). During this period of Church History, the study will specifically concentrate on the small group of Monks.

3.3.1 The Small groups of the Monks

This section will focus on the small groups of monks. This will be done by paying attention to the small groups of Monks and the characteristics of these small groups. A closer look at St Patrick and Gerald Groote's role in small groups of Monks and their expectation from the groups they sent out to make disciples.

3.3.1.1 The Small groups and St Patrick

ST Patrick was born around 385 A.D in Roman Britain. He was taken to slavery at the age of fourteen to herd and tend the sheep. He learned the practices and language of the people who held him captive. He continued to pray to God while in captivity and God heard his prayers. He escaped from captivity at age twenty after hearing God speaking to him in a dream showing him the escape route. He followed the dream and ended up at the coast, where the sailors helped him to go back to Britain, where he reunited with his family (Comiskey, 2015:51).

Around 430 A.D, he was ordained a Bishop by St Germanus and appointed to establish a Church in Ireland, where he was kept captive. On his arrival, he had challenges of people trying to kill him, but he continued preaching the Gospel and converting many people. He preached and made disciples, his disciple also preached and made disciples, they planted Churches. When the kings of

Ireland and their families heard St Patrick preach, they all converted to Christianity. St Patrick's model of making disciples was community-oriented, rational, and hospitable.

The individual Monks felt the need to come together for community protection and greater effectiveness. Many Monks were drawn into a life of isolation to pursue their salvation. They formed small groups at the edge of cities and called them monasteries. These Monks formed a relationship with God and felt the need to relate to other believers (McGuire, 2010:38-60). St Patrick and his disciples would go into an area where they intended to make disciples and become part of that community. This will ensure that they model what they want their recruits to follow. They would then preach the Gospel and establish a Church through small groups (Comiskey, 2015:53). They preached love and unity, and those who joined them saw life transformation, practiced love daily, and learned how to live and act. They ensured that the Church was accessible to everyone (Comiskey, 2015:52).

They lived in a community (small groups) but never lost sight of giving their community away by breaking them into small groups. This group was characterized by its evangelistic strategy, which resembled that of Jesus' prayer in John 17:22-23, where Jesus indicates that the world would know and believe His disciples by their unity. Patrick's followers spoke more of love and unity within the Trinity. They discovered that meeting in groups allowed them to experience spiritual and practical benefits.

According to Brown (1992:37), the small groups they formed had the ability to embody the characteristics of the Christian Church described in Acts 2, despite being separated from others. Secondly, each monastery had its own rules, but the group strictly followed rules of St Benedict because they were deemed to be able to balance spiritual life, work, and community. They strictly practiced charity and obedience and followed a strict diet, and were hard workers (Comiskey, 2015:50).

3.3.1.2 The Small groups and Gerald Grootte

In the Netherlands, another Monastic movement called the Brethren of Common Life was formed. This movement originated under the leadership of Gerald Grootte (1340-1384), who ensured that their conversion was characterized by what was called the intense Zeal to bring back the countrymen to real, vital religion (Neal, 2007:76). This movement emphasized the importance of

spirituality, scholarship and the preaching of the Gospel. They formed groups from time to time. They met in houses, and as soon as the group grows, they form another group (Comiskey, 2015:59).

Groote evangelized from one place to the other, calling men and women to repentance and proclaiming the beauty of Divine Love. In 1380, Groote chose twelve disciples, who met regularly with him in a house, preparing them to preach God's word. This led to this movement seeing a growth of hundred houses for women and thirty homes for men (Strand, 1960:22). Each household of brethren consists of four or more priests, and along with them is a number of clergymen who gathered together voluntarily (Neal, 2007: 96).

3.3.2 Section Summary

This section examined the history of small groups in the Middle-Ages and the Renaissance period looking closely at the establishment of the Monks and the role played by both St Patric and Gerald Groote. The small groups of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period presents the following lessons:

- St Patrick and Gerald Groote when sending a group of disciples out, they ensured that the group understood the importance of cultivating the inner life. This was accomplished through sharing property and practicing spiritual discipline, such as praying and meditating on scripture (Neal, 2007:97).
- Unlike Ambrose and the Clergy, who did not allow the lay in the Church to participate in their small groups, the monks of the time used small-group structures,
- the laypersons were separated from the official Church structure in order to ensure purity.
- Towards the end of the 5th century, monasticism grew through small groups and played a major role in the Catholic Church (Latourette 1975:222).

The next section discusses the small groups during the pre-16th century reformation.

3.4 Small groups during the Pre 16thCentury Reformation Period

The previous section provided a historical overview of Class Leader Ministry through the presentation of how in the history of the Christian Church small groups were used as tools for evangelism and discipleship zooming on the small groups of Monks. This section explores the literature on small groups during the Pre-16th Century Reformation (The Waldensians, Lollards, and

the Hussites) and their similarities in order to present a historical overview of a Class Leader Ministry and share what can be learned from these historical groups.

The Canon Law governed the internal hierarchy and administration of the Church from the 12th to the 16th Century. In the 16th century, this law became complex as leaders (popes and bishops) added rules to it; leading to the Canon Law contradicting itself. The scholars attempted to bring order to the canon law by selecting texts and arranging them systematically. This new systematically collected canonical collection was to be the only law to be used by bishops to manage the Church (Lynch, 1992:68).

Not everyone was allowed to preach during this era, only those approved by the Roman Catholic Church authorities. Not everyone obeyed this rule. Amongst those who did not obey this rule was Peter Waldo, who felt compelled by God to go out and preach the Gospel. He did not have permission to preach; therefore, authorities stopped him. He went to the Pope to seek permission to preach, and his request was rejected. This never stopped him from spreading the Gospel (Lynch, 1992:69-70).

Others joined him, and they preached the word of God; three similar movements appeared within proximity of each other, all emphasizing the importance of small groups, preaching the Gospel, obedience to the scripture, and commitment to lay involvement. These three pre-reformation groups were the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Hussites. These three groups are discussed in greater details below.

3.4.1 The Waldensians

The Waldensians were a pre-reformation group of Christians who sought a more purified brand of Christianity. The group claimed they could trace their roots to the early Church. The Waldensians were started by Peter Waldo (1140-1217) in the late 1170s, and by 1215, the Waldensians were declared heretical and were subjected to persecution. Peter Waldo was a wealthy and influential young man. This wealthy and influential young man was profoundly moved by the word of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St Matthew 19:21, where Jesus Christ spoke to the young rich man (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:14). Waldo followed the scripture literally. He gave away his wealth to the poor. He and his followers were known as "The Poor Men of Lyons" or "The Poor"; they called

themselves "The Poor of Spirit," a name taken from the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew 5:3. They did not own anything in their name (Tourn, 1980: 3-4).

The Waldensian movement had a strong belief that people of God must be given an opportunity to hear and understand the word of God. To achieve this, Waldo employed Ydros and Stephen of Ansa to translate seven books of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into the local French Provençal Dialect (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:15). The Waldensian movement was amongst the first Christian movements to translate the Bible into local dialects and preached the Gospel in public. Waldo followed the Gospel according to St Mark 6:7; he divided his followers into groups of two to take the Gospel to the surrounding towns and villages. They walked barefoot, clad in woollen garments, and had nothing to their names, holding all things in common like the apostles, naked, following a naked Christ. The Catholic authorities were against public preaching and worked towards ensuring that this preaching caused conflict that led to the persecution of the Waldensians. This led to the Church forbidding the Waldensians from preaching unless explicitly invited by the priest (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:15).

Waldo did not accept this. He believed that the body of Christ should follow in the teaching of the apostles and not of human constructs of his day. He continued to preach the Word of God publicly. When asked to stop preaching, he used the words of Acts 4:19 as his response "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than Him?". In 1183, the Bishop of Lyons banned Waldo from the city (Latourette, 1975:543).

During the 12th century, Waldo and his followers developed a system of secretly meeting within small groups. These small groups ministered to one another (Comiskey, 2000, 762-764). These groups met at night, outside, and were led by itinerant brothers. Their belief was based on the Bible. The groups were characterized by memorizing and reciting the Bible, followed by discussions and comments before application (Zdero, 2004:63). They encouraged lay people to read the Bible for themselves and disputed many teachings of the Catholic Church. In an effort to recover the type of intimacy of the pre-basilica era, following their ban, the Waldensians (Waldo and his followers) moved to remote Alpine Mountain areas; they met as smaller groups in mountains, forests, and caves as well as in villages to continue their mission (Brumback, 2007:107).

The Waldensians were persecuted not only at the beginning but for a number of years and in different locations. These persecutions forced the Waldensians to keep their faith alive in their

homes and night meetings in stables and backrooms of little shops. In these house meetings, they would gather together for a meal, pray together and participate in the Holy Communion/Lord's Supper (Tourn, 1989:41). Their private meeting places were known as a scholar, the locaxgons where worship was building up in the faith, and instructions occurred. The most important role teaching played in the religious life of the Waldensians was to empower everyone, men and women, young and old, to preach the Gospel (Tourn, 1980:30-39).

They rejected the notion of purgatory, transubstantiation, and some of the Catholic sacraments and refused to worship saints and pray for the dead (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:5). Regardless of persecutions, this group grew from strength to strength through its small group meetings and teachings.

3.4.2 The Lollards

John Wycliffe (1328 – 1384) was born in a village called Ipreswel, near the town of Richmond; he was born during a time of great spiritual darkness (Levy, 2018: 2). Wycliffe was certainly one of the most important forerunners of the Reformation. He is referred to as the Morning Star of the Reformation. His influence on the Reformers was very great (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:19). Wycliffe studied at Merton College in Oxford as a student and with time he became a teacher at the same college. It is at this College that Professor Thomas Bradwardine taught him that God alone is able to save men from their sins by His sovereign grace and these teaching touched Wycliffe's heart. He began to love the Scriptures and studied them gladly.

He became a Doctor of Theology in 1372. He continued to study the Bible and loved to preach the Gospel with clarity, faithfulness, and power that were unusual in those days (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:20).

John Wycliff was not pleased with the way of life of the monks and called them "the pests of society, the enemies of religion, and the promoters of every crime. "The friars were not pleased with his utterances and wanted to have him sentenced to death. Wycliff continued to speak openly about anything he considered not pleasing about the Roman Catholic Church leadership. Wycliffe was charged with heresy and summoned to appear in St. Paul's Cathedral in London on 19 February 1377. During the court proceedings, there was a commotion and Wycliffe escaped during that commotion. He was warned not to preach against the Roman Catholic Church and his case was dismissed (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:21-22).

In the 14th century, the writings of John Wycliff, a prominent theologian at the University of Oxford, inspired the beginning of his followers, known as the Lollards. He was a professor at Oxford University and later entered the service of the king of England. His doctrine was published through a number of theological pamphlets that he wrote (Kleyn & Beeke, 2007:15).

The Lollards is a political and religious movement that existed in the late 14th century to the time of the English Reformation (Comiskey, 2000: 739-834). They followed the teaching of John Wyclif. They lamented the Reformation of Christianity. This group challenged the authority of the Church to invest or deny the divine authority to make a man a priest. Their belief regarding the priesthood of all believers stirred them to mutual accountability in the home meetings like in the early house Churches. The reading of the Word of God formed the central activity of the Lollards' small groups (Comiskey, 2000: 739-834).

Wycliff was a convert to realism in philosophy and Augustine's theology. He came to see the Church of his day as a synagogue of Satan as it had departed from the purity of its early poverty, lost its authority to interpret the Bible and it became entangled in abuse (Boreczky, 2017:475). He did not believe in Pilgrimages, purgatory, transubstantiation, and other ecclesiastical life aspects. In the fifteenth century, Lollardy went underground following measures taken by the Church like the burning at the stake of John Badby, executions, martyrs of Lollardy believers, etc. (Hudson, 2002:281).

The Lollards had underground group meetings because of the fierce persecutions they experienced (Comiskey, 2015:72). The Lollards groups congregated according to homogenous groups, e.g., groups of men, groups of married, groups of couples, and groups of women (McSheffrey, 2003:37). Their small groups were also connected via their extended Pope and had no part to play in Politics. They held the following views about the Church at that period in time: -

- The Church was too worldly;
- Monasticism had drifted from its spiritual foundation;
- The Bible should be available to everyone in their own language;
- Piety was required for a priest to be a true priest or perform sacraments;
- Religious power comes through piety and not the hierarchy of the Church, and
- The attempts to use power for individual gain is, therefore, wrong (McSheffrey, 2003:37-38).

The Lollards' small group meetings activities are hereby listed below as follows (Hudson, 2002:306)):

- The Lollards small groups did not administer the sacraments because the sacrament was administered during the Church service.
- There is no record of their membership roll at their small group meetings.
- They tended to intermarry.
- They believed it is good for a man to confess himself alone to God or to another lay person as to a priest, James 5:16, “Show your sins one to another.”
- They advocated apostolic poverty and taxation of Church properties.
- They denied Transubstantiation in favour of consubstantiation.

3.4.3 The Hussites

The Hussites Christian movement followed the teaching of a Czech who is a reformer and a university professor, Jan Hus, from Husinec in southern Bohemia, who was declared a heretic and executed in 1418 (Pierce, 2018:59). Hus was born around 1369 in Bohemia, which was at that time a province of the Holy Roman Empire. He spent his youth preparing for the priesthood, attained his Bachelor's degree from Charles University in Prague in 1393, and progressed through biblical preaching to what was called Hussite Reformation or Czech Reformation (Atwood, 2009:5).

Hus became a professor of theology in 1398, was ordained to the priesthood in 1400, was made rector of the University in 1402, and received a Bachelor's degree in theology in 1404 (William, 1879:31). Jan Hus's life can be summarised into four general categories with obvious overlap he was a scholar (1390–1402), he was a pastor (1402–1412), he was in exile (1412–1414) and was accused heretic (1414–15) (Fudge, 2018:9).

In 1402, Hus became a preacher at the Bethlehem Chapel, a centre of the native Bohemian reform movement since its founding in 1391 (Estep, 1986: 69). Hus drew inspiration for his subsequent reformist ideas from Wycliffe's teachings, specifically his views on the divestment of ecclesiastical wealth, the authority of Scripture, Church governance, and the vernacular translation of the Bible (Lambert, 2002: 285-287, 293-295).

He was against the selling of indulgences and priesthood immorality. He was attacking the moral failings of the Clergy, bishops, and even the papacy from the pulpit. He was disillusioned with the

state of the Church. The archbishop of Prague tolerated Hus and appointed him as a preacher to the Clergy at a synod (Comiskey, 2015:75). Hus' beliefs, however, were not endorsed by all Bohemians, particularly by the Catholic Clergy, who owed their allegiance and authority to the Pope. These forces attempted to suppress Hus' teachings (Lambert, 2002:293).

Hus was condemned by the Council of Constance and put to trial in 1414 and 1415. (Fudge, 2017:29). During his trial, he agreed to obey the Church fully on condition that the Church leaders could prove beyond reasonable doubt that his statement was erroneous (Fudge, 2017:30). In 1410, Zbynek, the Archbishop of Prague, excommunicated Hus and his supporters. However, Hus' reformist ideas had already spread, people of Prague, inspired by Hus and his teachings, revolted against Papal authority (Lambert, 2002: 295-296). In 1412, after his ex-communication and exile from Prague, Hus retreated to the countryside until his arrest in 1414. Wealthy patrons supported Hus, and he continued to develop his beliefs, publishing his major work called *De ecclesia* (The Church), wherein he laid out an ambitious proposal for Church reform in Wycliffe's tradition (Lambert, 2002: 294-295), which was viewed as a direct threat by both the Pope and the Emperor. In 1414, Hus was lured to the German city of Constance, where he was arrested, tried, and executed for heresy (Spinker, 1968: 287-290).

Hus, being a Czech language teacher, empowered him to create a uniquely Bohemian form of Catholicism, with Czech as the language of the Bible and Utraquism as the form of the Eucharist.

The following are beliefs of Huss as practiced by the Hussites:

- *Everyone has the ability to interpret the Bible as long as it is written in a language they understand* - He taught his students to read and understand the Bible on their own, and he advocated for a Czech translation to be made available to the general laity, producing one of his own copies of which, unfortunately, no longer exist (Spinker, 1966: 17).
- *Full communion must be offered to all Christians, not priests only* – His spiritual belief is that Central to this worship was the practice of Utraquism, which is the lay participation in the full practice of the Eucharist, the taking of both the bread and wine, as was done in the earliest days of the Christian Church (Leff, 1999:91)
- *Bible and the scriptures take precedence over Church leaders and Councils* - He drew his system of Church structure, governance, practice, and belief from the examples in the Scriptures (Hus, 1915: 195).

- *The ethical standard of the Clergy is to be raised.* - His reliance on Scripture informed his position on the role of the Clergy and the role of the Pope within the true Church (Hus, 1915: 195). He believed that priests must be pure, and 'Priestly acts of all kinds are invalid except as the priest's life is conformed to the law of Christ. He clearly emphasized the necessity of purity of life to the clerical office (Hus, 1915: xix.). He saw the main downfall of the priesthood as the Clergy seeking personal glory, and he believed that 'every clergy who is not seeking his own glory but the honour of God, the prosperity of the Church and the salvation of the people, and who does God's will and uncovers the wiles of antichrist, preaching the law of Christ' has the marks which show that God sent him. (Hus, 1915: 195–196.)
- *For Hus, 'neither Pope nor priest can be absolved from sin except where God has before absolved* - the Pope's act in absolving is nothing more than the announcement of a herald—*factum papea a maximum non esi nisi praconis Dei promulatio* (Hus, 1915: xix).

Primarily existing in Bohemia, the Hussites were Czech speaking and nationalistic. They drew their initial theological inspiration (and their name) from John Hus, who was, in turn, highly influenced by the reforming ideas promulgated by John Wycliffe in the late 14th century at Oxford. The Hussites movement was involved in ministering and growing the Church through small groups (Fudge, 2002:5).

The following are some of the important formative influences of the Hussite Movement according to Heymann (1965: V11 and 1965:600):

- their vigorous domestic tradition of reformist preaching, this is related to early humanism in which the abuses of the Church and society were exposed and attacked;
- their supportive literary tradition in the vernacular, with a focus on personal piety and frequent communion;
- the Waldensian influence, and
- the impact of Wycliffite theology in academic and clerical circles.

These influences were complementary and somehow mutually contradictory. Under the pressure of the political, social, and economic conditions which prevailed in Bohemia during the second decade of the fifteenth century, they worked together to produce "the first great European revolution (Heymann, 1965:600).

From the 14th to 15th century John Hus was a Czech priest, and the Church grew through small groups to a membership of thousand as a result of the house-to-house ministry in its homeland of Bohemia and Moravia to a membership of two hundred thousand (Dianne, 2004:193). The Hussites continued to promote Reformation. The leadership of Hus was characterized by the importance of communities. This group was inspired by the early Church during the days of the apostles' which practiced Christian community in the New Testament Acts 2:42-7, 4:32-37, and epistles. Hus promoted the reading of the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible by all (not only the Clergy) in a language of choice.

3.4.4 Similarities between the Waldensians, Lollards, and Hus

The three pre-reformation groups had a number of things in common, as discussed above, and these are listed below:

1. They all believed that the scripture was the final authority, not the Church.
2. They believed that Bible must be translated into common languages for public reading and preaching.
3. They each reacted against a Church perceived to be corrupted through wealth, privileges, and power and believed the Roman Catholic Church to be corrupt.
4. Each emphasized preaching from the Bible in a language understood by the people.
5. They were all dedicated to both laymen and laywomen.
6. They believed in the Full Holy Communion for all.
7. They were against the immorality of the Clergy.
8. They were against indulgences, did not believe in prayer for the dead, and condemned the cult of the saints, relics, and pilgrimages.
9. They believed in home-based small groups.
10. They were persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church which saw them as divisive and disruptive of the then-status quo.
11. They had to worship in hiding underground, and they involved the laity in the ministry; they were Bible-based.
12. They formed small groups, and they grew both in numbers and spiritually through small-group participation.
13. They all pointed out Church abuses that were not based on God's word.
14. They paved the way for the protestant Reformation, which ensured that Christians abide and commit to God's Word alone.
15. They all survived into the sixteenth century regardless of persecution.

3.4.5 Section Summary

In this section, the history of Waldo, Wycliffe, and Hus was examined together with the pre-reformation movements they led and the beliefs of these pre-reformation movements. The section also discussed the formation and working of small groups in these movements as well as the similarities between these three pre-reformation groups. The next section discusses the small groups during the Reformation.

3.5 Small groups during the Reformation

The previous section presented the historical overview of small groups during the pre-16th century reformation period looking at Waldo, Wycliffe, and Hus together with the pre-reformation movements they led as well as the beliefs of these pre-reformation movements. This section discusses some views advocated by some leaders and sections of the protestant Reformation regarding small groups in the Church still relevant today. The section highlights the relevant views of Luther, Bucer, the Anabaptists, the Puritans, Pietism, and the Moravian Church.

3.5.1 Luther and Small Groups

Martin Luther was the lightning rod of the Reformation (Latourette, 1975:717). He is known for his contribution to the Reformation and for advocating that the Bible as the sole authority in the believer's faith. The greatest contribution of Martin Luther was the discovery of the truth of Justification by faith alone and the authority of scripture. Through his teachings, "the Church was liberated from Babylonian captivity" (Latourette, 1975:712).

One of the key doctrines Luther taught was the priesthood of the believers. He believed that each believer could read the Bible, understand scripture's plain meaning, have equal access to God, and be actively involved as a minister of the Gospel. The concept of small group meetings in private homes reappeared with the Reformation. Luther had a vision of the devout meeting in homes to practice their faith (Dreyer, 2020:3).

Luther initially looked at the ways to apply the priesthood of all believers and entertained the idea of using small groups as part of his Reformation (Luther, 1965:63-64). He saw small groups as a means of spiritual growth and discipleship. He saw the potential of house Churches and had a vision of meetings in homes for deeper expression of faith, which was generally absent in the institutional Church he sought to reform (Luther, 1965:64; Tan,1994:45).

In his Preface to the German Mass and Order of Service, Luther spoke of the need for the gathering of all people in a celebration service. He then added, "The third kind of service should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the Gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works. Here one could set up a brief and neat order for baptism and the sacrament and centre everything on the Word, prayer and love . . ." (Stevens, 2002:73).

The emergence of Anabaptists made him change his mind in light of contextual circumstances leading to him failing to implement the use of small groups (Forde, 2012:22-24). Martin Luther spoke of the importance of small groups, and he wrote that he no longer believed that earnest Christians should meet together in homes in order to pray, read, baptize, receive sacraments, and do other Christian works (White, 1983:274). He was of the opinion that small groups would sow division instead of unity. In his mind, he believed that people would start fooling themselves about who is an earnest Christian and he also argued that those self-styled earnest Christians meeting in houses will start to be full of pride and lack the understanding of grace, and see themselves as the one, pure Church (White, 1983:275).

Luther believed that through the works of Satan, earnest Christians would be isolated from the weak. The strong would grow pride and the weak will give up and all end up in hell. Luther further warned that if small groups of Christians are allowed to separate from the rest, to read the word, to baptize, and receive sacraments, it will be an encouragement to establish a new Church and schism (White, 1983:274-278).

Based on this, Luther did not make any attempt to inter-connect the small group meetings with the larger Church gathering regardless of his reading books like *Acts 2:46; Acts 5:42; Acts 10:22; Acts 12:12; Acts 16:32; Acts 18:26; Acts 20:7; Acts 20:20; Acts 21:7* which testifies to both the small home meetings as well as the large temple gatherings. Luther understood that Christian life is shaped by Christ and His Cross (Forde, 1977:14-15). He believed that God's true righteousness, true nature, and true essence is revealed on the Cross and that God is love and merciful, as indicated in I John 4:8.

3.5.2 Bucer and Small Groups

Luther's contemporary, Martin Bucer, drew heavily from Luther's Theology. Bucer felt that he would have been 'unfaithful' to Scripture by not promoting the gathering of believers in small groups (Wright 1994:137). Bucer did not support the state Church (Lutheran) against the gathered Church (Anabaptist) or vice versa. Instead, he felt the need for both (Wright, 1994:134). His groups were characterized by "The motif of twofold ecclesiology," at once both majority-based and confessing, which played an important role in the slow maturation of Bucer's plans for small communities. In the face of criticism, Bucer found himself having to explain that instead of creating divisiveness, the small groups aim to promote unity among all Christians. The Sunday morning worship service would bring them all together. According to Bucer, the communion table on Sunday morning was the perfect time for the 'true' Christian community to meet (Wright 1994:141).

The group meetings were characterized by their purpose and series of meetings on Christian discipleship and also provided an ideal structure for the Church to grow in sanctification (Wright 1994:141). Earnest Christians gathered for the purpose of encouraging each other and thus growing deeper in the Christian faith (Wright 1994:142).

Bucer had to specify how the small communities would function and continuously explained that these groups can be achieved by conforming closely to the pattern of the organization and life of the apostolic communities, as described in the New Testament book of Acts and mainly Pauline Epistles. The book of Acts 2 and Acts 4 emphasizes the importance of not only confession of the same doctrine, but also a demonstration of the same practice that resembles apostolic faithfulness, like sharing of goods by these communities (Wright, 1994:142-143).

Only born-again believers were admitted to these groups. A person intending to join the Class had to be interviewed by the pastor and the group's elders before admission. The interview dealt with a member's beliefs concerning the doctrine, the sacraments, Christian behaviour, and repentance. If the person were willing to commit to the community, his name would be registered (Wright, 1994:143).

3.5.3 Anabaptists and Small Groups

Small groups were vital in the Anabaptist movement throughout the sixteenth century. During the Reformation, the house Church movement was associated with Anabaptists (Hadaway *et al.*,

1987:72). However, it's not conclusive that they met in small groups due to theological reasons or whether circumstantial reality like the persecution from Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics drove them to do so. In 1522 those with Anabaptist tendencies gathered in homes for small, private meetings.

These meetings expanded into a wave of lay reading groups throughout 1522 and 1523, and they were mainly in Zurich and the surrounding areas (Latham, 1992:13). These small group meetings were characterized by strengthening the believer's faith and expanding the knowledge of eager Christians. At first, the only motivation was to deepen the reform movement. Some of these small home studies were so effective in and around Zurich that Zwingli commented that as a result of these meetings, certain lay people were better acquainted with the Scriptures than some priests (Latham, 1992:15).

On 21 January 1525, the Swiss Brethren formed their own small group; their coming together in a small group was to officially dedicate themselves to a separate movement which they felt was the true Church. As part of their ceremony, each member of the group was re-baptized. Their re-baptism was the act of disobedience in relation to secular and religious authorities. This re-baptism placed them in direct opposition to the secular and religious authorities (Latham, 1992:24).

The reformed Church in Zurich actively sought out the Anabaptists in order to put them to death. On 05 January 1527, Felix Manz was the first casualty of the 07 March 1526 Edict of the Zurich Council. He became the first Anabaptist martyr, who was put to death by drowning for the charge of conducting illegal re-baptisms (Latham, 1992:27).

The Anabaptists had a high view of a community (small groups). They preferred to call each other brethren. This practice is closely tied to the Anabaptist belief that the true Church of Jesus Christ was composed of re-baptized, gathered Christians. They were convinced that the gathering of small groups for intimate Bible Study and worship was part of the true nature of the New Testament community (Latham, 1992:36). The Anabaptists had no Church buildings but met in homes several times a week for worship and nurture. This may have been partly because of the persecution they experienced from Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics combined. Even when persecutions had stopped, Durnbaugh said they preferred to meet in homes because according to them, this was more faithful to the practice of the early Church (Durnbaugh in Plueddemann, 1990:6-7).

Small groups were being used as an effective means of evangelism and cultivation of the Anabaptist faith and also employed out of necessity. The reason Anabaptists met in small, scattered groups was that there was little interest in the movement. Secondly, Anabaptists met in small groups because the Anabaptist activities were believed to be illegal (Latham, 1992:10). This small group was upheld by various factors that include the Anabaptist concept of the Church being a community **combined** with a common interest, mutual support during the persecutions and consistent group meetings (Latham, 1992:111). Biblical instruction played a crucial role in many of the Anabaptist meetings.

3.5.4 Puritans and Small Groups

The Puritans originated from Great Britain and the word Puritan describes those in England who believed that the Reformation had not truly transformed the English State Church (Comiskey, 2015:103). They were the English equivalent of the continental reformers. Today's Puritans are distinct from those who lived during the Calvinist era. They were taking alcohol and not "teetotallers, bishops, not beer were their special aversion. "The Puritans formed and joined forces with various religious groups advocating greater purity of worship and doctrine (Comiskey, 2015:103-4).

Queen Elizabeth of England viewed the group as seditious and wanted the preaching of sermons to take place once a month. Edmund Grindal refused to carry the queen's demand. The queen stripped him of all his duties and powers and he was placed under house arrest until his death (Comiskey, 2015:107). Puritans believed that the Gospel transformation was not complete until a person was committed to fellowship with other believers. Puritans rejected individualism believing that God called believers into a life of the community (Comiskey, 2015:108).

Conventiclers or small group gatherings were one of the key practices by which Puritans matured as believers. The spiritual fellowship was to happen at Church, at home and among friends, and they saw a Church as a hospital (Molenaar, 2005:17). Conventiclers or small groups multiplied throughout England. The Puritan conventicler or group meetings were also characterized by their need to meet the needs of the community and spiritual growth by praying, reading scripture, bible memorization, discussing recent sermons, discussing what God was showing them through reading and listening to God, teaching and learning the way of the Lord seen in the lives of His people (Comiskey, 2015:110). They grew as they discussed the scripture together and tried to apply it to their daily lives. The word conventicler refers to an unlawful or secret religious gathering. The

Puritans based their gathering on I Corinthians 14 (Comiskey, 2015:107). The Puritans viewed the primitive Church and their house-to-house ministry as the way to create a more biblical pure Church (Comiskey, 2015:110).

3.5.5 Small Groups in Pietism

Pietism is a movement of a Lutheran background. It emphasizes both the Lutheran (Biblical Doctrine) with the Reformed, especially the emphasis on individual piety and vigorous Christian life (Davis, 2019:1). They were so named because of the renewal groups implemented by Jacob Spener. In 1669, Spener, a Lutheran minister, realized that the Church's identity required Christians to meet regularly in small groups to encourage and discipline one another (Young 1989: 107). To Spener, this was not "a pastoral strategy but a necessary correlate of ecclesiology" (Hadaway *et al.*, 1987: 49). Spener and Franke started the Collegio pietas, house meetings for prayer, bible study, and discussion. Spener's small groups had various names like collegia pietatis, conventiclers, ecclesiae, or the collegium philobiblicum. These names brought out the internal dynamic of Pietism which helped to achieve the actual practical renewal and expansion of Christian ministry beyond the Clergy (Sohn, 1990:102).

Pietism was a renewal movement that took place in the wake of the tragic thirty-year war in which much of Germany was devastated. It was a time when many were searching for answers, and the Church didn't have answers. They were mainly not finding those answers in the Lutheran Church (Latham, 1992:58). According to Latham (1992:58), the Lutheran Church in the seventeenth century in Germany consisted largely of nominal Christians who attended Church services that were dull and boring. Ministers preached theological legalism that no one could or wanted to understand. There was also drunkenness and immorality among the Clergy. The spiritual condition of Germany was very low (Latourette, 1975:895). This meant that the Church services were formal and sterile.

Spener was concerned about the moral and spiritual Reformation rather than dry, doctrinal debate. He was a reformer and had the desire to reform the Church. Spener concluded that to achieve the type of spiritual reform he wanted, he should formulate small groups. According to him, it was not good enough for believers to attend Church and live unchanged. He, therefore, gathered serious-minded Christians into small groups 'little Churches in the Church'. His purpose was to reform the Church spiritually (Spener, 1964:80).

Spener led the first small group meeting in 1670. Initially, the meetings were held in Spener's home every Wednesday and Sunday. Both men and women were invited to attend. He then set forth rules and regulations for self-discipline within these groups in his *Pia Desideria* published in 1675. The group's focus can be seen by the subtitle of his *Pia Desideria*, which reads, "*Heartfelt Desire for a God-pleasing Reform of the True Evangelical Church, Together with Several Simple Christian Proposals looking towards this End.*" This group focused mainly on discipleship and holiness. These groups were meant for born-again believers, and Spener wanted the born-again believers only to attend these group meetings (Latham, 1992:63).

In the *Pia Desideria* (Holy or Pious Desires), he developed his ecclesiology of "little Church within the Church" (Hadaway *et al.*, 1987: 49). He argued that small groups provide the means to realize Luther's vision for restoring the priesthood of all believers (Hunsicker 1996: 197), advocating the meeting together of like-minded, born-again believers in house-Churches (Möller 1990: 156). However, he ran into opposition from the Lutheran Church; problems from 1703 onwards ended any more experimentation in the Lutheran Church because small groups often created schisms (Beckham 1995:118; Hunsicker 1996: 197). In Frankfurt, the city council even refused to allow the groups to meet in homes (Beckham 1995: 118; Hunsicker 1996: 197).

In Spener's initial home meeting, Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety* was used as a basis for the discussion (Latham, 1992:62). However, in subsequent meetings, they used it and the Bibles, and it was used as the foundation for further discussion. The group members read Scriptures in their meetings, prayed, worshiped, fellowshiped spiritually, and mutually assisted one another (Bloesch, 1973:119). Spener was primarily concerned with Biblical application in the meetings rather than the Bible knowledge of members (Spener, 1964:113). The meetings gradually changed from bi-weekly to weekly with the passing of time (Latham, 1992:63).

The Pietist movement was characterized by the concept of accountability within a small group, for the faces became people with needs who could care for one another (Latham, 1993:61). According to Young (1989:108), the purpose of the groups was to renew the greater ecclesia, the Church. For the whole Church to be renewed, those serious Christians in the Church must be the first to change. These small groups within the Church were not intended to replace the institutional Church.

Spener's groups also had the following characteristics:

Firstly – **Leadership** - Spener appointed a qualified leader to lead these group meetings in order to avoid false doctrine. The appointed leader was normally a pastor or a professor willing to take

responsibility for the group (Latham, 1992:67). However, the leader was not to dominate the discussion. Rather, he was to stir up participation among those who were present. As the leader, the professor or the pastor, was to reinforce good observations. Once a group member was departing from the end in view, the leader was to intervene in a clear and friendly fashion to set them right on the basis of the text and redirect the group discussions (Spener, 1964: 113).

Secondly, - **Participation** - the group members were encouraged to participate to their maximum capacity. As much as these groups had group leaders, members were allowed to each exercise their gifts. The Sunday sermon was used mostly as the starting point for the discussion, and each person was to contribute according to their own gifting and understanding. These meetings were conducted in a way that enabled each member to say what they thought about each verse and how it applies to their own and to other members' benefit (Spener, 1964:113).

Those attending these meetings clearly understood that these meetings were only to supplement and not replace the Sunday morning worship service. Spener, unlike the Anabaptists, believed that the state Church was the true Church (Latham, 1992:65). He did not allow the people to call the groups the true Church or to serve any Sacraments during group meetings so as to avoid doctrinal conflict. Communion was served only during the Sunday morning worship services (Young, 1989:108-109). On Sunday mornings, Spener would often urge the congregation to participate in the small group meetings during the week to fulfil their Christian duties for spiritual instruction and to review the Sunday sermon (Spener 1964:13).

This concept has always been one of the foundational themes in Lutheran Theology, but one rarely practiced. Pietism played a large part in changing that. Hence it is believed that the priesthood of believers, though having a prominent place in the Theology of the Reformers, has embodiment in Pietism (Bloesch, 1973:118). According to Spener (1964:95), all believers are important. He believes that no damage will be done to the ministry by enforcing priesthood in an effective manner. He believed that the ministry cannot accomplish all that it ought to, amongst other reasons, because of its weakness without the help of or dependency on the universal priesthood. One man is incapable of doing all that is necessary to edify the many persons generally entrusted to him in pastoral care (Spener, 1964:95).

Thirdly, it is worth mentioning that under Zinzendorf, the Pietist teaching of the inner Church "ecclesioalae in ecclesia," gave it a more ecumenical and outward focus (Zinzendorf, 1997:63-84). While governing structures of the state Church was shaped by a clerical hierarchy, Zinzendorf

sought a more democratic ecclesiology, applying a doctrine of *the priesthood to women* who were authorized and equipped to teach scripture to other women. He also emphasized ecclesial-based community renewal as a common goal that Christians could seek regardless of their confession (Shelley, 2013:273).

From Spener's point of view, the Church's purpose was to nurture a Christian's spiritual life in the parish. To achieve this, he used small groups for bible study to empower the lay leaders, which he understood as a spiritual priesthood renewal for the Church (Shelley, 2013:273). Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravian movement, followed him. The Moravians followed Pietists' spiritual practices, including intimate fellowship groups for spiritual growth and religious instruction (Shelley, 2013:355). The Moravian Church is to be discussed below.

3.5.6 Small Groups in the Moravian Church

Despite Spener's disappointment, his experiment with small groups had unforeseen consequences. His colleague, Franke, directly influenced Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravians, to gather converts into unipolar house Churches (Hadaway *et al.*, 1987: 50). This led to the development of the Moravian movement.

The Moravian movement started in 1722 when a few refugees who were persecuted by the Protestants in Bohemia and Moravia settled on the estate of Nicolas Ludwig. Nicholas von Zinzendorf, one who had the linguistic ability, outstanding leadership qualities, and with ability to conceive novel schemes, had a perception that the world was his parish and was never interested in establishing a denomination; his passion was to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Stoeffler 1973:160). His original thinking was that people should remain in their own denomination but participate in addition to a more disciplined small group community where they engage in fellowship and worship, mutual correction and confession, prayer, etc. (Young 1989:110). He established groups that were open to members of all denominations.

This was emphasized as liberating freedom in the small group and that is what the Moravians passed down to their future generations. The Moravians used society, Classes, and band for the Church-renewal movement (Young 1989:110). William Brown (1992:38) states that perhaps one of the most deliberate and successful uses of the small group principle in Church history is the band system of Zinzendorf in the middle of the eighteenth century. The micro-communities of Hernhut follow the suggested groups in James 5:13-16 which combined the aspects of fellowship and

sharing, mutual correction and confession, prayer, and an urgent sense of mission to send the Gospel to the world and bring renewal to Christians (Brown, 1992:38).

Small groups within Moravianism were very complicated; they have an interconnection between the bands, choirs, and Diaspora groups which is not easy to follow. In analyzing this group, one can conclude that the Moravian small group vision was very creative and contemporary for its time in the sense that there was more than one type of group (Diaspora groups versus choir groups), and there was flexibility in adapting the small group emphasis.

3.5.7 Section Summary

This section summarizes the views of some leaders and sections associated with the protestant Reformation regarding small groups. Those summarised are Luther, Bucer, the Anabaptists, the Puritans, Pietism, and the Moravian Church. The Table 3.1 below depicts what these small groups' leaders believed in:

Luther	Bucer	Anabaptists	Puritans	Pietism	Moravian Church
the priesthood of the believers.	Small group meetings were characterized by strengthening believers' faith and expanding the knowledge of eager Christians.	The meetings expanded into a wave of lay reading groups.	Fellowship with other believers. Puritans rejected individualism	the priesthood of all believers practical renewal and expansion of Christian ministry beyond the Clergy	Small groups within Moravianism had an interconnection between the bands, choirs, and the Diaspora groups
devout meeting in homes and institutional Church	Small Meetings take place during the week and have main worship service on Sunday for a larger group	met in homes	The spiritual fellowship was to happen at Church, at home, and among friends	Initially, the meetings were held in Spener's home every Wednesday and Sunday	gather converts into unipolar house Churches
Groups meet in homes for	The motif of twofold	Small group members	The Puritan's conventicler or	In their meetings, the group	disciplined small group

deeper expression of faith; pray, read, baptize, receive the sacrament, and do other Christian works.	ecclesiology. Small group meetings were characterized by their purpose and series of meetings on Christian discipleship and also provided an ideal structure for the Church to grow in sanctification.	encourage each other and thus grow deeper in the Christian faith. Met in homes several times a week for intimate Bible Study, worship, and nurture. The small group combined.	group meetings were characterized by prayers, reading of scripture, bible memorization, discussion of recent sermons, discussion of what God was showing them through reading and listening to God, teaching and learning the way of the Lord	members read Scriptures, prayed, worshiped, fellowshiped spiritually, and mutually assisted one another. Leadership Participation “ecclesioalae in ecclesia” <i>priesthood to women</i>	community where they engage in fellowship and worship, mutual correction and confession, prayer, and an urgent sense of mission to send the Gospel to the world and bring renewal to Christians
Luther failed to implement the use of small groups				The meetings gradually changed from bi-weekly to weekly with the passing of time.	
Luther came to believe that small groups would sow division instead of unity.					
Luther believed that through the works of Satan, earnest Christians				Spener was primarily concerned with Biblical application in the	

would grow pride, the weak will give up and all end up in hell.				meetings rather than the Bible knowledge of members.	
	Small groups promote unity and sharing of goods.				
		re-baptism			
spiritual and numerical growth	spiritual and numerical growth	spiritual and numerical growth	spiritual and numerical growth	spiritual and numerical growth	spiritual and numerical growth
individual piety and vigorous Christian life			advocating greater purity of worship and doctrine	individual piety and vigorous Christian life focused mainly on discipleship and holiness	

Table 3.1: Summary of Luther, Bucer, Anabaptists, Puritans, Pietism, and the Moravian Church

3.6 Small Groups of the Methodist Church

The 18th Century Church could not bring its members into close fellowship and holiness, then John Wesley (1703-1791), the great evangelist, organizer, the founder of the Methodist movement who was ordained a clergy by the Anglican Church, saw a need to do something about it. In 1739 John Wesley was preaching the word of God and a number of people used to attend his preaching and hoping to obtain assurance of salvation. John Wesley continued to teach and admonish them about eternal matters in a temporal world. The group continued to grow weekly because people viewed Wesley's ministry as the ministry offering a simple and easy way to understand the Gospel message with the assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. This group was known as the society. Wesley also continued to give advice and start and conclude each meeting with a prayer encompassing their needs (Rosser, 1855:51). During that time, John Wesley visited a Moravian Church Community in Hernhut, Germany for three months. During his visit, he observed how their classes were organized. People were grouped in terms of age, gender and split into smaller groups called bands, meeting two to three times a week. These groups' core values were imported to

Britain and became a feature of the Methodist Class System under the leadership of John Wesley (Wesley, 1909:53).

Wesley, on his return, looking at the size of the group he had, decided to break the group into societies and Classes. In developing the first classes in London, Wesley appointed several earnest and sensible men, who after much discourse, agreed that there could be no better way to come to ensure, thorough knowledge of each person, than to divide them into Classes. These Classes were under the oversight of Class Leaders, those in whom Wesley could confide (Wesley, 1909:535).

According to Plueddeman (1990:8), John Wesley's mother, Susannah, had initiated home meetings in the parsonage years before. These began with devotional times, which Susannah led for her children. A few neighbours asked to attend, and eventually, the group grew to over 200 people. These meetings came to an end because of opposition from John Wesley's father and other Church leaders, but the vision for small groups became an important dynamic tool in the ministry of John Wesley, her son.

John Wesley created an interlocking system of Class meetings, societies, annual conferences, and true gospel preaching Church through his organizing ability. These Class meetings were not designed merely as Christian growth groups or primarily as cells for koinonia, as much as they did serve that function satisfactorily. Their primary purpose was discipline (Snyder, 1980:38). Wesley expelled members who were not following the Lord wholeheartedly from the society; he made it his responsibility to know the condition of each member through the Class accountability structures/ Class Leaders (Snyder 1980:57). The Class meetings were not a highly organized event. Although they would only meet for one hour, the main event was for Class Leaders to report on the spiritual life of members (Snyder 1980:55). According to David Lowes Watson (1986:13), it was a weekly gathering, a sub-division of the society, at which members were required to give an account to one another of their discipleship, and thereby to sustain each other in their witness. These meetings were built upon the sharing of personal experiences of the past week (Pallil 1991:107).

The Class meetings offered a new set of opportunities for men and women to know themselves as valued and useful. The Class meeting was the basis of every Methodist society; every member was expected to belong, to speak freely and plainly about every subject, from their own temptations to plans for establishing a new cottage meeting or visiting the distressed (Mallison, 1989:127, 28).

Through Class meetings, members bore each other's burdens and exhorted one another, enhancing the intimate level of community and membership (Synder, 1996:55).

Wesley learned the importance of allowing each member of the body to use their gifts. In the early days, various members of the Classes began to preach the Gospel. Wesley was unsure about this and started questioning whether this was God's way of doing things. His mother told him that by not letting them preach, he would be quenching the Holy Spirit. He yielded, and lay preachers became an outstanding feature of Methodism" (Latourette1975:1027).

Before a person can be allocated a Class, s/he has to join the society (Church) (Young 1989:113). According to Pallil (1991:105), the conduct and nature of Methodist Class Leader Meetings have three characteristics. Firstly, its *discipline*- meaning attendance in Class meetings was mandatory. Attendance was assessed quarterly through a card system used in the class. These cards were renewed quarterly only for members in good and regular standing (Pallil, 1991:105).

Secondly, its purpose was to *instruct or educate* members – meaning that the Methodist message was simple and easy to understand and was appealing to common people, mostly poor and illiterate. Class meetings became a place of instruction where the Class Leader would advise, reprove and exhort. A Class meeting educates people on moral issues and basic doctrine and is an efficient vehicle of religious education (Pallil, 1991:105).

Lastly, its *quality of evangelizing* – According to Brown (1992:39), the groups also had a clear evangelistic function as people were converted during the meetings, and lapsed members were enabled to renew their commitment to Christ. Wesley knew that the beginnings of faith in a person's life could be incubated into saving faith more effectively in a warm Christian environment that could warm a person in the chill of the world. Evangelism took place primarily in the Class meetings and in people's hearts in the hours following the Class meetings (Hunter 1987:58).

In Class meetings, members were allowed to testify of their conversion experience, personal account of how God worked in their lives, etc. These confessions were appealing to others and helped others understand how they could be saved and realize the works of God. Most people were converted in these meetings, which led to each group being doubled each month (Pallil, 1991:106).

According to Hunter (1996: 85), Wesley was a Church growth strategist. The Class was Methodism's main point of entry for awakened seekers who had not yet experienced justification and new life but desired such experience. Wesley formed Classes out of necessity. Wesley grouped all members of the Methodist Church into societies, which were broken further into small groups of about twelve members who were of geographic proximity (Pallil 1991:110). Based on the above, John Wesley, besides going to Germany and observing how Classes were organized, had a small group background from home; he was also a good administrator and had the ability to organize people. John Wesley was aware of these primary talents and gifts (Latourette 1975:1026).

One of Wesley's strengths was the ability to adapt other people's methodology to suit his own ends. He was an eclectic theologian who combined traditional religion with Enlightenment thought processes. He did not have a problem adopting other scholars' ideas to develop his practical blend of theology (Black, 2001:136-137). According to Latourette (1975:1026, he had an unusual capacity to accept suggestions and adapt methods from various quarters. Hunter (1996:84) accordingly noted this when stating that "He learned from exposure to the home groups (the ecclesia in ecclesia) that the Lutheran Pietist leader Philip Jacob Spener developed to fuel renewal and outreach, and Wesley learned particularly from the Moravians.

He also learned a number of things from Anabaptist groups and from the occasional 'societies' within the Church of England, resulting in his group movement being an eclectic Protestant. Wesley, just like, Bucer and Spener, wanted God's people to experience the community of the King; he studied the book of Acts and the New Testament model of the Church. Hunter (1996:84) says Wesley sensed that if he drew people together in Classes to challenge and encourage each other to live daily as Christians through their protracted experiences, the contagion and power of the apostolic Church would move into human history once again.

The fundamental unit of Wesley's small group organization was the Class System. They were the base, the foundation, and the cornerstone of the Methodist Church. There seem to be at least two reasons for the origin of the creation of Classes; firstly, the Classes were originally organized as a *plan for raising money* for Methodism. A large part of the success of the Class System had to do with leadership. Under Wesley's leadership, the Classes met together to consult on a proper method of discharging the public debt; and it was resolved after a lengthy discussion:

- ✓ Every member of society, who was able, should contribute a penny a week.
- ✓ Each Class is to be composed of twelve members.

- ✓ One person (a Class Leader) in each Class should receive the contribution from members and bring it to the stewards weekly (Wesley, 1909:528).

It was easy for the Class Leaders to manage and account for small Classes. The smaller the Class, the easier for the Class Leader to know the well-being of members and who amongst the Class members really needs salvation. John Wesley deemed it necessary for Classes to engage more in spiritual matters than raising funds; he encouraged Class Leaders to keep teaching the word of God to Class members (Goodell, 1902:39).

Secondly, in 1742, after Wesley witnessed that those who were not closely united with other members of the Church soon departed from their faith and holiness (Young 1989:112), he felt compelled to *connect them* to other members of the Church through small groups so that they could help each other or support each other in their salvation and sanctification (Nagelwer, 1918:110). These small groups were called Classes (Snyder, 1980:53). Each Class emphasized the importance of salvation, fellowship and discipleship (Heitzenrater, 1995:118). These groups had to organize a weekly meeting so that they could also bear one another's burden and exhort each other to intensify the intimate level of community and membership (Synder, 1980:55).

3.6.1 Section Summary

Looking at history, it can be said that Wesley was amongst the first to combine discipleship with evangelism. Wesley was strong with both his evangelistic emphasis and his discipleship focus. Wesley used the Jethro system, as described in the Book of Exodus before it was made famous. He was a master at delegation and organization, and the fruit of his system still stands as an example for many Churches. The Classes served as an evangelistic tool and as a discipling agent (Young 1989:113). Wesley would not start a Class if he couldn't manage it. He would only start as many Classes as they could be effectively managed and he would not preach where he could not enrol people into Classes (Hunter 1987:56).

The Class meeting and Class Leaders were critical elements of the "method" that shaped the missional identity and vitality of the Methodist movement. Class Leaders were lay women and men who served as role models, mentors, and discipleship coaches for the people called "Methodists" in their pursuit of holiness of heart and life. Class Leaders were mature followers of Jesus who could be trusted with leading and training others in the way of Jesus. They were the ones in the Class

meeting who "provoked one another to love, advise on the importance of Holy tempers, and good works," in line with Hebrews 10:24-25.

Lastly, it is clear that Wesley, under the influence of the ecclesiology of the Moravians and the structure of the Anglican religious societies, turned his two-poles concepts into a radical method for evangelism, discipleship and Church growth. He established small groups linked initially to Anglican congregations with a clear focus and purpose, which became the cornerstone of his methodology (Snyder 1980:55; Hadaway *et al.*, 1987: 50; Beckham 1995: 120; Hunsicker 1996: 203). By the end of the 18th century, he had developed more than ten thousand small groups called Classes (Snyder 1980: 63).

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, one can say this chapter was able to present the historical overview of small groups/Class Leader Ministry established at different periods in Church history. The chapter explored the matter from the times of the Apostles through to the days of Wesley. The study presented evidence that small groups have had a huge impact on the history of the Christian Church. The small groups of the days of the apostles seem to have been modelled by Jesus Christ and played a major role in the growth of the Church in the first century.

Although the small groups of the days of the Church fathers did not allow lay persons' participation, we note that it set the opportunity for spiritual growth and allowed members to exhort one another like other groups. This group of Clergy had a number of similarities with other groups, which allowed lay persons to exercise their spiritual gift and assume a leadership role in the groups.

The new spiritual life has often been marked by the emergence of small groups (Mallison, 1989:6). When we look at the Middle-Ages; the Church grew from all corners through prosperity and muscle-bound by over-organization, dynamic Christians gathered in small groups for prayer, Bible study training and service. Most of the small groups discussed in this section met in houses and lived out a New Testament-style community life.

The early Reformers taught that small group structures could revitalize the Christian Church; they are a means of spiritual growth and disciple-making. The Lutherans also used cells for nurturing (Mallison, 1989:6). Just before the fifteenth century, something started to change the Church,

which resulted in a progression of spiritual awakenings in which small groups spearheaded, became strong catalysts or, followed as nurturing environments to revivals (Plueddemann 1990:6).

The Anabaptist's teachings suggested that the nature of the true Church can be achieved through small groups. In Pietism, small groups played a role in the state Church. Both the Moravian and the Methodist small groups emphasize the ability of small groups to grow the Church through evangelism and discipleship. In all groups, we learned that small groups are a means of spiritual and numerical growth. Small groups took on the characteristics of a small family. These small group settings taught people to love, encourage, and support one another as they pursue Jesus together. According to Brown, small groups are gathered communities of believers who want an intimate relationship with God, to grow together in Christ-like character, and to experience the power of the Holy Spirit (Brown, 2012:84).

Chapter 4 will explore the place and role of the Class Leaders and Class Members towards membership growth in the AME Church environment generally as well as in the South African context.

CHAPTER 4

4 PLACE AND ROLE OF THE OF THE CLASS LEADERS AND CLASS MEMBERS IN THE AME CHURCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter 3 explored the historical overview of the Class Leader Ministry. This chapter explores the place and role of the Class Leader and Class Members in the AME Church context generally and towards membership growth in the Wilberforce District of the AME Church, taking into account the words of John Maxwell that everything rises and falls on leadership (Maxwell, 2007: VIII). This exploration will be done by firstly presenting the abridged history of the AME Church, the history of Class Leader Ministry in the AME Church, the place and role of the Class Leader and Class Members towards membership growth in Wilberforce District of the AME Church, and the historical setting of each Church to be studied.

4.2. ABRIDGED BACKGROUND OF THE AME CHURCH

The AME Church follows the Wesleyan biblical and theological convictions, which emphasize the importance of being converted, justification by faith, and importance of sanctification, not withholding the fact that it believes in the sufficiency of the Holy Scripture for salvation (Mahloko, 2015:83). In his seminal work, Di Bernardin (1986:189) believed that justification is found by solely believing in Christ “*sole fide, sine operibus legis.*” The founders of the AME Church affirmed their humanity in the face of slavery, and racism, defended the disadvantaged and oppressed people (African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church, 2021:21). The AME Church preaches salvation from sin and deliverance from bondage. The mission of the AME Church is “to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people” (AME Church 2021:21).

Richard Allen, the first elected and consecrated Bishop of the AME Church, who served the Church for fifteen years from 1816 to 1830 as Bishop (AME Church, 2016:10), carefully observed the structures of Methodism, their rules and regulations, their approach to Christian education and decided that these are relevant for the AME Church (White, 1965:22). In terms of the AME Church

Doctrine and Discipline, the AME Churches follow an Episcopal form of government, Figure 4.1 below depicts the AME Church structure. Each local Church is a part of the larger connection.

The Bishops, referred to as Right Reverent, are the Chief Officers of this Connectional Organization. They are elected for life by a majority vote of the General Conference. The General Conference meets every fourth year (Quadrennially). Bishops are bound by the laws of the Church to retire upon the General Conference nearest their 75th birthday (AME Church, 2021:262 - 267). The General Conference is the supreme body of the AME Church.

The bishops are ex-officio presidents of the General Conference, with delegates from each annual conference of the Twenty Episcopal Districts, composed of an equal number of laity and clergy being members of the General Conference. The General officers, college presidents, and deans/presidents of theological seminaries are also members of the General Conference (AME Church, 2021:177-194).

The Annual Conference has a middle management team called Presiding Elders. Members of this layer of leadership serve as Assistants to the Bishops and are appointed to supervise the preachers (pastors) within the Presiding Elder's District. A Presiding Elder District is one portion of an Annual Conference, which in turn is one part of the Episcopal District over which a Bishop presides. In the Presiding Elder District, the appointed Presiding Elder meets with the local Churches that comprise the District at least once every three months for a Quarterly Conference (AME Church, 2021:306).

The Presiding Elder also presides over a District Conference and a Sunday School Convention in his or her District. At the end of an Annual Conference year, the Presiding Elder reports to the Bishop at the Annual Conference and makes recommendations for pastoral appointments (AME Church, 2021:153).

Pastors receive a yearly appointment to a charge (Church) on the recommendation of the Presiding Elder and with the approval and final appointment of the Bishop. The pastor is in full charge of the Church and is an ex-official member of all boards, organizations, and clubs of that local Church (AME Church, 2021:154-155). The local Church has a number of boards which include the Official Board. The Official Board is the structure that calls for all auxiliaries to account for their

actions/activities and advises, reprove, comfort, or exhort members (AME Church, 2021:111-112). The Official Board takes place at least once a month at the call of the local pastor, and all officers of the Church are members of the Official Board and must be eighteen years or above. The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church empowers the Official Board to conduct the business of the AME Local Church (AME Church, 2021:112).

There are decisions that need a majority vote before implementation, like the election of trustees (AME Church, 2021:98-99), the erection or renovation of a building, confirmation of stewards, as well as changing the pastor's plans for governing the Church, in this instance, the majority vote is a two-thirds vote of Official Board members of the local Church (AME Church, 2021:99). All these decisions must be taken during the Official Board meeting of a local Church. The Official Board decisions are binding on all members of the Church (AME Church, 2021:112). The Class Leaders are members of the official board and are accountable to this Board (AME Church, 2021:102).

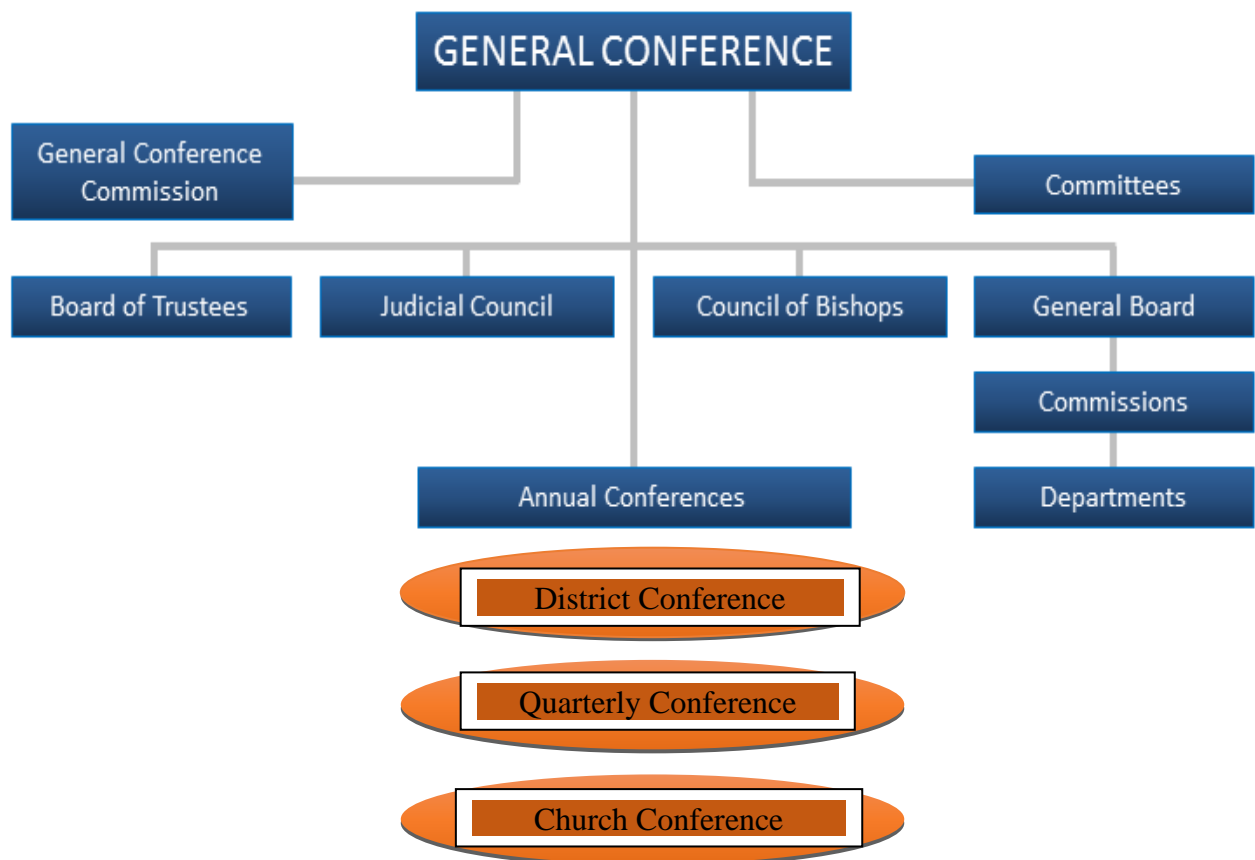


FIGURE 4.1 THE AME CHURCH ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE (AME, 2012, 116)

4.3. CLASS LEADER MINISTRY IN THE AME CHURCH

The Class Leader Ministry in the AME Church dates back to the roots of Methodism. The founder of the AME Church, the Rt Rev. Richard Allen, left the Methodist Church in 1787 and organized the AME Church with other members of St George's Methodist Church. The AME Church held its first General Conference in 1816 (Mahloko, 2015:81). The AME Church adopted the same policies, procedures, and methods, including the Class Leader Ministry, as that of the Methodist Church. The Class Leader Ministry led to the immediate tremendous growth of the AME Church (White, 1965:66).

In terms of the current AME Church Doctrine and Discipline, the Class Leader ministry in the AME Church is the means by which the Church shepherds and cares for its members. It is the ministry that enables the pastor and the congregation to remain a united family, to care, encourage and communicate throughout the Church (AME Church, 2021:102). Each Class is made up of a group of twelve Church members (disciples) with one leader designated as Class Leader (shepherd). The Class Leader is expected to be a member of the Church in good and regular standing (AME Church, 2021:102).

Each Church has to divide its members into groups of at least twelve members, inclusive of a Class Leader, and these classes are assigned by a pastor in charge of the local Church. These Class members must meet at least once a week to see how Class member's souls are, Class members meet either at the Church, through a phone call, by available electronic devices, etc. (AME Church, 2021:102-103). The Class Leaders are expected to introduce new members to old members, give Church notices, and have the time of fellowship. In some instances, there must be time allocated for listening to the concerns and suggestions of members. In terms of the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church, a Class Leader should be a member of the steward board (the highest office a lay person can hold in the AME Church) where possible. All Class Leaders are appointed for a year and can be reappointed on condition that their conduct is satisfactory and are members in good and regular standing. They are examined by the minister every quarter (AME Church, 2021:102-103).

Goodell (1902:39) emphasized that John Wesley deemed it necessary for Classes to engage more in spiritual matters than raising funds. He encouraged Class Leaders to keep teaching the word of God to Class members. This Class Leader Ministry initially worked efficiently and effectively in the

AME Church as it did in the Methodist Church, but with the changing of time and circumstances of life, there are cases in which there is no growth, and the Church may start to be stagnant and then decline (Mahloko, 2015:1).

4.4. CLASS LEADER MINISTRY IN THE WILBERFORCE DISTRICT

This section of the study explores the Class Leader Ministry in the Wilberforce District. This will be done by firstly introducing the place and role of the Class Leader Ministry in the Wilberforce District, secondly discussing the role of the Class Leaders as well as Class Members towards Membership Growth in the Wilberforce District of the AME Church, thirdly providing the historical setting of each sampled local Church, its township profile, the historical events of the area, and the Church personality of each Church where possible.

4.4.1 The setting of the Wilberforce District Churches

The Wilberforce District Churches are in a semi-urban environment. The Wilberforce District is largely situated within the Emfuleni Local Municipality. Emfuleni Local Municipality has a total population of 721 663 (Emfuleni, 2015:2). It covers 987.45 Km² (Emfuleni, 2015:1) and has 220 135 households (Emfuleni, 2015:3). Emfuleni Local Municipality was originally called Lekoa (Plaatjie, 2002:1). This place was named *Le-koa* by king Moshoeshoe, the King of the Basotho nation. King Moshoeshoe called this place *Le-koa*, referring to the natural borders of Lesotho. *Le Koa* means Lesotho stretch thus far (Mohapi, 2008:111). When Boers arrived in Le-koa, they changed the name to Vaal, meaning grey ((Paatjie, 2002:1). According to the Loxion News (Local Newspaper) dated 12 August 2013, Emfuleni Local Municipality is the biggest local municipality in South Africa, with 721663 population size (Maseko, 2013:3).

4.4.2 The Role of the Class Leaders as well as Class Members towards Membership Growth in the Wilberforce District of the AME Church

The AME Church originated in America and expanded into African countries. Wilberforce District Churches are of African American background, and most of its teachings and practices are based on the Wesleyan theology (justification by faith and sanctification). The Wilberforce District Churches are not a stand-alone Church with its own laws and regulations. It is part of the AME Church, which follows an Episcopal form of government that forms part of the larger connection as

indicated in Section 4.2 above. The Wilberforce District Churches are all expected to organize their Church members into small groups called Classes. The number of members of each Class must not be more than twelve (AME Church, 2021:103).

The purpose of forming Classes is to discern whether its members are indeed working out their own salvation and to make their contribution to support the Gospel (AME, 2021:102). Each Class is led by a person called a Class Leader. The Class Leader leads a group of persons made up of members of the local Church (AME, 2021:102-103).

The success of the Class Leader Ministry is largely depended on the Class Leader. This leader is assigned to a group annually by the minister/resident pastor of a local Church. The same member may be appointed the following year(s) as long as their conduct is satisfactory (AME, 2021:102). The appointment of Class Leaders is consistent with Jesus' appointment of disciples and sending them in Mark 3:13-17.

No Class Leader can claim to have been appointed for life or demand to be appointed by the new pastor because s/he served under the previous leadership for years. Re-appointment should not be seen as a continuous appointment. Hence new appointment letters/certificates are issued annually. When a member transfers his/her membership to another AME Church, the appointment ceases to exist. The Class Leader Ministry is not an itinerant ministry (AME Church, 2021:102).

A Class Leader, according to Bishop H.M. Turner in Allen (1994:8), should be a person of deep personal piety, mature experience, have the ability to give religious council and advice, must be wise, affectionate, and have the ability to influence members regardless of the age and gender, towards the systematic change of their Christian duties. They should be well-versed in the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church. They must make time to read the Bible and be familiar with the Holy Scriptures and be able to apply the Word of God to different members' problems.

In order for members to qualify to occupy a Class Leader position in the AME Church, they must "run with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, taking up the cross daily, submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world, and knowing that men could say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord's sake, a Class Leader must be a prayerful Christian (Allen, 1994:24).

The Class Leaders must be of good character (AME Church, 2021:102) and have knowledge of scripture. Ensure that members of their respective Classes understand that:

4.1.1.1 For where two or three gathers in my name, there am I with them (Matthew 18:20).

4.1.1.2 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. "Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. (John 14:21-23).

4.1.1.3 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Hebrews 3:13).

4.1.1.4 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **not** giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25).

4.1.1.5 Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian Churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up so that when I come, no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:1-3).

4.1.1.6 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

4.1.1.7 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact, you are doing (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and many more.

Once members are appointed Class Leaders, there are duties they are expected to perform like:

4.1.1.8 **Have weekly meetings with members of the group they lead** (AME CHURCH, 2016:91; Mahloko, 2015:81).

The Class Leader, during the Class meeting with members, must enquire how each soul prospers, are the members growing spiritually or not. During Class meetings, members are allowed to testify of their conversion experience, personal accounts of how God worked in their lives, and how the sermon was relevant to their lives.

Class Leaders must visit their members from time to time to ensure that they are in good health. They must also ensure that they contribute to the support of the Gospel willingly (AME Church, 2021:102; Mahloko, 2015:81).

The Class must meet members weekly for prayer meetings, reading of scripture, bible memorization, discussion of recent sermons, discussion of what God was showing them through reading and listening to God, teaching and learning the way of the Lord (AME Church, 2021:102).

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). The Class meetings have the same characteristics as the small groups during the pre-reformation and reformation periods discussed in sections 3.4 and 3.5 above.

4.1.1.9 Read rules.

The Class Leader must be a person who can read, write and explain the rules to the Class Members. New members need someone to socialize them with the group's rules and regulations. Someone who can guide them when they go astray. The Class Leaders are to assist the pastor in ensuring adherence to the mission of the AME Church "to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people" (AME CHURCH 2021:103).

4.1.1.10 Visit other Classes (AME CHURCH, 2021:102)

There is a Sotho idiom that goes "*e haella ka tshiba tsa engoe*" loosely translated, *the bird builds its nest using the other bird's feathers*. The reason for the Class Leader to visit other Classes is to learn how other leaders lead their groups and adopt what is good and implementable. It is also for the Class Leader to participate in the Class discussions like other members to ensure spiritual growth. These visits to each group are limited to not more than three per year and must not be consecutive.

4.1.1.11 Converse with the pastor frequently.

The Class Leader must give feedback to the pastor on the lives of members of the group. The Class Leaders Ministry follows the same model of Jesus Christ in Chapter 2. In the same way, Jesus evangelized in the presence of his disciples and sent them afterward (Mark 6:7), the pastors are to do the same as Jesus and send Class Leaders out.

The Class Leaders must meet with the pastor weekly to report their works, and they can also meet the pastor as and when a need arises, or circumstances dictate at various times. The pastor must be informed of members who must be served Holy Communion from home due to ill health, living in

shelters, etc., members who must be excommunicated and the reasons for ex-communication, members who need spiritual support due to the loss of their loved ones, etc.; The same way that the disciples coming back from missionary assignments, e.g., the mission trip in Galilee, were expected to provide Jesus, their leader and tutor, with a report of everything they had done and taught (Mark 6:30), Class Leaders are also expected to provide the resident pastor with the report.

4.1.1.12 Admit non-members to the Class Meetings.

The Class Leader must accept visitors into their groups. These visitors must remain visitors and not assume membership, they can visit not more than three times per year, and these times must not be consecutive. This is to ensure adherence to the fact that only the pastor assigns members into groups. Once a person is allowed to visit the group weekly, they become members with no assignment. The Class Leader cannot report on the lives of non-members or visitors unless something that warrants reporting, e.g., an accident happens during their visit.

4.1.1.13 Reprove members.

The Class Leader can reprove, exclude, suspend and expel a member from the Class meeting when a member is not in good and regular standing. The members of the AME Church are expected to be governed by the Doctrine and discipline of the AME Church. Once they go astray and depart from the teaching of the Church and the Bible, the Class Leaders must use powers vested in them (AME, 2021:102).

4.1.1.14 Watch over new members with special care.

The Class Leader must watch closely over the new members. Teach them the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church. Ensure that they believe in the scripture in totality. Instruct them on the articles of Religion. At the end of 90 days, recommend to the pastor those eligible for full membership upon their profession of saving faith in the Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Christ (AME, 2021:102).

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4.1.1.15 Report to the Official Board

The Class Leaders are amenable to the official board, therefore, must report 1) those who are not well, 2) those who walk disorderly and will not be reprovved, 3) the money collected for the support of the Gospel and hand over the collected money to the stewards; These Class Leaders must report to the official board those who are sick, those who walk disorderly and need reproof (AME,

2021:102); The Class Leaders are to provide a list of those who are not well and propose what action is required from the pastor and/or from the Church. Where a member's walks depart from the AME Church believes and norms, the Class Leader must report such behavior, how the member was reprovved, and what steps must be taken by the Church if the member does not repent. (AME, 2021:102),

4.1.1.16 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 AME Church Class Leaders follow Wesley's leadership, and the Classes meet weekly; a Class Leader in each Class should receive the contribution from members and bring it to the stewards weekly (Wesley, 1909:528). These contributions must be recorded accurately (AME, 2021:103). The Class Leader must have an accurate list of Class members, recorded in the Class Leader Record book (AME CHURCH, 2021:103). All members of the Church, who are able, should contribute a specific amount weekly.

4.1.1.17 Lead Children Classes

Class Leaders must instruct new members and children in the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church. The Class Leader leading children must also perform all the above duties in the children's Class meetings (AME CHURCH, 2021:103).

In conclusion, one can say the main focus of the Classes was dependent largely on the capability of the Class Leaders to emphasize the importance of salvation, fellowship, and discipleship to members. These meetings are to ensure that members can bear one another's burdens and exhort each other to intensify their intimate relationship with each other and God.

4.4.3 Sampled Churches In The Wilberforce District

Five Churches of the twelve Churches within the Wilberforce District will be discussed as a sample of Churches in the Wilberforce District. These sampled Churches are all based within the Emfuleni Local Municipality. 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. (Creswell & Clark, 2018:175-176).

It is the goal of this quantitative 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 12 (100%) Churches constituting the Wilberforce District, 5 (42 %) largest Churches within the District with a history of more than forty years, financially viable and have the necessary resources were selected to participate in the study. All Churches which were not studied have been in existence for a period of less than thirty years, and they have lesser membership; some do not have the necessary resources (Proper worship structure), while others are not yet dedicated. A ten percent sample, according to Grinnell and Williams (1990:127), should be sufficient for controlling errors. According to Stoker (1995) and Stoker (1985), as cited by White (2002:59), table 4.1 gives guidance on what the size of a sample ought to be:

Table 4.1

Population	Percentage	Number of Participants
20	100	20
30	80	24
50	64	32
100	45	45
200	32	64
500	20	100
1000	14	140
10 000	4,5	450
100 000	2	2000
200 000	1	2000

Source: Stoker (1995) Stoker (1985) cited by White (2002:59).

The sample represents a good sample, therefore can be concluded that the sample was a good representation of the possible total population of the Wilberforce District Churches. It is important in the quantitative analysis to define the participants (Mahloko, 2015:175). The AME Churches to be studied as discussed in Chapter 1, are Trinity AME Church which is based in Evaton; St Peter AME Church, based in Sharpeville, DM Robinson AME Church, based in Sebokeng Zone 11, OL Sherman AME Church, based in Sharpeville (Vuka section), Nthoba Memorial AME Church which is based in Sebokeng Zone 7. These Churches will be discussed below. The discussion will focus on the location of the Church, the abridged history of each Church, and describe at least one thing or activity that makes the Church different from the other. There is no written history of these

Churches, the research will rely on oral history for sections 4.4.3.4 to section 4.4.3.6.2. Sections 4.4.3.1 to section 4.4.3.3 will provide the pros, cons, challenges and strengths of Oral History before we can discuss the sampled Churches.

4.4.3.1 Pros and Cons of Oral History

Oral History is useful for research, in society and within the academic space (Ritchie, 2003:9). Literature points out that Oral History plays a part in a number of activities in society, especially in establishing the culture and heritage (Moss and Mazikana, 1986:89). There are also flaws in the Oral History as a method of data collection. The person being interviewed may not always accurately remember the required data, such as dates, sequences, names, etc. Sometimes the interviewee may exaggerate. To avoid inaccurate recording information, the researcher must do accurate research about the subject beforehand. According to (Pfaff, 1980:568-571), successful Oral History enhances its written counterpart.

4.4.3.2 Challenges of Oral History

Although the phenomenon of Oral History has been widely discussed, their challenges are presented as follows (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:135):

- It is relatively expensive and takes longer to complete than a questionnaire;
- The presence of the interviewer might influence the responses;
- It has chances of being bias,
- The respondent may not respond to personal questions; and Responses might not be complete as compared to participation observation

4.4.3.3 Strengths of Oral History

Apart from these challenges so widespread, the advantages of Oral History are as follow:

- Oral history is suitable for both educated and uneducated equally (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:135);
- The response rate is better on Oral History than questionnaire (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:135);

- Interviewee may broaden their responses or be limited from central topic in a way that prove useful to the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:56);
- It allows a broader understanding of the interviewee's motives, their way of reasoning and the emotional reaction attached to the subject which is not possible to detect with the questionnaire (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:135); and
- Rubin and Rubin (1995:56) state that Oral History allows the interviewer to provide clarity on clarity-seeking questions.

The interview was selected as another tool used to collect data; before the interviews started, all ethical aspects were taken care of as discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.4.2.2. All people who participated in the interview were requested to give permission to use their comments in the study and permission was granted. These *persons preferred that their real names be used* in the study so that their contribution to this study can be known. Most of them were complaining about the non-written history which perishes with the death of the eyewitnesses.

Before the interview, the researcher had to familiarize herself with the history and characteristics of the culture of the interviewee. The interview also took an unstructured form and approach. This unstructured interview process is an interview in which questions to be posed are not prepared in advanced, not rehearsed, and they are also casual (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:135). As a data collection method, this unstructured interview will be discussed in Section 5.4.2.2 of Chapter 5.

4.4.3.4 Trinity AME Church

Trinity AME Church is the oldest Church in the Wilberforce District. It is situated in Evaton. Evaton is approximately 50 Km from South-East of Johannesburg and is within the Emfuleni Local Municipality. It was established in 1904. Evaton was originally called Weldebeesfontein and, in 1905, was subdivided and named Evaton (Mahloko, 2012:104). Evaton has a total population of 132 851 with 42 348 households (Statssa, 2011).

Trinity AME Church was dedicated on 21 October 1926, as per **picture 4.1** below. Looking at the statistics, Trinity AME Church has 998 members, while Evaton has a population of 132 851. This means that Trinity membership is equal to 0.75% of the total population of Evaton (less than one percent). It must be noted that not all members at Trinity AME Church reside in Evaton. This

means that members of Trinity AME Church who reside in Evaton are less than 0, 75% of the population of Evaton.



Picture 4.1.....(Own work)

Trinity AME Church is an old Church situated in an old location, which has big family stands. The pastors acknowledge that the history of this Church dictates that its members are mainly from well-known families in Evaton, the Opperman family, the Qophe family, the Mothei family, the Makhene family, and the Nduna family. Since these families stay in close proximity to one another and they are the main families in Evaton, they are one way or the other related. Their children grow up together, go to the same schools, and end up marrying each other, etc. They know each family deeply. They hold positions in society, and some were ward councillors, some own businesses in the area, and most of these family members hold senior positions in government institutions and the private sector (Rev Oupa Jeffrey Matlhabe; 13 November 2017).

The Church holds its election of officers annually as prescribed by the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church. On Election Day, these families come in numbers, and they ensure that leadership in their respective families is even kept in the Church by voting in line with their family seniority. Whoever holds a senior position in the family holds a senior position in the Church. The pastor's challenge with this type of Church is that when one member of the family is not happy, the majority of the Church members are taking that person's side, and the mood of the Church gets affected. When they are happy, the whole Church must be happy. When the senior of the family gives direction, no one objects, even if the pastor has a different opinion (Rev Oupa Jeffrey Matlhabe).

Rev Oupa Jeffrey Matlhaba indicated that Trinity AME Church is the first AME Church in *Le-Koa*, currently known as Emfuleni Local Municipality, and the oldest in the Wilberforce District. This Church used to attract people from all over because of its association with Wilberforce College. It gave birth to a number of Churches within the Wilberforce District, including CD Nthoba Memorial and Dare Mae Robinson, which are part of the sample. Most of the AME Church pastors did their practical studies at Trinity AME Church while they were ministry students at Robert Right Theological Seminary.

When Trinity was the only Church in Evaton (Trinity, 1965:3), the Church services used to take place three times every Sunday. The first service was to take place at 07:00 (adult Service) in the morning, the second service, which was the main service, was to take place at 10:00, and the last service was to take place at 15:00 (Youth Service). The ministry students were used mainly during the Morning and afternoon worship services and during the Holy Communion and Baptismal services, which were closely led by the Resident Pastor. This Church is always led by a senior pastor with a record of experience (AME Church, 1963:2). Members of Trinity AME Church came from all over Emfuleni before planting new AME Churches.

Maki Modise, the daughter of Presiding Elder Modise, who is the longest-serving pastor at Trinity AME Church, said that the Church was always full above capacity regardless of which service you chose to attend. This led to Church planting in and around the Emfuleni Local Municipality. Nthoba Memorial was the first Church planted in Sebokeng Zone Seven, Dare Mae Robison being the second, and SD Modise was the third Church within Emfuleni Local Municipality and was planted in Small farms (AME Church, 1978:6). Nthoba Memorial and Dare Mae Robinson AME Churches were dedicated in the same year (1971). SD Modise AME Church was dedicated in 1978, this Church, with more than forty years of existence, does not have a formal worship structure (currently worshiping in a precast concrete structure), and this has an impact on its growth. A number of Churches were planted within Emfuleni Local Municipality and the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality following the planting of these three Churches.

The planting of more Churches led to a drastic change in how worship services were held. Only one worship service is taking place now, and this is the main service which starts at 10:00 every Sunday. The finances of the Church are also affected by this move. When Church planting started, all the worship stations' income was reported to the main Church (Trinity); with time, these worship

stations were turned into circuits, and pastors were assigned to them. This meant that the money they generate belongs to that Church and not to Trinity AME Church like it was before.

Church planting resulted in a decrease in membership and income at Trinity AME Church. The good thing about this Church planting is that most people stopped traveling long distances for a two-hour worship service, and a more diverse Church grew. As much as most of these new stations had dynamics of being dominated by a particular family or families, it is much better than the Historic Trinity AME Church.

During the official board meeting, the members of the Church indicated that it's very rare to hear members of the Church talking about Classes. The Classes do exist, and the pastor always allocates new members to Classes, but Class Leaders and members do not meet for the original purpose of Class Meetings. The Class Leaders do not teach and oversee Class members anymore; they have forgotten that they are faith supporters and spiritual developers. The only duty the Class Leaders do not fail to do is to collect monthly dues (financial contributions) from members.

4.4.3.5 St Peter and OLS Sherman AME Churches

St Peter AME Church and OL Sherman AME Church are both situated in Sharpeville, a place with a rich history. Sharpeville is a township situated between two towns, Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark, and are both within the Emfuleni Local Municipality. It was established in 1942 as part of the Leeuwkuil farm following the Vereeniging riots of 1937. This township is between highways, Cemeteries, and Railway lines. It was named after John Lillie Sharpe, who was the Mayor of Vereeniging from 1935 to 1937 (Menye, 2018:8).

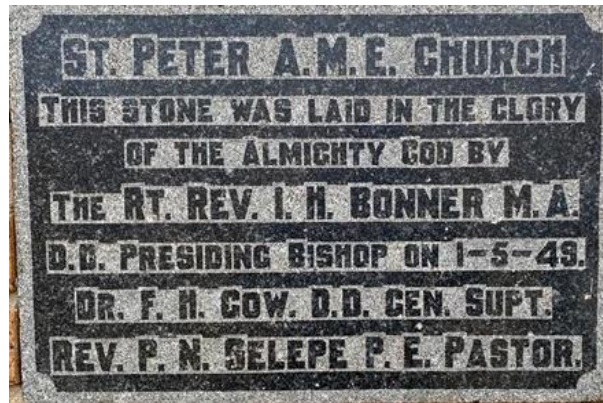
Sharpeville is known for the "Sharpeville Massacre," which took place on 21 March 1960, where a group of between five and ten thousand people was protesting outside the Sharpeville Police Station against the pass law. On that day, 69 people were killed by the police, and 180 people were injured (Davenport and Saunders 2000:412-414). This protest became an international icon of the anti-apartheid struggle, leading to the 21 March being declared a Public Holiday called Human Rights Day (Lawrence, 2002:32).

Sharpeville has a total population of 41 032 with 12 170 Households (STATSSA, 2011). Membership at both St Peter and OL Sherman is 1 278. In Sharpeville, the total membership for

both Churches (St Peter and OL Sherman) combined constitutes only three percent of the total population. Sharpeville has a Church square that has ten different Churches, and St Peter AME Church is one of the ten Churches in the Church square, while OL Sherman is not in the Church square but in a section called Vuka in Sharpeville. These two AME Churches will be discussed below.

4.4.3.5.1 St Peter AME Church

St Peter AME Church was dedicated in 1949 by Rev HI Bonner, who was Episcopal District Presiding Bishop, while the resident pastor was Rev. Peter Ntseole Selepe (see Picture 4.2 below). St Peter AME Church contributed to the Vaal uprising relief fund. The money collected was distributed to sixty-eight family members who lost their loved ones during the period between September 1984 to January 1985 (Nooman, 2011: 314).



Picture 4.2..... (Own work)

ST Peter AME Church was originally based in the top location before the establishment of Sharpeville, and people of the top location relocated to Sharpeville. Bishop Senatle, while pastoring this Church, taught of the significance of equipping the congregation for God's work. He had Bible study sessions every Saturday, and he encouraged small group ministry led by Class Leaders every Sunday before Church (St Peter, 1978:4). The two sessions were well attended by both young people and adults and registers (accessible to the researcher) were kept in the register book. The register book kept the name and surname of the attendee, age, and address with the date of the meeting on top of each page. Once a month, the Church hosted a Wednesday know-your-Church session where the polity of the Church was discussed.

The Church had many professionals. According to Ntate Lesito (November 2017), one of the Church stewards indicated that all Classes were led by educators (members of the local Church

holding a teacher qualification). Members of the Church were elected to office based on their skills, expertise, and qualification. All Class Leaders were teachers/educators who had the patience to meet Class members every Sunday morning to set the tone for the day and discuss what they learned from the last Sunday's scriptures and sermon.

The Church had a new beginner's Class led by the pastor, who would transfer the members to an existing Class or formulate a new Class once members had found their footing. Ntate Lesito (November 2017), believed that the Class Leader Ministry was the best thing at St Peter. It had the potential to make everyone feel at home. It ensured that it was easy to socialize with other members of the Church. The Class Leaders were elected annually, and those re-elected were placed in a different group from the one they led the previous year. That way, the Class Leader had a responsibility to prepare for the Class, and the element of respect was maintained. This rotation ensured that the Class Leader does not assume that members knew what was expected of them, but the leader continued to strive for the best.

St Peter AME Church attracted people from the neighbouring townships, and it grew. In the years 1978 and 1979, it had three thousand and forty-seven members. It was not possible to have one service (St Peter, 1980:2). The Church board agreed to present a report to the Church Conference for the Church to have two services on a Sunday to ensure that everyone was able to sit comfortably in the Church. This proposal was welcomed by the Church Conference with a hundred percent vote. St Peter Church has a double-storeyed Church building. The two Church worship services on a Sunday worked for a short period.

Soon the board presented another proposal to the Official Board to have a worship station in the neighbouring township and one at the far end of Sharpeville. This proposal was welcomed with the majority vote (St Peter, 1983:1). The station at the far end of Sharpeville grew tremendously that it was dedicated the following year, and a pastor was assigned to it. This Church was named OL Sherman Chapel AME Church. This move of having stations, dedicating, and assigning pastors to the established stations affected the St Peter the same way it affected Trinity as discussed in section 4.1.3.2 above.

In a quarterly conference, meeting members were asked how often Class Leader Meetings take place. Members of the Church indicated that there are no Class Leader Meetings. When a new

member joins the Church, s/he is assigned a Class Leader. The new member will meet the Class Leader after Church for a small induction. At the end of the month, the Class Leaders will request the monthly dues (financial contribution) from the member. There is no more communication between the member and the Class Leader unless there is another Church financial obligation that needs to be met. Some members stay away from the Church due to a lack of financial source.

4.4.3.5.2 OL Sherman AME Church

OL Sherman was dedicated in 1984 by the Right Rev John Ellsworth Hunter, who was the Episcopal District Presiding Bishop, Rev Daniel Seokamo Modisapodi being the Presiding Elder of the District, and Rev. Harold Ben Senatle being the resident pastor at the time see **Picture 4.3** below.



Picture 4.3.....(Own work)

OL Sherman grew from strength to strength until it was affected by a schism. Ntate Mokhele (December, 2017) indicated with a deep heart that the pastor assigned by the annual conference in the year 2006 decided to take over the ownership of the Church with his other stewards. Ntate Mokhele (December 2017) indicated that he and other members of the Church refused to move with the pastor. There was a long battle about who must worship in the Church building.

According to Ntate Mokhele (December, 2017), He and other old AME Church members fought until the Church building remained the property of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The pastor and his followers opened their Church called AME Church in Africa. Not so long, the pastor moved to the other province, and some of his followers opened their charismatic Church. Ntate Mokhele (December, 2017) also indicated that with the pastor moving to the other province, most members returned to OL Sherman AME Church, and some of the members moved back to St Peter Church AME Church. OL Sherman AME Church continued to suffer dwindling membership.

The Presiding Elder requested Class Leaders to report on the life of their Classes. Class Leaders indicated that their members are not paying their monthly contributions to the Church, leading to the Church struggling to raise funds. The Presiding elder further asks Class Leaders how often the Class meets for spiritual revival. Most Class Leaders indicated that Classes are not meeting because their members are not available during the week. When trying to arrange meetings over the weekends, members cite other commitments.

Some Class Leaders indicated that at times when they try to visit their members, members see them as cash collectors and not spiritual parents. Even when they try to explain their role, they are unsuccessful in convincing members because there was an era where Class Leaders would only talk about money. This behavior by members of the Classes resulted in most Class Leaders not visiting the members. The pastor indicated that the Church is embarking on teaching Church members the role of Class Leaders and Class members.

4.4.3.6 DM Robinson, D Hunter, CD Nthoba Memorial

DM Robinson and CD Nthoba Memorial are both situated in Sebokeng. Sebokeng was established in 1965, then 18772 houses were built in the area. This was developed under the Orange-Vaal Board. Sebokeng has a total population of 218 515 with 60 793 households (Statssa, 2011). DM Robinson and CD Nthoba AME Churches have a total membership of 1 404. These two Churches' memberships constitute 0.6% of the population of Sebokeng. The statistics do not include the population increase due to new developments in Sebokeng, and it does not also include membership at D Hunter AME Church. D Hunter is another AME Church in Sebokeng. To be specific, it is situated in Zone 14 Sebokeng. It has less than 30 years of existence hence excluded from the study.

4.4.3.6.1 Dare Mae Robinson AME Church

Dare Mae Robinson is situated in Sebokeng, Zone 11. It was dedicated in 1971, (as per the cornerstone depicted below, Picture 4.4), by the Presiding Bishop, Rt Rev Dewer Robinson. The presiding elder at the time was Rev Wilson W Letumbu, and the resident pastor was Rev Abram Tati Khaalo.



Picture 4.4..... (Own work)

Rev Seabi Jacob Moleli, who is the long-serving pastor in this Church, indicated that DM Robinson is one of the big Churches within the Wilberforce District. It is also financially stable. The Church has a worship station in Polokong (Johan Deo). He further indicated that the Church is well situated. It is at the center of Sebokeng. It attracts people from all zones in Sebokeng. The Church structure is well maintained and looked after.

The trustees at the Church ensure that the Church is always in good condition and clean. The people staying next to the Church will always talk about the cleanliness of this Church and how the fathers at that Church will not allow anyone to drop any dirt on the ground without reminding them to pick it up. Sis Khaalo, one of the residents in the area, continued to talk about Ntate Kutoane. Ntate Kutoane will come to Church every day to make sure that the Church is clean. She (Sis Khaalo) says Ntate Kutoane will never allow anybody to throw anything around the Churchyard, even the chappies; you will pick it up. She says even children in that neighborhood know that they cannot drop any rubbish next to the Church, even a paper covering the sweets.

The Church has a Brass Band. This band makes this AME Church unique from others. The Brass Band is called the Sons of Moleli. Females are not playing the wind instruments, only males. This band attracts more people to this Church. Rev. Moleli indicated that the band is made up of disciplined males; once your ethics are questionable, you are removed from the band until you are reprovved and changed your way of doing things. The players (musicians) are dignified young and adult men led by their pastor Rev Seabi Jacob Moleli. Rev Moleli is not afraid to reprove, correct

and discipline a member whose actions are in contradiction with the doctrine and discipline of the AME Church.

Ntate More indicates that Rev Moleli is against Church immoralities and rejects the notion of purgatory and transubstantiation. He believes that he will not lead a corrupt Church. He preaches the importance of being Christ-like. Some people leave the Church because they think he is too strict, while parents want their children to go to this Church because of the ethical standards of the Church. The Oral Account suggests that most young people are not ready to be in this Church because they want to either play Church or are not ready to receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour. They are Churchgoers, not Christians. Ntate More also confirms that the trustees and stewards at this Church agreed that as much as their pastor (Rev Moleli) is very strict, he believes that his task, amongst others, is to maintain a loving and trusting environment between members of the Church and between members of the Church and the Lord.

DM Robinson grew from 105 members in 1974 to 773 members in 1978. This was influenced by the development of Zone 10 and its dual role (this Church was used as a school during the week and a Church on Sundays). Currently, the Church is only used on Sunday for Sunday worship services and seldom during the week by auxiliaries of the Church. The Department of Education built more schools in the area and stopped to use the Church during the week. The stewards of the Church indicated that they went to the nearby schools to check if their classes were not full over capacity, with the intent to request the principals to continue to use the Church as the school. Their request did not receive a favourable response.

This move by the department had a negative impact on the Church statistics. Each year new students were introduced to this dignified Church, according to Rev Moleli and the stewards of the Church. Some will fall in love with the Church, and parents, as they drop children and fetch them in the afternoon, will also be attracted to this clean, dignified Church and join the Church. Now, this exposure is no more. The statistics, as indicated in chapter one, revealed that in 2011, Dare Mae Robinson had 1114 members, but by 2015, membership had reduced to 1065 despite the growing population with the development of new townships like Boitumelo, Johan Deo, and Kanana.

DM Robinson members indicated that the Church is always talking about Class Meetings. The Classes do exist, and active and new members are always allocated to Classes. Class Leaders and members meet monthly, and the meetings are not for the original purpose of Class Meetings. The Class Leaders do not teach and oversee Class Members; the main reason for the Class meeting is to collect monthly dues (financial contributions) from members.

This trend of collection of monthly dues causes tension at times because of competition among the Class Leaders. Each Class Leader wants to report the highest income, while the other members of the Classes do not have any means of income. Some members stay away from the Church on the report date due to a lack of financial source, and some end up not coming to Church at all. The Class Leaders seem to have forgotten their spiritual mandate.

4.4.3.6.2 Nthoba Memorial

Nthoba Memorial AME Church is situated in Sebokeng, Zone 7. It was dedicated in 1971, as per the cornerstone depicted below in **Picture 4.5**. In 1971, the resident pastor at Nthoba Memorial AME Church was Rev Simon Daniel Modise, and the presiding elder of the District was Rev. Aaron Shadrack Molefe. The Church was dedicated by the Right Rev John Ellsworth Hunter, who was the Bishop at the time.



Picture 4.5..... (Own work)

Sebokeng Zone 7 is a well-known place because of the Massacre that took place on 12 January 1991 at the night vigil of Chris Nangalembe, who was an African National Congress member as well as the member of the Sebokeng Crime Prevention Unit. The South African History Achieves (SAHA) records that this attack underscored the endemic brutality of the interregnum attributed to the lawlessness of the time. This massacre is one of the brutal heritages of Sebokeng Township. Not so long after this Nangalemebe night vigil attack on 23 May 1991, two AK-47 Clad men opened fire into a crowd of about a hundred patrons, killing five patrons at Gobizitwana (*loosely translated "bend your knee or sit down to rest"*) Beer hall in Sebokeng. According to SAHA, within days, the death toll rose to thirteen.

Mr. Daniel Masemolo, in an interview with Dale McKinley for SAHA's "Forgotten Voices in the Present," said, "The lingering culture of violence today should be dealt with more strongly by the government". Mr. Masemola said "the government must take guns from anyone who owns a gun and does not have a license." More and more deaths took place without any intervention from the government at the time.

Khabonina Tsjhabala (January 2018), a member at Nthoba Memorial who resides in Zone 7 was shaking when retelling the story. She said she had never seen so much violence in her lifetime. No one was ready to go out of the house for no apparent reason. Going to Church was a mission. She indicated that the Church building was not safe at all. Most members continued to go to Church though they feared for their lives. She said most people who stayed in the area started moving out of the area to the suburbs from 1994 to date.

Even today, the area is still not safe. Currently, it's not the guns. There is a group of young men from initiation school called the wrong-turns. These boys rob people of their hard-earned money; they break into houses and steal goods. They do not own guns but use sticks and knives. Mr. Blessing Mahloko interviewed some members of this group to find out why they were killing people, raping them, and breaking into people's houses. They cited that they are bored, jobless, and their age does not allow them to continue asking for money from their parents. They are men, and they must provide and not depend on their parents.

In the same interview, they were asked if their parents refused to support them because of their age. They all indicated that their parents are not happy with their criminal activities and that their parents

are willing to provide for them, but they want to be respected in the community. The oral account suggests that they cannot be children forever. When asked why they are not applying for jobs, they indicated that they tried, but they are not marketable because most of them do not have Matric or skills.

Rev Sello Billy Dire, who was the presiding elder of the Wilberforce District, indicated that the Church structure at Nthoba Memorial was dilapidated and pronounced Nthoba Memorial AME Church a District project. The project was to rebuild the Nthoba Memorial Church. The project was a success, the new structure is dedicated, and members worship in this new beautiful structure.

When asked why he chose Nthoba Memorial as the District project, while other Churches in the District are building their own structures, renovating and maintaining them. Rev Dire indicated that most young people in Zone 7, once they get employed, they leave the area because of the crime. The membership of the Nthoba Church is made up of Senior Citizens mainly. Looking at their income, it will be difficult for them to rebuild the Church. He also indicated that looking at the statistics at this Church, and it will take some time for the Church to grow. In 2011, CD Nthoba had 607 members but in 2015 had only 339 members. Regardless of the growing developments in Zone 10 towards the Kwa-Gastroom station, Zone 12 extension (Lengoeleng informal settlement), and developments of Eastonside, this Church does not attract more people because of its location.

The members at Nthoba, Memorial when asked about the Class Leader Ministry in their Church, most members indicated that they had a very successful Class Leader Ministry before the Namgalembe Night vigil. Members used to meet and pray together. They even had a senior citizen Class that met three times. These senior citizens would not only meet for spiritual enrichment only, but they had social activities that included handwork (dressmaking, gardening, artwork); each one was teaching the other under the leadership of a Class Leader. Most of the new recruits did not even know that there was once a successful Class Leader Ministry. One thing they all know is that the pastor will ensure that every member of the Church belongs to a Class. The relationship they have with their Class Leader is to pay their monthly dues, fundraising money, and any other finance-related item. The Class Leader will visit the family when there is a funeral. No social visits or social calls.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 explored the place and role of the Class Leader and Class Members in the AME Church context generally and towards membership growth in the Wilberforce District of the AME Church, taking into account the words of John Maxwell that everything rises and falls on leadership.

Looking at each Church, it is clear that each Church is unique, though they have some common characteristics.

- The membership is declining.
- Class Leaders collect Money.
- There are no Class meetings focusing on the spiritual well-being of members.

Chapter 5 will review the extensive literature on empirical research and a qualitative approach, explore the research design, concluding with the empirical inquiry.

CHAPTER 5

5 THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous Chapter 4 discussed the origin and background of a Class Leader in general and within Wilberforce District in particular. Furthermore, its notion (Class Leader), roles, and responsibilities were in the spotlight. Linked to this in Chapter 4, five (5) sampled local Churches out of 12 Churches falling within the Wilberforce District were investigated in their use of their Class Leader Ministry as the well-calculated strategy to grow their membership.

In this Chapter 5, the extensive literature on empirical research is reviewed, and a qualitative approach and an explorative research design is followed for this empirical inquiry. As noted above, five (5) sampled local Churches out of 12 within the Wilberforce District were chosen to conduct this study. Qualitative data was collected from 240 congregants by means of a group-administered questionnaire, using semi-structured interviews and participant observation as a data collection process. To test the above pre-position, the reliability and validity of the research questionnaire will be conducted. Furthermore, ethical issues for this study were considered.

In order to achieve its objectives, this chapter of the study discusses aspects of the empirical method that was used in this study. The investigation also explains the design followed as well as the reasons for the choice involved in this regard. This chapter of the study is accordingly divided into the following five sections:

- i. Literature Review
- ii. A discussion of the research design and a description of the applicable method for this study. The section accordingly highlights the research design that is followed in the investigation, including the relevant underlying philosophical assumptions, as well as the population and sample of the study;
- iii. A discussion of the issues regarding the research instruments and data collection mechanism of the study.

- iv. An exploration of the administration of the questionnaire looks at the issues and factors pertaining to the validity and reliability of the data the study uses and how it handles and analyses that data.
- v. A consideration of the relevant research ethics issues involved in the study.

5.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers such as Bryman, et al (2016:268) mention that in order to access high-quality data, the relevant extensive literature should be reviewed and analyzed.

In order to use Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Churches within the Wilberforce District, relevant academic journal articles and professional literature in religion and theology in the Church Ministry were analyzed. The applicable search engines such as Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Cumulative Index to Information Science, Sabinet, Science Direct, and Sumon were used to source secondary data. The key AME Church documents were also utilized. Institutional documents such as Conferences, Plenary meeting minutes, and Class Meetings, among others, were some of the official documents consulted.

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The literature on research design is abundant (Lankshear & Knoble. 2004:21 ;). A research design is considered a broad strategic or logical approach (Lankshear & Knoble 2004:21), a plan, blueprint, or guide. These scholars commonly agreed that a research design is a guide for data collection and interpretation as well as the concept of exploration on how the study will be conducted (Lankshear & Knoble 2004:21)

For the purpose of this study, the research design is the step-by-step approach/plan carefully tailored for this specific study and must be followed by the researcher when conducting the study to obtain relevant data. A research design is a crucial part of any research as it is concerned with turning research questions into projects. Research design choice depends on the purpose(s) of the study, and there are four types of research design, namely:

The first one is an **exploratory study** (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:171). The exploratory study is the approach to data analysis that emphasises the use of diagrams to explore and understand the data. The exploratory study is the study that is used to clarify the understanding of a problem for example, when one is unsure of the precise problem and therefore needs to explore. The second one is a **descriptive study** (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:371). The descriptive study is a forerunner or extension to an exploratory research piece. Its objective is to portray an accurate profile of a person, event or situation (Robson, 2002:59). The third one is an **explanatory study** (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:172). This is the research focuses on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationship between variables and the last one is an **emancipator study** (Robson, 2002:82).

The researcher had a responsibility to decide upon which research design and methods are appropriate and useful for this study, the one that is carefully tailored to meet the specific needs of the research. The purpose of the study was to find answers to research questions by applying a systematic procedure. As this study remained unexplored and a new exploratory design is necessary, this study will follow an exploratory and descriptive qualitative research design (Burns & Grove, 2011:20; Polit & Beck, 2017:187) to investigate the use of Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Churches within the Wilberforce District.

5.3.1 Research Methods

The extant literature considers research methods as important tools to find the answers to research questions (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:23). The following methods are discussed “qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods” focusing on the following scholars (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Howitt & Cramer, 2017; Bairagi & Munot, 2019).

A qualitative research method is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013:4). Qualitative research deals with subjective analysis. This type of research mainly deals with the types of parameters or qualities considered for research (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:8). Qualitative research focuses on the description of the qualities (or characteristics) of data.

A quantitative research method is predominantly used as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as a questionnaire) or data analysis procedure (such as graphs or statistics) that generates or uses numerical data (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:145). Any amount that is measurable is

referred to as quantity. Bairagi & Munot (2019:75) believe that something that can be expressed with the results of a specific amount that could be compared can be called quantitative research. This method involves measurements of quantities of features that can be used as features for the research study.

A mixed research method is the term used when both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques are used together in one study. It is subdivided into two types. The analysis procedures take place either at the same time (parallel) or one after the other (sequential) but are not combined. This means that, although mixed method research uses both quantitative and qualitative world views at the research methods stage, quantitative data are analyzed quantitatively, and qualitative data are analyzed qualitatively (Saunders et al., 2009:146). In this method, the researcher collects data in a quantitative form where there are adequate means of quantifying variables and concepts but use open-ended and less-structured material where the concepts and variables cannot be measured satisfactorily for some reason (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:370).

It must be noted that qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches may utilize research questionnaires; the difference will be the type of questions that are formulated as well as how the information acquired by the questionnaires is interpreted or analyzed. Qualitative and quantitative research is often presented as being diametrically opposite and as different as they possibly could be (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:362). It should be stressed that qualitative and quantitative methods are not necessarily clear-cut alternatives. The choice between the two is not simple, nor is it always the case that one is to be preferred over the other one (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:366).

If conducted properly, qualitative research and in particular ethnographic field methods can lead to more accurate results than quantitative studies (Becker, 1966:59, 1970:42-43). It is important for the researcher to be sure which method will provide the information required for the study (Druckman, 2005:46).

To determine if Class Leader Ministry is the backbone of of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) Wilberforce District, a qualitative research method will be used.

5.3.1.1 Positives of Qualitative Research Methods.

Rahman (2020:104) present the following positive characteristics of the qualitative research method in this study.

- i. It is more concerned about the process than the outcome;
- ii. It is good because of its descriptive nature, and it allows the researcher to follow the process, meaning, and understanding gained during the study;
- iii. It allows the researcher to use concepts, theories, themes, and categories;
- iv. It is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis;
- v. It allows for field work, where a researcher goes out to the selected population of study in their comfort zone and either observes and studies things or interviews and participates; and
- vi. It allows the researcher to get data regarding the assumptions that the population makes about their daily understanding of the subject.

5.3.1.2 Negatives of Qualitative Research Methods.

The following are negative characteristics of the qualitative research method, according to Rahman (2020:104-105):

- i. It takes longer to complete the study as data is collected in numbers;
- ii. It is demanding, because one has to sort data accordingly and evaluate it without prejudice;
- iii. It is not cost-effective; it demands the scholar to travel to the population of the study, buy necessary devices to collect data; print necessary questionnaires where applicable, buy a computer for quick, accurate data analysis, etc.;
- iv. One must always guard against biases; and
- v. It has room for mistakes since the scholar becomes immersed in the studied phenomena.

With the above limitations or negatives, the method was chosen because of the understanding of the study population's (group) behavior in the context of their comfort zone. Data was collected in the study population's natural environment, promoting self-understanding and increased insight into human experiences. In order for the data collection period to be shorter, the researcher had all participants in the same room to fill questionnaire simultaneously, and that reduced the traveling costs as the researcher did not travel to each respondent's place but to a central venue (Church), and to avoid mistakes, the researcher collected copies of individual's questionnaire and took notes to

reference when writing a report; lastly, all participants were made aware of the ethical standards necessary.

Since very little is written about the AME Churches, especially the Wilberforce District Churches and the research topic, the empirical study of this research depended mainly on oral history, questionnaire, and participant observation in order to assess the participants' knowledge about the research problem and what they believed the role of others in the study was. This was done in order to build an understanding based on their ideas and to achieve the goals of the study, in the area of research methodology, for investigating the use of the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church within Wilberforce District.

5.3.2 Philosophical Assumptions and Paradigms of qualitative research

Numerous and different scholars define paradigms differently (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:645; Polit & Beck 2012: 736). Scholars initially defined *a paradigm* as a model for observing and understanding, shaping what we see and how we understand it. Other scholars, such as Polit & Beck (2012: 736), point out that a paradigm is a worldview that encompasses sets of philosophical assumptions that guides one's approach to inquiry. All research is based on some assumptions regarding its validity and the appropriate methods to follow (Mahloko, 2015:111). Creswell (2013:15) believes that when researchers undertake a qualitative study, they agree to its underlying philosophical assumptions.

Philosophical Assumptions are those first ideas one has during the process of developing the study; their relationship with the overall process of research is something that baffles understanding and cannot be explained (Creswell, 2013:16). There are four philosophical assumptions, according to Creswell (2013:16-17) namely:

Ontological – in the ontological perspective, qualitative research is underpinned and guided by the principle of interpretivist philosophy. The "interpretivist" paradigm emphasizes the need to put analysis in context. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals by using meaning (versus measurement) oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003: 32). It rejects the positive thinking and refuses to reduce human behavior to a mere number. This tradition believes that people may or

may not experience social or physical reality in the same way (Neuman, 2014:70). This is the assumption claimed by the researcher regarding the nature of reality (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2009:19). Human interest is not only directing people's way of thinking but has an impact on how the world is investigated and how knowledge is constructed (Blumberg, 2011:18). In this study, the researcher seeks to explore the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Churches within the Wilberforce District. The Unstructured interviews will be conducted to gain in-depth and description of their life-world experiences of the decline or growth of the AME Churches' membership.

Epistemological – the longer the researchers get to know participants, the better the responses. Researchers bring value to a study, but qualitative researchers need to make those values explicit (Creswell, 2007:18). Other scholars like Wyssusek, Schartz, and Krallman agree with Creswell on this; they espoused that the sociological paradigm encompasses the entire constellation of beliefs values, and techniques shared by members of a given community (Wyssusek, Schartz and Krallman, 2002:7). This can be summarized as the relationship between the researcher and what may be known. It involves knowledge and embodies an understanding of what is entailed in knowing. Epistemology is the study of or theory of knowledge. It is concerned with the methodology of knowledge (how we go about knowing things) and the validation of knowledge (the value of what we learn) (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:367). There are many criteria listed by qualitative researchers which are only meaningful if we understand the epistemological origins of qualitative research. This means that there are some considerations about the worth of qualitative data which do not normally apply to quantitative research (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:477). In this study, the descriptions of the phenomenon will be obtained from the participants by the researcher (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:477).

Axiological– It is the assumption that presents the way in which values are applied in research (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2009:21). **Axiology** is a branch of philosophy that studies judgments about value. Although this may include values we possess in the fields of aesthetics and ethics, it is the process of social inquiry with which we are concerned here (Saunders et al., 2009:110). Heron (1996: 110) argues that our values are the guiding reason for all human action. He further argues that researchers demonstrate axiological skills by being able to articulate their values as a basis for making judgments about what research they are conducting and how they go about doing it. The axiological perspective of a research paradigm is aimed at illustrating the level

of consistency, reliability, or otherwise reconstructing or extending the previously held theories or construction (Neuman, 2014:97)

Methodological- This is the process followed in the research or the research methodology (Maree and Van der Westhuien, 2009:21). It is about what methods and procedures are allowable within the paradigm. While epistemology deals with the question of what knowledge is, methodology asks how valid knowledge can be acquired. The methodology is thus the study of methods (Stenbacka, 2001:552), and it analyses the different methods used in investigating the use of the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal Church within Wilberforce District.

To effectively achieve this, the researcher has to assume the philosophical assumption relevant to the study, and this study follows the Epistemological assumption. The epistemological assumption in qualitative research means that the researcher gets as close as possible to the subject of the study and allows the researcher to stay in the research field to get to know and understand participants (Creswell, 2013:20). In realizing the epistemological assumption, the researcher relied on responses from participants, collaborates and spends more time with the participants as participants in this study.

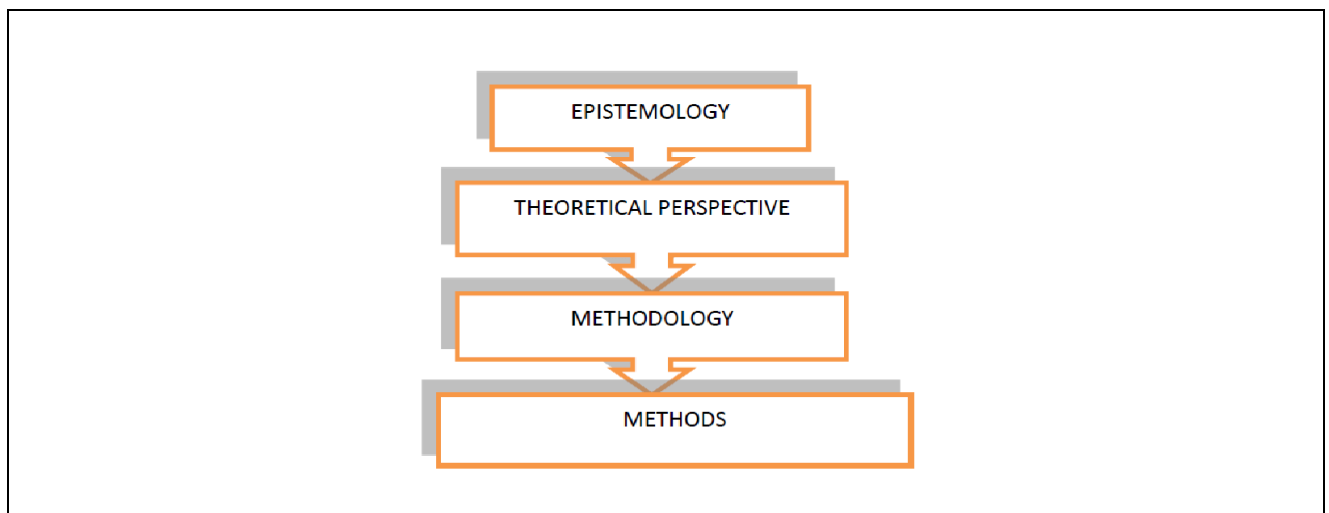


Figure 5.1: The Basic Elements of Research Process (Crotty, 1998:4).

Therefore, this study relied mainly on the ability to interpret what is said, make sense of what is seen and be critical in understanding social phenomena. Data is collected face to face by interacting with the selected population of the study in different Church settings using a phenomenological

approach (understanding and interpreting the meaning that people give to their experiences in their daily Church lives focusing on the Class Leader Ministry).

The research process consists of four elements, as depicted in Figure 5.1 above; these are epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods that inform one another. This means that epistemology informs the theoretical perspectives, these perspectives determine research methodology, and then methodology governs and chooses the methods of research (Crotty, 1998:4).

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the AME Church believes that Class Leader Ministry is the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Research questions and objectives were presented in chapter one to validate the assumption. Based on this, it is concluded that the epistemological assumption presents subjective evidence collected by the researcher from the identified field of study, and this is discussed in Chapter 7 of this study.

5.3.3 Population and Sampling

This section will describe the population of this study and the sample to be used as participants of the study. Figure 5.3 below depicts that there must be a sampling process before data collection. The sampling process is a process where the researcher estimates or makes a generalization about the population based on the information contained in the sample of the entire population (Adam & Schvaneveldt, 1985:175).

5.3.3.1 Population

There is extensive scholarly literature on the population of the study (Saunders et al., 2009:205; Neuman, 2014:252).

Saunders *et al.*, (2009:205) defined a population as the total number of individuals from which a sample is taken. For Neuman (2014:252), a population is the specific collection of elements to be studied. To reinforce this argument, a population is the group of interest to the researcher (Gay and Airasian, 2000:122), as shown in Figure 5.3 below.

In order to use the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), all thirteen (13) Wilberforce District AME Churches will be the population of this study.

5.3.3.2 Sampling

Having chosen the study population as reflected in Figure 5.3 below, it is widely believed that there are two important procedures that need to occur in the qualitative paradigm before data collection. The first one is to have the process of sampling, and the second is to select the sample.

For Polit and Beck (2012: 391), sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population. These authors go on to say that purposeful sampling is the selection of participants that will be highly beneficial to the study (Polit and Beck 2012: 517).

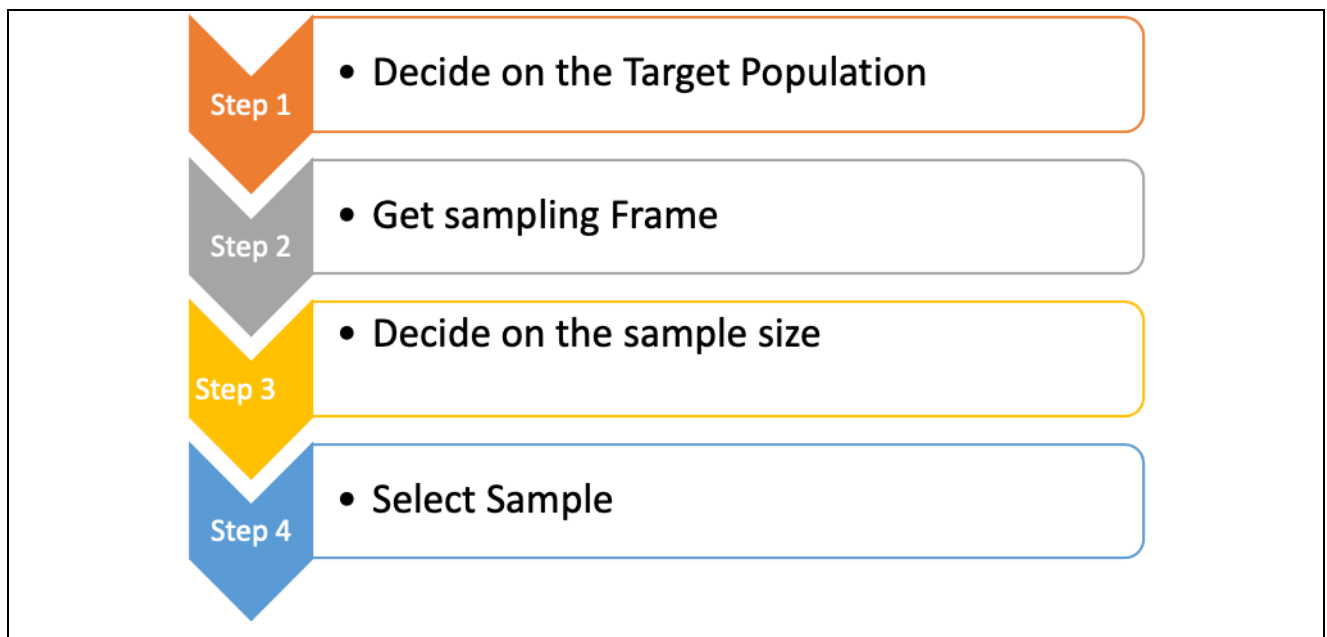


Figure 5.3 Target Population to Sample

A purposeful sampling will be used to select participants who are members of the AME local Churches within the Wilberforce District (Polit and Beck 2012: 391; Howitt & Cramer, 2017:267). For the purpose of this study, the sample that could yield the most information about the topic under investigation was chosen. The sample for this study was discussed in detail in chapter 4, section 4.1.3 above.

5.3.3.3 Sampling Frame

In view of this research, a sampling frame is a list from which the sampled population has been sourced (Polit and Beck 2012: 517; Neuman, 2014:252). The Class Leaders and Class Members were participants in this study. The minutes of the Conferences and Roll Books from various sampled Local AME Churches were used to source their list of the Class Leaders and Class Members as the sampling frame.

5.3.4 *Research Instruments and Data Collection Techniques*

This section presents instruments or methods for collecting data and the techniques used to collect data for the purpose of this study. The data collection involves a number of steps and allows the researcher to collect information about the subjects of the study and the setting in which the study takes place in a systematic way. The reason data collection must be systematic and not haphazard is to ensure that it is not difficult to respond to research questions in a conclusive way and that data collected is complete (Zikmund *et al.*, 2009:25).

Data collection is an important step in the research process. The instruments chosen to collect data depend on the type of data the researcher plans on collecting and the plan on how to collect it. A number of common data-collecting instruments are used in constructing research instruments like Questionnaires, Interviews, Observations, Archival documents and government sources, Laboratory experiments, Quasi-experiments, Scales (measuring and weighing tapes), etc. (De Vos, *et al.*, 2011:171). To produce data for this qualitative research, the interview, questionnaire, and participant observation data collection instruments were employed. Questionnaires and interviews are the most common research instruments for data collection in the research study (Borg & Gall, 1989:430).

This study employs a qualitative research method, meaning it relied mainly on the views of participants, general questions, and collected data consisting mainly of words from participants. The researcher describes and analyses these words, themes and conducts the inquiry in a non-subjective and unbiased manner (Creswell, 2013:4). Qualitative research denotes the type of inquiry in which the qualities, characteristics, or properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation (Henning *et al.*, 2004:5). Qualitative research centers on understanding processes, experiences, and the meaning people assign to things (Kalof *et al.*, 2008:79).

Qualitative methodology increases understanding of human behavior in order to understand why things are the way they are in the social world and why people act the ways they do (Al-Ababneh, 2020: 76). Qualitative research is significant because non-statistical research can produce more reliable results if researchers pay attention to the rules of scientific inference commonly stated in quantitative research (King *et al.*, 1994: 4). This study was conducted by means of both literature and empirical study. The research problem, research questions, and research aims called for a purposeful research design that would meet the requirements of the research intentions.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher decided that the methods of data collection that best suit this empirical investigation be limited to interviews, participant observation, and Group Administered Questionnaire within the five AME Churches identified in chapter one to gain insight into the experiences of the participants in order to arrive at a sound conclusion.

These three methods were used to collect and access data from these five Churches in order to gain a detailed picture that Class Leader Ministry is the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) within the Wilberforce District.

5.3.5 Development and administration of the questionnaire

This section explores the development and administration of a questionnaire. The development of questionnaires is very important, and the person developing the questionnaire must be thorough and the questionnaire requires a considerable time. Therefore, this section discusses how the questionnaire was developed and how it was administered. The development of the questionnaire is discussed in section 5.3.5.1 below, and the group-administered questionnaire data collection method for this study will be discussed in section 5.4.2.1 below.

5.3.5.1 Development of Questionnaire

A survey method of data collection was used in this study. The questionnaire was developed in line with guidelines as suggested by Miller (2003:78-79). The questionnaire's language was appropriate and to the level of participants (Miller, 2003:78); when choosing words, an effort was made to choose words that do not have more than one meaning to participants (Miller, 2003:78); long sentences and ambiguous words were avoided (Miller, 2003:78-79); and the biases, as well as leading statements or questions were avoided at all costs (Miller, 2003:79). Insight gained from the

literature in chapters 2-4 was also taken into consideration when developing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was tailored in a way that encompasses the scope and objectives of the study.

The researcher must pilot the questionnaire with a small group of participants who are similar to those in the final survey before the rollout (Neuman, 2014: 320). Before the questionnaire could be distributed to the selected sample, it was distributed to a group of delegates to the Wilberforce District Conference as part of the pilot project. A *pilot* is a small study used to test whether research protocols, data collection instruments, sample recruitment strategies, and other research techniques are appropriate for the study (Kraemer et al., 2006:485). The pilot was used to identify potential problem areas and deficiencies of the research tools prior to implementation (Kraemer et al., 2006:488). The pilot study was conducted on 26 delegates from 13 Churches that constitute the Wilberforce District, 13 being youth (ages between 18 and 40) and 13 being adults (above the age of 40), both males and females. All participants agreed to participate in the study.

They filled out the questionnaire in the conference room during the break. The questionnaire was tested to find out if the questions were comprehensive enough, appropriate, and well-defined. The responses were recorded, and data collection progressed smoothly. A basic analysis was done; out of 26 participants, 23 completed the questionnaire in full, and all 26 participants took part in the questionnaire discussion. The pilot demonstrated that all protocols were observed and feasible.

After the questionnaire session, these delegates did not want to disperse but wanted to discuss the Class Leader Ministry more and suggested that this topic be included in the teaching of the district conference every year. The pilot demonstrated the benefits of this phase of research. In this research, it is evident that the positives use of the questionnaire far outweighed the negatives, as it was evident during the pilot stage, which ensured the reliability and validity of the study.

5.3.5.2 Parts of the Questionnaire

Only one questionnaire is designed for all participants, and this questionnaire has eight sections:

- Section one covers the demographic profile of participants, and this section covers issues like gender, age, and marital status, amongst others. This information is crucial to give the picture of the kinds of participants in the study;
- Section two covers training; this section looks at the training of Class Leaders and its impact on the status quo, growth or decline in the membership of the Church;

- Section three covers leadership; this section looks at the leadership skills of the Class Leaders and their impact on the growth or decline in membership;
- Section four covers the skills aspect of participants; this section looks at the Church's effort to improve the Church members' skills and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership;
- Section five covers evangelism; this section looks at the Church's effort to improve evangelism and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership;
- Section six focuses on new members; this section looks at the views and experience of the Class Leaders on handling new members assigned to their Class in order to grow their Local Churches' membership;
- Section seven covers Church finances; this section looks at the impact which Church finances have on the growth or decline in the Church's membership; and
- Section eight covers the Class Leader/Pastor relationship. This section looks at the impact which the Class Leader/pastor relationship has on the growth or decline of the Church's membership.

5.3.5.3 The Design of the Questionnaire

The Likert attitude scale format was used to design a questionnaire. The Likert attitude scale is a format that provides a range of response statements or series of statements that participants are asked to choose from. Usually, in this Likert attitude scale, participants are required to rate their responses or agreement on a scale ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree with a 3 = neutral type of response (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011:19-20 and (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:363).

The following two types of questions were used to develop the questionnaire: open-ended questions and closed-ended questions because of their relevancy to the study. The first section of the questionnaire uses open-ended questions because the participants are required to provide their own answers to the posed questions. The last seven sections use close-ended questions; in these sections, the participants are required to respond by choosing a statement or a series of statements provided (Likert attitude scale).

5.4 ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

In administering the questionnaire, one had to take into consideration the following aspects:

- Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire; and

- Questionnaire Distribution.

These two aspects will be discussed in section 5.4.1 and section 5.4.2, respectively.

5.4.1 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

The selection of an appropriate data collection instrument is an important component of the research findings because a basic element of validity and reliability of the study depends on the chosen qualitative method (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:148). The validity and reliability of data should be checked, and the researcher should consider an adequate amount of data to ensure that the study is reliable and valid. Good research should be creative and valid in the long term (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:23). The validity of the questionnaire or measuring instrument is determined by whether the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Delpont, 2003:166).

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measurement, that is, whether repeated measurements of the same object/phenomenon provide consistent, stable results (Pruzen, 2016:122). Simply put, reliability refers to the consistency or stability of the results of an experiment; the results do not fluctuate. The reliability of the study is said to increase if the study is repeated and consistent results are obtained or if the study is performed using different types of measurement instruments and the same results are obtained. Bairagi & Munot (2019:157) believes that the experiment is referred to be reliable if other researchers replicate the experiment and obtain the same results.

Validity focuses on the soundness of the way that the concepts researchers employ in their models; are they operationally defined and on how well-grounded their claims are regarding the measurements that have been performed (Pruzen, 2016:121). There are different types of validity, and this study will focus on content and construct validity only.

Content validity is the extent to which a measuring instrument is a representative of the content or domain being measured (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:92). In general; it is a broad criterion dealing with the trustworthiness of one's results (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:152). Content validity is defined as "the degree to which items in an instrument reflect the content universe to which the instrument will be generalized" (Boudreau et al. 2004). The judgmental approach to establish content validity involves literature reviews and then follow-ups with the evaluation by expert judges or panels (Taherdoost, 2016:30). According to Taherdoost (2016:30), the procedure of the judgmental approach of content validity demand researchers to work together with experts in order to ensure validation.

Construct validity refers to where a relationship is causal; what are the particular cause-and-effect behaviours or constructs involved in the relationship? Construct validity refers to how well you interpret or transform a concept, idea, or behavior established into a functioning and operating reality, the operationalization (Taherdoost, 2016:31).

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of this study, triangulation and feedback were used strategically. Triangulation is a process where two or more methods of data collection are used in the study (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:95). In this study, literature review, interviews, group administered questionnaire, and participation observation method of data collection to assess the efficiency of the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church were used in order to achieve triangulation.

When designing a questionnaire, it is easy to make and overlook mistakes and ambiguities in the layout and construction of the question. The design of the questionnaire can affect the response rate, reliability, and validity of the study or data collected. The reliability and validity of this study or data collected were enhanced by:

- i. Careful design of each question;
- ii. The clear layout of the questionnaire form;
- iii. Lucid explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire;
- iv. Piloting testing; and
- v. Submitting the questionnaire to the ethics committee for security and refinement (see ethics certificate herewith attached as **APPENDIX D**).

5.4.2 Questionnaire Distribution

There are a number of methods through which a questionnaire can be distributed to participants. Adams & Schvaneveldt (1985:202) indicate that a questionnaire may be distributed through the following methods "self-administered, group administered, mailed, long, short, open-ended or closed-ended style questions." This is because the purpose for which a questionnaire is used can range from exploring-probing type research to a highly structured lab experiment. In this study, a group-administered questionnaire method was used, and more details are provided on how the study was conducted.

5.4.2.1 Group-Administered Questionnaire

A questionnaire is used in research where participants in a study respond to a set of questions (Creswell, 2013:1). In this study, a survey by means of a questionnaire is used. The reasons for using a questionnaire in this study are as follows:

5.4.2.1.1 A questionnaire distributed is cost-effective because all participants get the same questionnaire; therefore, the researcher print one and then duplicate;

5.4.2.1.2 Self-distribution of the questionnaire warrants quick data collection by the end of the session, and the questionnaire is collected; and

5.4.2.1.3 A questionnaire is a convenient way to reach a geographically dispersed sample.

Qualitative research emphasizes the use of structured questionnaires (Hair *et al.*, 2008:78). Added advantages of using a questionnaire are that questionnaire may result in honest responses; it does not always require the researcher and reduces biasness that can be caused by phrasing questions differently for different participants (IDRC, 2007:7). For the purpose of this qualitative study a Group Administered Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection to investigate that Class Leader ministry is the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church within the Wilberforce District.

The population of the study was composed of members of the Church belonging to a Class in each local Church as allocated by the pastor. Each Class had 12 members, including the Class Leader. In some Classes, all members of the Class attended, and in some Class meetings just above 60% of the total Class members will attend. In each Church, four Classes were visited. The first Class is composed of young people (18-26 years), the second Class is composed of young adults (26 – 40 years), the third Class is composed of the active middle (40-55), and the last group is composed of adults (above 55).

In the Local Churches' circles, different names are attached to the identity of the group. In their use, among others, prominent leaders and group numbers are taken into consideration. Typical examples are either Charlotte Maxeke group, or others use numbers such as Class One, Class Two, etc. Where a category has more than one group in the Church, the Church secretary will write the names of the groups on pieces of paper and put them in a bowl. During the Official board, a Sunday school child will draw the paper which bears the name of a potential participant. At the finality, a nominee pulled out will be of the group selected to participate in the study.

(Polit and Beck 2012: 517; Neuman, 2014:252).

Before the participants could fill in the questionnaire, the aim of the study was presented, and how the Church will benefit from the study. All participants were encouraged to be fair and frank in their responses. They were all assured that their responses would remain confidential and were also assured of their anonymity, as outlined in **Appendix C** attached.

For the purpose of this study, a Group-administered questionnaire is a process where the whole group of participants completes the questionnaire simultaneously; the questionnaire is handed out to participants at the same time and consequently exposed simultaneously to the same stimulus. The questionnaire was filled out through a two-step process. The first process before the questionnaire is discussed is that all participants completed the questionnaire simultaneously; the questionnaires were handed out simultaneously and exposed to the same stimulus. As much as the participants were in the same room, they were not allowed to discuss their answers or share their views on the posed questions. Once they had finished filling in this questionnaire individually, each questionnaire was collected and recorded as individual responses.

During the filling of the questionnaire, the researcher was mainly in the background, and she limited her contribution to the completion of the questionnaire to an absolute minimum. The researcher is available to ensure that when the participants experience a problem, she can provide clarity where there are uncertainties (De Vos, 2011:189).

The second process allowed for the respondents of the individual questionnaire to be divided into four groups per Church. The groups had to discuss the questionnaire and to present a group response. For group responses, the researcher facilitated the discussion, and each group had a scribe. The role of the scribe was to complete a common questionnaire on behalf of the group while the researcher was also taking notes. The scribe did not participate in the study but completes the questionnaire by capturing views which represented the position of the whole group. At the end of the Class meeting, a final questionnaire representing the views of each group is completed and submitted to the researcher in line with De Vos *et al.*, (2011:189).

The researcher facilitated the discussion in such a way that did not allow the most vocal member of the group to take over the discussion, and she ensured that everyone was given enough chance to express their opinion and ensured that even the less talkative members of the group participated during the discussion to avoid bias results.

The attached **Appendix E** Constitutes the questionnaire responded to by the Class Leaders and Class Members.

5.4.2.2 Unstructured Interview

The interview is another method used for collecting data and providing clarity on questions that were posed in the questionnaire. An unstructured interview was conducted. Unstructured interviews are most likely to be the foundation of qualitative research simply because of the lack of structure provides 'richer' unconstrained textual data (Howitt & Cramer, 2017:386). Unstructured Interviews are flexible and do not reflect any fixed type of questions, theories, or ideas (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:36). In this type of interview, questions are not organized, and the flow of questions depends on the response received from the interviewee. Unstructured interviews are mainly used when more information is required in answers to analyze the problem further or the area of the problem which is less researched (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:37).

The unstructured type of interview allows the interviewer to ask some open-ended questions and the interviewees to express their opinion freely. This requires both the interviewer and the interviewee to be at ease because it is like a discussion or brainstorming on a given topic. The direction of the interview is determined by both the interviewee and interviewer, not pre-planned. According to Preece et al. (2015:79.), it makes it difficult to develop standard interview questions for different interviewees since each interview takes on its own format. Though it is possible to generate rich data, information, and ideas in such conversations while the level of questioning can be varied to suit the context, and the interviewer can question the interviewee more deeply on specific issues as they arise. In this research study, unstructured interviews were the primary source of data and proved to be extremely important in the context of this study.

The unstructured interview method of data collection is chosen to allow the interviewee to lead the discussion, preserve the voices, and trigger memories and the interviewee's perspective. This approach worked well and generated a wealth of data. It was not easy to control the interviewee's length because of their enthusiasm on the subject. They were mainly expressing things that they deemed important to them. Sometimes they repeat themselves in an unstructured and confusing manner every time the memory sparks up other relevant events.

Before interviews could be conducted, permission to record data was sought and granted. Interviews took place after the questionnaire session in an atmosphere that allowed mutual respect to both interviewer and interviewee.

5.4.2.3 Participation Observation

There is voluminous literature on participant observation (Dawson, 2002:17-18; Ruben & Babbie, 2005:71; De Vos, et al.2011:329; Mahloko, 2015:118; Creswell, 2016:216). In the qualitative approach, scholars like (De Vos, et al., 2011:32; Mahloko, 2015:118; Creswell, 2016:216) consider participant observation as a research procedure. During such a procedure, Dawson (2002:17-18) pointed out that a researcher is observing behavior. The author goes on to say that notes taking, doing interviews, and writing reports are key tenets of the participants' observation (Johnson & Christensen, 2019:18; Mahloko, 2015:118).

In reinforcing the above view, scholars like (Ruben & Babbie, 2005:71; Mahloko 2015:118; Creswell, 2016:216) also add that the researcher had full participation as a member without ignoring the purpose of the study and the researcher's role. For this to be done, Ruben & Babbie (2005:71) warned that the researcher must not be judgmental towards participant work methods.

In this study, the researcher visited the five Churches for five months, observing the patterns of participation from one Church to the other; she observed issues discussed with the intent to explore the role of the Class Leaders and the Classes members during Class meetings. Data was collected by observing participants while participating in their natural surroundings (Church environment). The researcher developed the participation observation schedule from the literature review study to guide the process of observation as well as to ensure consistency on what to be observed from one Church to the other. By participating within the participant's chosen culture and through careful observation, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the behavior, motivation, and attitudes of the sample under study.

In the process of participating in all these Class meetings, the researcher took precautions and was discreet to avoid interrupting the normal running of these Class meetings. As a participant observer, the researcher felt that she was better positioned because of her relationship and passion in the AME Church than any external observer or researcher to understand the actual reality behind the sequence of actions that contribute to the investigation of Class Leader ministry as the backbone

of a Church growth strategy in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Churches within Wilberforce District. This method granted the researcher access to the utmost important information that created more understanding, and the study was concluded timeously.

During the study, the researcher had the opportunity to:

- attended Class meetings and participated in different Classes at different Churches;
- attended the Church services and participated;
- participate in their worship services and she took notes;
- attend the stewards meeting where the Class Leaders were to account for the lives of their members and to hand over money collected to the stewardship and finance board;
- go with Class Leaders to visit the sick;
- observe the Class Leaders confronted with the situation where they have to reprove members;
- observe where non-members were admitted to the class meetings;
- check for nonverbal expression of feelings;
- determine who interacts with whom;
- grasp how participants communicate with each other;
- capture and understand the context within which the participants interact with each other;
- check for how much time is spent on various activities;
- Observe the Class Leaders meeting with the pastor;
- observe events that participants may be unable or unwilling to share; and
- Be aware of distortions or inaccuracies in the description provided by participants without being judgmental towards participant work method as suggested by Ruben & Babbie (2005:71).

The observation was recorded as field notes, and immediately after observation, these notes were edited in line with what Johnson and Christensen (2019: 18) suggested. It is good to correct and edit any notes that the researcher made during observation as soon as possible after they were taken while the researcher's memory is still at its best status (Johnson & Christensen, 2019:18).

5.5 ETHICS OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher had to ensure that administration activities related to the study were undertaken. She has a social, legal, or moral requirement not to harm, deceive or force participants to participate in the study. These administration activities include, amongst others, the following:

- 5.5.1 Approval from the faculty confirming that the study proposal for this study went through all the required processes as prescribed by the Faculty of Theology (NWU) was sought. It was accepted by the Subgroup Missiological Perspectives; herewith attached as **APPENDIX A**;
- 5.5.2 A letter was written to the Prelate of the 19th Episcopal District requesting written consent for the study to be undertaken within the Wilberforce District, in the East Annual Conference AME Church, herewith attached as **APPENDIX B**;
- 5.5.3 The approval to do the study was received from the Bishop on the same **APPENDIX B**;
- 5.5.4 Letters were written to participants (Class Leaders and Class Members) requesting their consent to participate in the project together with the questionnaire herewith attached as **APPENDIX C**; The participants were made aware that their participation is voluntary and explicitly expressed that they can withdraw from the study any time they so wish;
- 5.5.5 The participation observation schedule from the literature review study to guide the process of observation developed by the researcher corresponding with the normal schedule received from Class Leaders to ensure that the research does not interfere with the environment of the subjects;
- 5.5.6 Participants were not subjected to any risk, loss of self-esteem, or exposure to any hazard or chance of loss by participating in the study. All participants were informed of the ethical issues applicable to the study and were briefed about the objectives of the study and how Churches can benefit from the study once concluded, as outlined in **APPENDIX C** herewith attached;
- 5.5.7 The researcher ensured that the contents of the questionnaire responses remained anonymous; and
- 5.5.8 The researcher had to secure research ethics approval, and this is herewith attached as **APPENDIX D**.

As a pastor in the AME Church, following the approval by the Bishop to conduct the study, I forwarded the approval to the pastors of the sampled Churches and permission to conduct the study on specific dates (a proposed schedule was attached); this was to ensure that I do not interfere with the normal running of the Churches. Three weeks before the observation started, I visited the Church with the permission of the pastor. During these visits, the local pastors, with excitement and the intention to excite the congregation as well with his comments, will announce that I am in the process of conducting research towards a Doctor of Theology Degree. These pastors will further urge all Class Leaders to avail themselves for this study. They would normally advise the

whole Church, even those who are not the subject of the study, to support the study by praying for me, the Class Leaders, and the Class Members who will be participants in the study and for the successful execution of the study. The pastors gave me the opportunity to address the Church and explain the purpose of the study.

In my presentation, I indicated that I am a registered student at North-West University, Vaal Campus, and that I was in the last phase of studying towards obtaining a Doctor of Theology degree, and it's time for me to do the fieldwork. I indicated that without the fieldwork, my studies wouldn't be complete, as fieldwork is part of the study requirements. I indicated that I would be attending class meetings and Class Leaders do not have to change their schedule, I will align my schedule with their schedule, and nothing should change. I also explained the ethical aspects of the study as listed in section 5.5 above and further used the opportunity to encourage the participants to be fair and frank in their responses and assured them of their confidentiality. This assurance was also repeated during the Class Leader Ministry Classes. The reception was good and maximum participation in Class meetings was observed. I also took the opportunity to read the BRIEFS INFORMING CREATIVE PARTICIPATORY WORK-REF NO: NWU-HS- 2017-0212 letter to the congregation.

The notice of the study was put on the notice board three weeks before the fieldwork was undertaken. This notice was also read during the Church when the secretary read the Church notices three weeks before the empirical work commenced and continued to read this notice for all the Sundays I spent at each Church. These ethical requirements were important for the success of the study and reduce legal battles and errors.

5.6 CONCLUSION

During this empirical inquiry, an extensive literature has been reviewed. The research design, approach, and method related to this study have been clearly made.

The philosophical assumption and qualitative research paradigms have been placed the under radar. The sampling, sample, and sampling frame were used to select participants from the population of both Class Leaders and Class Members. The semi-structured interviews by means of a group-

administered research questionnaire and participant observation were used to collect the qualitative data. The reliability and validity of this study were also done.

The next chapter summarizes the study by presenting the findings, proposing the strategy for Church growth, and rounding off with concluding remarks and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 6

6 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter is divided into two sections; in the first section, the researcher placed focus on the empirical study that focused on the effects of the Class Leader Ministry within the Wilberforce District. In the second section, the focus was placed on the research design that this research study undertook. During the discussion of the empirical study, the researcher reviewed the literature used in Chapters 2 and 3 as well as the philosophical assumption used therein. In the section on research methodology, the researcher outlined the research methodology used, the research design, and the distribution of the data collected in the study. In this chapter, the researcher presents the research summary of responses obtained through a self-administered questionnaire. In the context of discussing the research responses, the researcher will first discuss the focus of the questionnaire used in this research study.

The focus of the questionnaire process was to explore and analyze the Class Members' and Class Leaders' perceptions, attitudes, needs, and expectations regarding the decline of membership within the Wilberforce District Churches and the AME Church in general. Responses to the questionnaire seek to determine the underlying causes of the decline in Church membership as perceived by the particular AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. The questionnaire used in this study comprises eight sections with fifty-two questions. The responses ranged from demographic questions to responses to questions relating to training, leadership, skills, Evangelism, handling New Members, Church finances, and the Class Leader/Pastor Relationship towards Church growth.

6.2 RESPONSES

This section presents the views of all participants. The questionnaire process was discussed in section 5.4.2.1 above

Section 6.2.1 to section 6.2.8 presents the responses from both individual and twenty groups (four groups per Church multiplied by five Churches). Individual responses include the demographic profiles, but the group findings do not include the demographic profile of participants because the groups are made of the same individual participants.

6.2.1 Demographical Profile

The qualitative data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire related to the demographic information, including job description, gender, age, marital status, level of education, subject attained, years of experience, and membership as a Class Leader. The survey results of the demographic profile section are shown in Figures 6.1 to Figure 6.7.

In this section, the researcher focused on the demographic information of the sampled population. Hair *et al.*, (2008:158), and Proctor (2000:157) advocated that demographical information constitutes an essential aspect of research as it provides basic information about the participants and their circumstances. The demographical information was described to be part of the general information of this study.

Section 6.2.1 was made up of eight questions that asked on the following: the job description, gender, age group, marital status, education, qualification, experience, and period in the local Church. In the subsection below (6.2.1.1 to 6.2.1.8), the researcher shows and discusses the responses as per the layout of the questionnaire used.

6.2.1.1 Job Description

This question came in two parts, the first part asked whether the participant knew of a Class Leader within the Church, and the second part, which is also the last part, asked if they knew the job description of a Class Leader as shown in **Appendix E**.

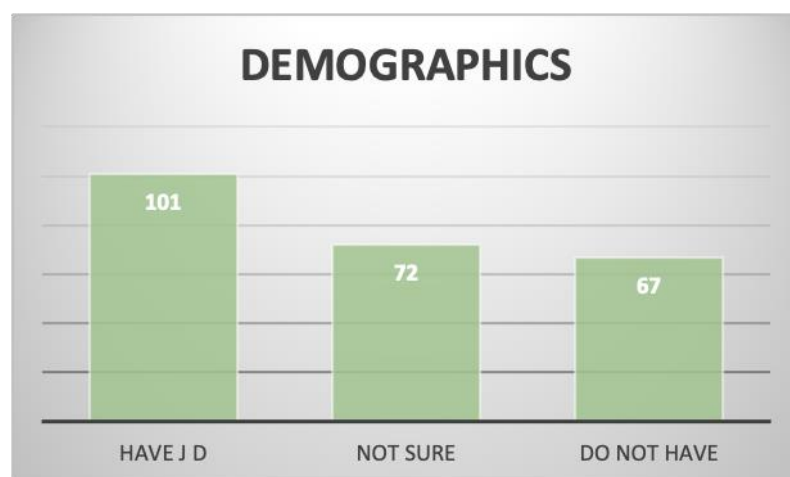


Figure 6.1: Knowledge of the Job Description

Source: Own

To solicit an answer to this question in **Appendix E**, the findings on this were presented in the form of a graph (Figure 6.1), and furthermore, the researcher will discuss the findings. Participants were asked to specify whether they were familiar with the job description of a Class Leader.

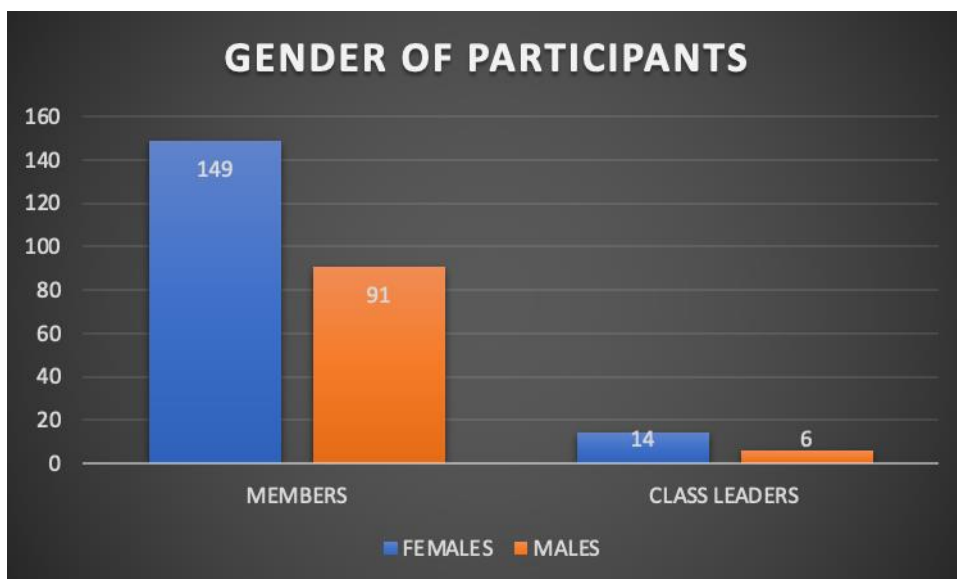
Figure 6.1 above shows that 101 (42%) of participants believe that Class Leaders do have the Job Description, while 72 (30%) are not sure if the Class Leaders have the job description or not, while of those Church members who responded to the research questionnaire, 67 (28%) think the Class Leaders do not have a job description.

6.2.1.2 Gender of Participants

To determine the gender of the 240 Church participants, the second question of the research questionnaire under the demographic profile asked the participants about their gender (**Appendix E**).

This question sought to find out the gender representation of the sample, who are both Class Leaders and members of the sampled AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. The need to determine gender responses was done to enable the researcher to make demographic inferences concerning the participants. The findings in this section are presented in a form of a graph (Figure 6.2), and furthermore, the researcher discusses the responses after the presentation of the graph.

Figure 6.2: Gender of participants



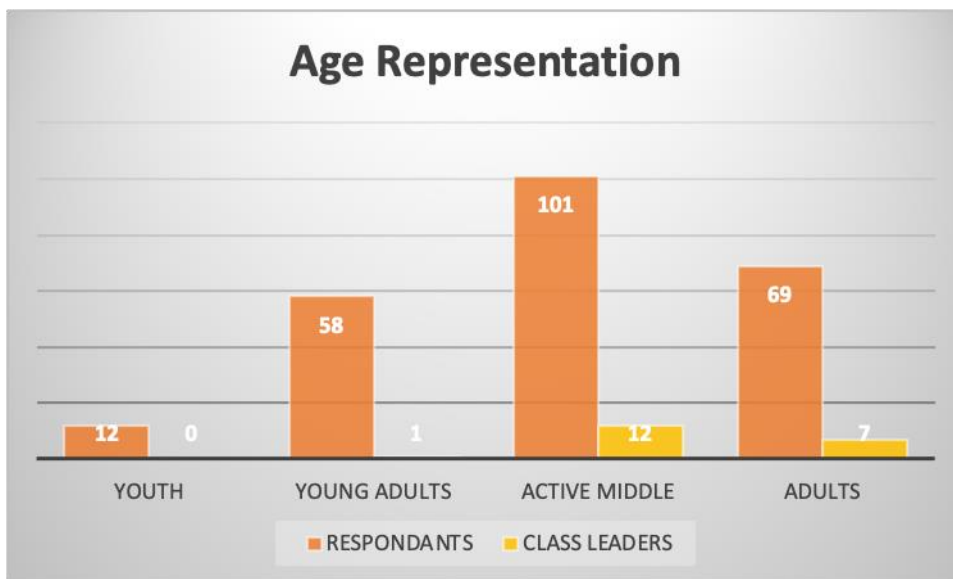
Source: Own

The qualitative data in Figure 6.2 above depicts the gender composition of the sample. Of the overall 240 (48 members x 5 Churches) participants sampled, 91 (38%) were male, and 149 (62%) were females. The 240 includes 4 Class Leaders per Church, which amounted to a total sum of 20 Class Leaders. Of those 20 (100%) Class Leaders, 14 (70%) are females, and the remaining 6 (30%) are males.

6.2.1.3 Age of Participants

Similar to gender, **Appendix E** reflects the age group of the participants. The participants were asked to specify their age groups, as shown in Figure 6.3 below. To reinforce this argument, Zindiye (2008:150) mentioned that the age distribution of participants is important in enabling the researcher to know whether participants are old or young. In supporting the above viewpoint, the researcher herein also posed this question to the participants in this study: *“What is your age group?”*

Figure 6.3: Age representation



Own: Researcher

To determine the maturity level of the participants, Figure 6.3 above indicates the age distribution of participants. A total of 12 (5%) of the participants reflect that they are under the age of 26, which represents youth; none of them were Class Leaders. The second group, composed of young adults between the age of 26 and 40, was made up of 58 (24%) members, and only one of them was a Class Leader. The third group, composed of active middle composed of persons between the age of 40 and 55 made up the majority with 101 (42%) members and 12 of them were Class Leaders. The

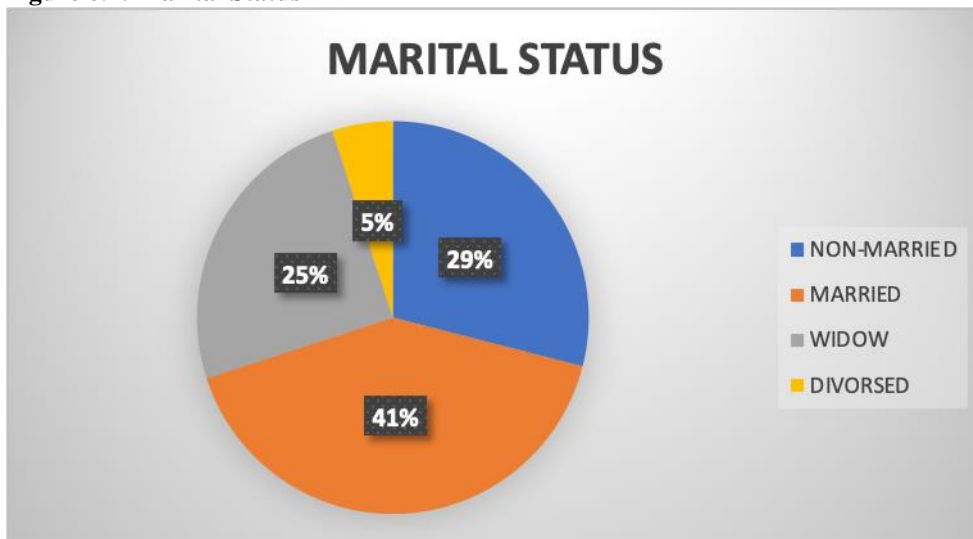
last group was made up of persons above 55 years, and this group consisted of 69 (30%) members, and 7 of them were Class Leaders.

6.2.1.4 Marital Status of Participants

This part of the questionnaire is intended to determine the marital status of the participants.

In Figure 6.4 below, it is realized that Single people account for 29%, married 41%, widows 25%, and divorced 5% of the participants.

Figure 6.4: Marital Status



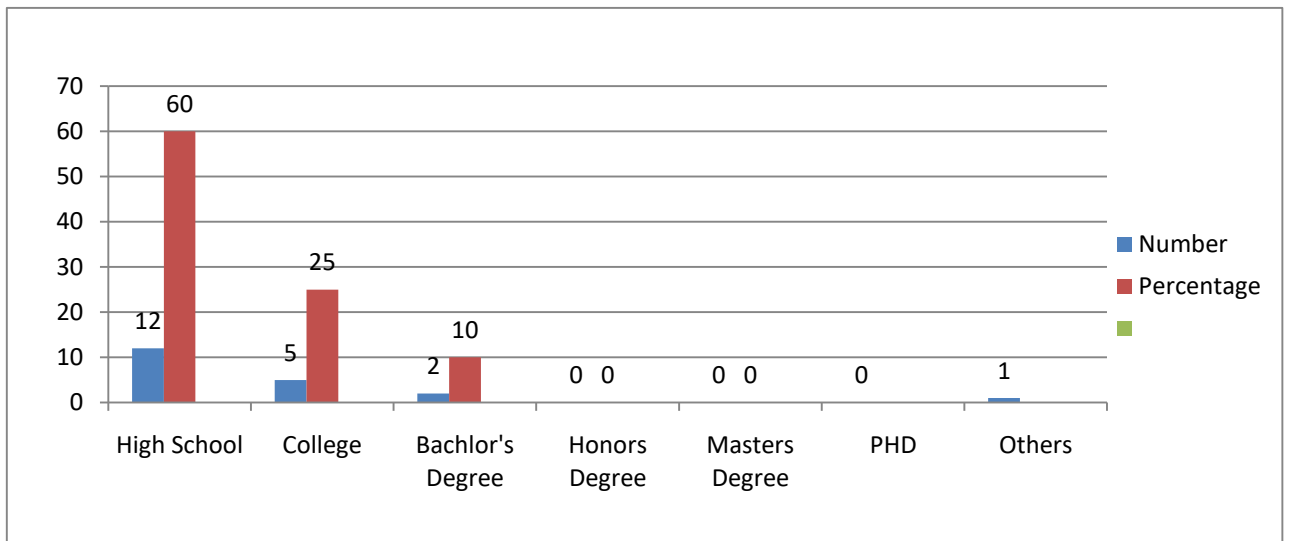
Own: Researcher

6.2.1.5 Educational Level

In this question shown in **Appendix E**, the researcher probed on the educational level of Class Leaders only.

The researcher asked participants to specify their highest educational level attained. Figure 6.5 below reflects the educational level of the participants in this study. Based on the graph (Figure 6.5), a substantial majority of participants constituted 12 (60%), have a high school education. This is followed by 5 (25%) and 2 (10%) of the participants who have attained College education diplomas and Bachelor's degrees, respectively. None of the participants have Honours, Masters or Ph.D., while the remaining one (5%) does not have any form of qualification.

Figure 6.5: Educational Level

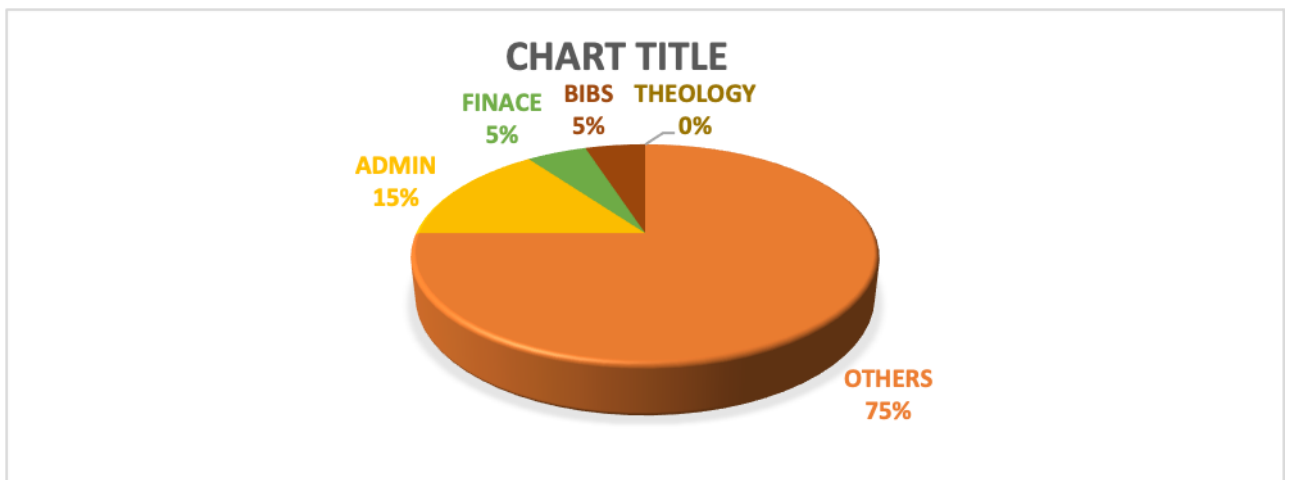


Source: Own

6.2.1.6 : The subject attained

This is a follow-up question from the above question that probed the issue of qualification. Figure 6.6 below shows the different subjects attained by these participants.

Figure 6.6: Subjects Attained



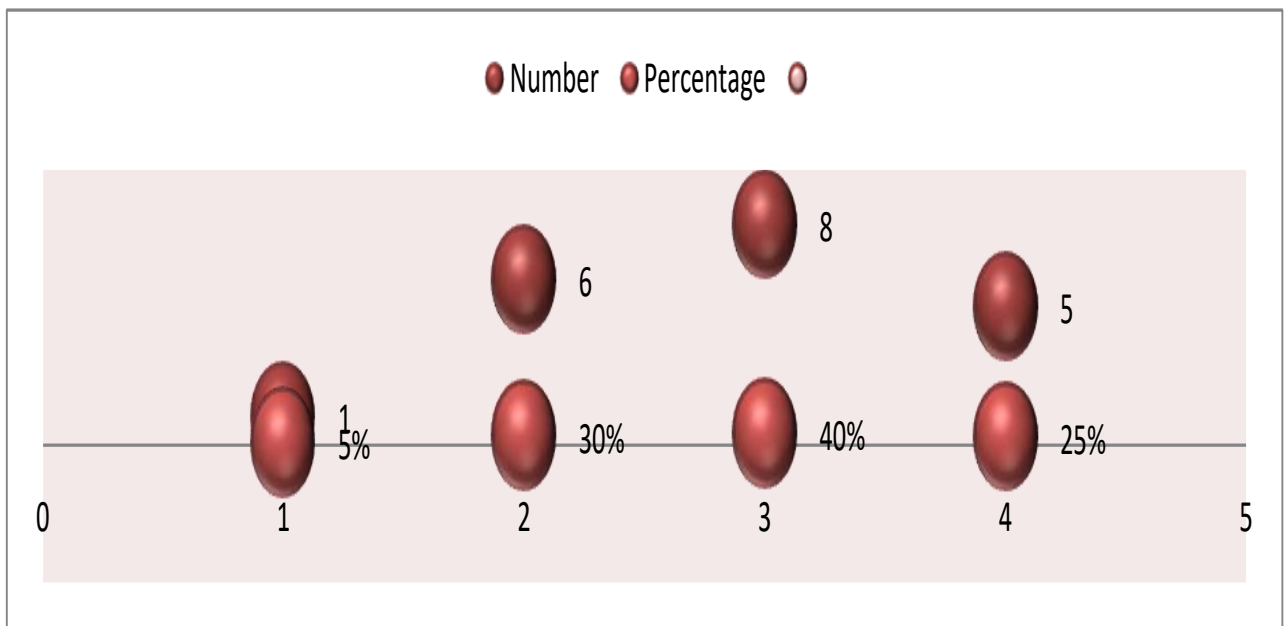
Source: Own

The data gathered in Figure 6.6 above depicts that seventy five percent (75%) of the participants have attained other qualifications, and fifteen percent (15%) of these participants have administration-related qualifications. Five percent (5%) poses the Finance qualification, while the other five percent (5%) have a Biblical related qualification 5. None of the participants poses a theology qualification.

6.2.1.7 Years of experience as a Class Leader

This question is applicable to the 20 Class Leaders only. The survey, as depicted in Figure 6.7 below, points out that of the 20 Class Leaders, only one Class Leader served for a period less than four years (5%), six (30%) have been Class Leaders for a period between four and seven (4-7), eight (40%) served as Class Leaders for a period between seven and ten years (7-10), the remaining five (25%) served for more than ten (10) years.

Figure 6.7. Years of Experience as Class Leader



6.2.1.8 Membership

The survey show that all 20 Class Leaders have been in the Church for more than 13 years.

6.2.2 TRAINING

This section looks at the training of Class Leaders and its impact on the status quo, growth, or decline in the membership of the Church. This section of the questionnaire consists of six (6) questions premised on the Class Leaders' training needs and their impact on either the growth or decline of the Church membership. Participants were requested to 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].

Flowing from question 9 (**Appendix E**) in this section, the researcher insisted on knowing whether the local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders.

N O	TABLE 6.1: TRAINING	INDIVIDUALS RESPONSES						GROUP RESPONSES					
		SA	A	DK	D	SD	T	SA	A	D K	D A	SD	T
9.	The local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders.	5	3	120	36	76	240	4	0	1	7	8	20
10.	The local Church has structured strategic planning sessions for its Class Leaders.	0	0	98	87	55	240	0	0	0	7	13	20
11.	The Church trains Class Leaders on what purpose of Class Leader Ministry is.	0	0	98	89	43	230	0	0	1	9	10	20
12.	The local Church train Class Leader in their duties and requirements in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.	0	0	27	166	37	230	0	0	0	7	13	20
13.	The local Church provides Class members with an opportunity for mentoring and coaching.	41	49	66	44	40	240	0	6	0	8	6	20
14.	The local Church trains Class Leaders to instil piety and religious commitment in members.	0	0	0	126	114	240	0	0	0	8	12	20

Table 6.1: Training

The response from the individual participants on question 9 in Table 6.1 above brings to light that of the 240 responses, five (5) participants strongly agree, and three (3) agree that the local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders. However, neutral responses were received from the one hundred and twenty (120) participants, and seventy-six (76) strongly disagreed, whilst thirty-six (36) disagreed with the afore-mentioned statement. The response from the group participants on question 9 revealed that of the twenty (20) group's responses shown in Table 6.1, only four (4) groups strongly agree that the local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders. However, only one group is not sure and chooses to have some reservations. The remaining fifteen (15) groups were in disagreement; eight (8) strongly disagreed, whilst seven (7) disagreed that the local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders.

Flowing from question 10 (**Appendix E**) in this section, the researcher insisted on knowing whether there is a structured strategic planning session at the local Church.

The response from the individual participants on question 10 revealed that none of the participants were in agreement that the local Church has structured strategic planning sessions for its Class Leaders.

Fifty-five (55) participants strongly disagreed, and eighty-seven (87) participants disagreed that there are structured strategic planning sessions at the local Church. The remaining ninety-eight (98) participants provided a neutral response.

The response from the group participants on question 10 brings to light as shown in Table 6.1, that none of the groups were in agreement with the statement, while the same Table 6.1 reflects that 13 strongly disagreed and the remaining seven (7) also disagreed that the local Church has structured strategic planning session at the local Church.

Flowing from question 11 (**Appendix E**) in this section, the researcher insisted on knowing whether the Church trains Class Leaders on what the purpose of Class Leader Ministry is.

The response from the individual participants on question 11 as depicted in Table 6.1 above reports that none of the responses were in agreement, while one hundred and thirty-two (132) were in disagreement. Of these one hundred and thirty-two (132) responses disagreeing, forty-three (43) strongly disagreed, and eighty-nine (89) disagreed. The remaining ninety-eight (98) participants decided to have their own reservations from the above view.

The response from the group participants on question 11 depicted in Table 6.1 above, brings to light that none of the responses were in agreement (0). In a nutshell, this means participants show nothing on the strongly agreed (0) and agreed (0) that the Church train Class Leaders on what the purpose of Class Leader Ministry is. Only one group remained neutral, and of the remaining nineteen (19), Ten (10) strongly disagreed, and nine (9) disagreed with the above statement.

Flowing from question 12 (**Appendix E**) in this section, the researcher insisted on knowing whether the local Church train Class Leader in their duties and requirements in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.

The response from the individual participants on question 12 as shown in Table 6.1, reflects that none of the participants were in agreement with the statement. Secondly, twenty-seven (27) of the participants reserved their comments on the matter. In contrast, thirty-seven (37) strongly disagreed, while one hundred and sixty-six (166) disagreed that local Church train Class Leaders in

their duties as a requirement in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church. To condemn this view.

The response from the group participants on question 12 depicted in Table 6.1 above, reflects that none of the participants were in agreement (0). Of the 20 groups of participants, as reflected in Table 6.1, thirteen (13) groups strongly disagreed, and the remaining seven (7) groups disagreed with the above statement.

Flowing from question 13 (**Appendix E**) in this section, the researcher insisted on knowing whether the local Church provides Class members with an opportunity for mentoring and coaching.

The response from the individual participants on question 13, in Table 6.1, revealed that ninety (90) participants were in agreement that the local Church provides Class members with an opportunity for mentoring and coaching. Of those ninety (90) responses, forty-one (41) of the participants strongly agreed, while forty-nine (49) agreed. On the contrary, forty (40) of the participants strongly disagreed, and forty-four (44) disagreed, whilst no specific responses were received from sixty-six (66) participants.

The response from the group participants on question 13 depicted in Table 6.1 above, brings to light that six (6) of the groups agreed, and none of the groups withheld their comments on whether the local Church provides Class members with an opportunity for mentoring and coaching. The remaining fourteen (14) were in disagreement, of this fourteen (14) eight (8) strongly disagreed, and the last six (6) disagreed that local Churches offer an opportunity of mentoring and coaching to their Class Leaders.

Flowing from question 14 (**Appendix E**) in this section, the researcher insisted on knowing whether the local Churches train Class Leaders to instil piety and religious commitment in members.

The response from the individual participants on question 14, Table 6.1, highlighted that none of the participants agreed that local Churches train Class Leaders to instil piety and religious commitment in members. One hundred and twenty-six (126) participants disagreed and one hundred and fourteen (114) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The response from the group participants on question 14 depicted in Table 6.1 above shows that none of the participants are in agreement with the above statement. Twelve (12) strongly disagreed,

and eight (8) disagreed with this view that local Churches train Class Leaders to instil piety and religious commitment in members.

6.2.3 LEADERSHIP

This section looks at the leadership of the Class Leader and its impact on the growth or decline in membership. Participants were requested to 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].

NO	TABLE 6.2: Leadership	INDIVIDUAL						GROUP					
		SA	A	DK	DA	SD	T	SA	A	DK	DA	SD	T
15	All Class Leaders are saved by faith in Jesus, the Christ.	19	81	54	20	66	240	0	5	1	6	8	20
16	All Class Leaders are redeemed and ignited by the gospel.	19	81	66	50	24	240	0	4	0	8	8	20
17	Class Leaders stay in constant contact with both members and the pastor.	121	105	5	6	3	240	8	12	0	0	0	20
18	Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report on class activities.	121	101	8	7	3	240	12	8	0	0	0	20
19	Class Leaders help members work out their own salvation.	19	51	46	80	44	240	0	6	0	8	6	20
20	Class Leaders have the addresses and contact details of all members of their class.	129	99	6	4	2	240	12	8	0	0	0	20
21	Class Leaders contact their members as soon as possible if they do not see them in Church.	99	99	10	19	13	230	8	12	0	0	0	20
22	Class Leaders prepare reports for the Official Board Meeting on the life of class members.	0	12	67	79	82	240	0	0	1	7	12	20

TABLE 6.2: Leadership

Flowing from question 15 - 22 (Appendix E) in this section, the researcher insisted on asking eight (8) questions to determine the nature of leadership within the selected Churches that fall within the Wilberforce District.

The response from the individual participants on question 15, Table 6.2 above highlighted that out of two hundred and forty (240) responses received, hundred (100) participants were in agreement, whilst eighty-six (86) were in disagreement.

On their own accord, fifty-four (54) participants decided not to give their opinion, as shown in Table 6.2. Of those hundred (100) responses in agreement, nineteen (19) strongly agreed, and eighty-one (81) agreed that the local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders. On the opposite, sixty-six (66) of the participants strongly disagreed, and twenty (20) disagreed with the expressed view.

The response from the group participants on question 15, in Table 6.2 above, shows that Twenty (20) responses were received as per Table 6.2, and fourteen (14) of the participants were in disagreement. Of the fourteen (14), eight (8) strongly disagreed and six (6) disagreed. Table 6.2 also depicts that five (5) of the responses were in agreement. On their own accord, only one (1) group decided not to solicit any comment.

The response from the individual participants on question 16 reveals that nineteen (19) of the participants strongly agree, and eighty-one (81) agreed that all Class Leaders are redeemed and ignited by the gospel. However, sixty-six (66) participants provided a neutral, response and twenty-four (24) strongly disagreed, whilst fifty (50) disagreed with the afore-mentioned statement.

The response from the group participants on question 16 depicted in Table 6.2 above, presents that none of the participants strongly agree, and only four (4) agreed that all Class Leaders are redeemed and ignited by the gospel. None of the participants remained indecisive. The 16 groups of participants presented a split response, of eight (8) strongly disagreed, whilst eight (8) disagreed with the afore-mentioned statement.

The response from the individual participants on question 17 disclosed that two hundred and twenty-six (226) of the participants were in agreement, while nine (9) participants remained in disagreement and the remaining five (5) of these participants decided not to provide a neutral response to this question. The breakdown of responses as depicted in Table 6.2, one hundred and twenty-one (121) strongly agreed, whilst one hundred and five (105) agreed that Class Leaders stay in constant contact with both members and the pastor in a Church setting.

The response from the group participants on question 17 depicted in Table 6.2 above, shows that of the 20 responses in Table 6.2, none show some indecisiveness (0), none strongly disagreed (0), and none agreed (0) that Class Leaders stay in constant contact with both members and the pastor in a Church setting.

All participants agreed with the statement, with eight (8) strongly agreeing and twelve (12) agreeing that Class Leaders stay in constant contact with both members and the pastor in a Church setting.

Since the monthly report is part of the Class Leaders' activities, question 18 (**Appendix E**) decided to test this proposition by investigating whether Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report on their class activities.

The response from the individual participants on question 18 in Table 6.2 brings to light that one hundred and twenty-one (121) of the participants strongly agreed, and one hundred and one (101) agreed, while eight (8) participants have their own reservations that Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report on class activities. Only a ten (10) of the participants were in disagreement with the notion that the Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report their activities.

The response from the group participants on question 18 reveals that none of the participants showed some signs of strongly disagreeing (0) or disagreeing (0) that Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report on class activities. Eight (8) participants agree that Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report on class activities, and the remaining twelve (12) strongly agree with the notion that the Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report their activities.

Over and above the monthly report depicted in Table 6.2, Question 19 of the research questionnaire in **Appendix E** scrutinized whether the Class Leaders help members to work out their own salvation.

The response from the individual participants on question 19 in Table 6.2, brings to light that out of two hundred and forty (240) responses, seventy (70) of the participants are of the opinion that Class Leaders help members to work out their own salvation. Of these seventy (70), nineteen (19) participants strongly agreed, and fifty-one (51) participants agreed respectively. One hundred and twenty-four (124) participants are in disagreement with the opinion; of these one hundred and twenty-four (124) participants, eighty (80) disagreed, and forty-four (44) strongly disagreed, and forty-six (46) remained neutral.

The response from the group participants on question 19 reveals that that out of twenty (20) groups of responses depicted in Table 6.2, neither of the participants strongly agreed, six (6) groups agreed. However, six (6) other groups strongly disagreed, while eight (8) groups disagreed that the Class Leaders help members to work out their own salvation, none of the participants deciding to be neutral.

In question 20 (Appendix E), participants were asked if Class Leaders have addresses and contact details of all members in their class.

The responses from the individual participants on question 20 as depicted on **Appendix E** reveals that two hundred and twenty-eight (228) participants were in agreement with the statement. Of the two hundred and twenty-eight (228), one hundred and twenty-nine (129) strongly agreed, and ninety-nine (99) agreed that Class Leaders have addresses and contact details of all members in their class. While six (6) decided not to express their opinion, only six (6) of the participants were in disagreement. From their disagreement viewpoint, two (2) of the participants strongly disagreed, whilst four (4) disagreed.

The responses from the group participants on question 20 revealed that all responses from 20 groups were in agreement, twelve (12) strongly agreed, and eight (8) agreed that Class Leaders have addresses and contact details of all members in their class.

In Table 6.2, those who support this view (228) outweigh their counterparts (6) who disagreed that Class Leaders have addresses and contact details of all members in their Class. There is also a common understanding amongst the groups that Class Leaders have addresses and contact details of all members in their class.

In Table 6.2, question 21, participants were requested to indicate whether Class Leaders contact their members as soon as possible when they do not see them at the Church.

The responses from the individual participants on question 21 point out that ninety-nine (99) of the participants strongly agreed and ninety-nine (99) agreed, while ten (10) of the participants remained neutral. Of the remaining thirty-two (32) participants, nineteen (19) disagreed, and thirteen (13)

strongly disagreed that Class Leaders contact their members as soon as possible if they do not see them in Church.

The response from the group participants on question 21, in Table 6.2 above, shows that out that twenty (20) of the groups of participants supported the statement, with eight (8) strongly agreeing and twelve (12) agreeing that Class Leaders contact their members as soon as possible if they do not see them in Church. For that matter, none showed some indecisiveness (0), strongly disagreed (0), and disagreed (0) that Class Leaders contact their members as soon as possible if they do not see them in Church.

The majority of individual participants (198) strongly agreed, and all groups agreed that Class Leaders do stay in constant contact with members as soon as they do not see them in Church.

On question 22 (Appendix E), participants were asked if “the Class Leaders prepare reports for the Steward Board Meeting on the life of class members”.

The response from the individual participants on question 22 on Table 6.2, indicates that twelve (12) participants agreed that Class Leaders prepare reports for the Steward Board Meeting on the life of class members. While sixty-seven (67) participants didn't know, as shown in Table 6.2, eighty-two (82) strongly disagreed, and seventy-nine (79) disagreed that Class Leaders do prepare reports for the Steward Board Meeting on the life of class members.

The response from the group participants on question 22, in Table 6.2 above revealed that twelve (12) of the participants strongly disagreed, and seven (7) disagreed that Class Leaders prepare reports for the Official Board Meeting on the life of class members. Only one group remained indecisive when asked if the Class Leaders prepare reports for the Official Board Meeting on the life of class members.

In Table 6.2 on question 22, the survey data reveals a set of participants who showed their disagreement level.

6.2.4 SKILLS

This section looks at the Church's effort to improve the skills of Church members and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership. Participants were requested to respond to each

statement by placing an "X" in the relevant box of each competency. Participants had to indicate whether you strongly agree [SA], agree [A], don't know [DK], disagree [DA], or strongly disagree [SD].

NO	TABLE 6.3: Skills	INDIVIDUAL						GROUP					
		SA	A	DK	D	SD	T	SA	A	DK	D	SD	T
23	Class Leaders developed structures for class meetings.	0	0	73	89	78	240	0	0	1	10	9	20
24	Members draw strength from Class Leader's Meetings	0	0	69	88	83	240	0	0	1	9	10	20
25	During Class Meetings, enough attention is given to discovering a member's God given talent.	0	0	0	201	39	240	0	0	0	16	4	20
26	Class Leaders know their role of communicating with both the pastor and members.	47	33	34	85	41	240	4	4	0	8	4	20
27	Class Leaders developed strategies to achieve the set goals of evangelizing and discipleship.	0	0	89	126	25	240	0	0	0	15	5	20
28	There is a need for greater member involvement in class meetings.	111	121	6	1	1	240	8	12	0	0	0	20
29	The Class Leader meets with members weekly.	10	19	98	59	54	240	0	0	0	12	8	20
30	Each Class has a maximum of 12 members in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.	127	103	5	3	2	240	9	8	1	1	1	20

TABLE 6.3: SKILLS

As shown in Table 6.3 above, the participants were questioned regarding the Church's effort to improve the skills of Church members and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership.

The problem with a deficiency in skills is multifaced and interrelated. On question 23 (Appendix E), participants were asked if “Class Leaders developed structures for Class meetings.

The responses from the individual participants on question 23, Table 6.3 shows that none of the participants were in agreement with the above; seventy-three (73) of the participants submitted a

neutral response. At the same time, seventy-eight (78) strongly disagreed, whilst eighty-nine (89) disagreed that Class Leaders developed structures for Class meetings.

The response from the group participants on question 23, in Table 6.3 reveals that none (0) of the participants were in agreement with the above statement. Out of twenty (20) participants in disagreement, ten (10) disagreed, and nine (9) strongly disagreed, while one (1) group gave a neutral response to the question that sought to find out if Class Leaders developed structures for Class meetings.

Besides the development of the structures for class meetings, on question 24 (Appendix E), participants were asked if “members draw their strength from Class Leader's Meetings”.

The responses from the individual participants on question 24 Drawing from Table 6.3, reveals that there is not a single respondent who agrees with the above statement (0). Instead, eighty-three (83) of the participants strongly disagreed, and eighty-eight (88) disagreed. The revelations from the survey point out that of two hundred and forty (240) responses, only sixty-nine (69) did not know if members draw their strength from Class Leader's Meetings.

The responses from the group participants on question 24, in line with statistics in Table 6.3, no responses were in agreement that members draw their strength from Class Leader's Meetings. Instead, ten (10) groups of the participants strongly disagreed, and nine (9) disagreed. The revelations from the survey point out that one (1) group responses were neutral when asked whether members draw their strength from Class Leader's Meetings.

On question 25 (Appendix E), participants were asked to provide answers on whether during class meetings enough attention is given to discover the members' God-given talent.

The responses from the individual participants on question 25 as presented in Table 6.3, none of the participants agreed that during Class Meetings, enough attention is given to discover a member of God's given talent. Unsurprisingly, all two hundred and forty (240) participants were in disagreement; of the two hundred and forty (240), thirty-nine (39) strongly disagreed, and two hundred and one (201) disagreed that during Class Meetings, enough attention is given to discover a member's God's given talent.

The responses from the group participants on question 25, as depicted in Table 6.3, none of the groups agreed (0) that during Class Meetings, Class Leaders give themselves enough time to discover members God's given talent. Twenty (20) of the participating groups disagreed that during Class Meetings, enough attention was given to discover a member God's given talent, of the twenty (20) groups, four (4) strongly agreed, and six-teen (16) disagreed.

In establishing whether the Class Leaders are knowledgeable about their role of communicating with both the pastor and members question 26 (Appendix E), was posed to participants.

The responses from the individual participants on question 26 revealed that eighty (80) of the participants were in agreement and one hundred and twenty-six (126) were in disagreement, and thirty-four (34) did not express their views. Of the eighty (80) participants shown in Table 6.3, forty-seven (47) strongly agreed, and thirty-three (33) agreed. On the contrary, forty-one (41) strongly disagreed, whilst eighty-five (85) disagreed.

The response from the group participants on question 26, in Table 6.3 brings to light that of the twenty (20) participating groups, twelve (12) were in disagreement, eight (8) agreed that Class Leaders know their role of communicating with both the pastor and members.

To be specific as depicted in Table 6.3, four (4) groups strongly disagreed, and eight (8) groups disagreed with the above statement. Of the remaining eight (8) groups which agreed, four (4) strongly agreed, and the other four (4) groups agreed.

In question 27 of the research questionnaire in **Appendix E**, sampled participants were asked if Class Leaders developed strategies to achieve the set goals of evangelizing and discipleship.

The response from the individual participants on question 27 revealed that none of the participants were in agreement with the above statement, and eighty-nine (89) chose to be neutral. One hundred and fifty-one (151) participants are in disagreement. As depicted in Table 6.3, of the One hundred and fifty-one participants (151) in disagreement, twenty-five (25) strongly disagreed, and one hundred and twenty-six (126) disagreed that Class Leaders developed strategies to achieve the set goals of evangelizing and discipleship.

The response from the group participants on question 27, in Table 6.3 revealed that none of the participants agreed (0) with the above statement, and none of the groups of participants chose to be neutral. Of the twenty (20) groups responding to the questionnaire, as depicted in Table 6.3, five (5) strongly disagreed, and fifteen (15) disagreed that Class Leaders developed strategies to achieve the set goals of evangelizing and discipleship.

In question 28 of the research questionnaire in Appendix E, the participants were expected to indicate whether there is a need for greater member involvement in class meetings or not.

The response from the individual participants on question 28 shown on table 6.3 above, made it clear that out of two hundred and forty (240) responses received, the overwhelming majority of the participants totalling two hundred and thirty-two (232) were in agreement, and only two (2) disagreed. On their own accord, the remaining six (6) participants decided to give a neutral response.

The **response from the group participants on question 28, in** Table 6.3 reveals that out of twenty (20) responses received, all twenty (20) participants agreed. None of the participants (0) were in disagreement.

In an effort to gauge how often a Class Leader meets with members weekly question 29 (Appendix E), was posed to participants.

The responses from the individual participants on question 29 in Table 6.3, revealed that Ten (10) strongly agreed, nineteen (19) agreed, and ninety-eight (98) remained neutral. Fifty-four (54) strongly disagreed, while fifty-nine (59) disagreed that the Class Leaders meet with members weekly. The response from the group participants on question 29, in Table 6.3, bring to light that of the twenty 20 participating groups, eight (8) strongly disagreed, and twelve (12) disagreed, while none (0) remained neutral.

In question 30, the researcher wants to establish if each Class has a maximum of 12 members in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.

The response from the individual participation on question 30: Table 6.3 shows that the overwhelming majority of two hundred and thirty (230) participants are in agreement with the

above statement. Of these two hundred and thirty (230), one hundred and twenty-seven (127) strongly agreed, and one hundred and three (103) agreed, respectively. Five (5) of the participants provided a neutral response. Three (3) participants decided to disagree, while two (2) strongly disagreed that each Class has a maximum of 12 members in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.

The response from the group participants on question 30, in Table 6.2 Table 6.3, shows that an equal split of strongly disagreed (1) and disagreed (1) that each Class has a maximum of 12 members in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church. Seventeen (17) groups were in agreement, of which nine (9) strongly agreed, and eight (8) agreed that each Class has a maximum of 12 members in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church. The remaining groups remained neutral.

6.2.5 EVANGELISM

This section looks at the Church's effort at improving evangelism and the impact this has on the growth or decline in membership. Participants were requested to 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].

NO	TABLE 6.4: EVANGELISM	INDIVIDUAL						GROUP					
		SA	A	DK	DA	SD	T	SA	A	DK	D	SD	T
31	Class Leaders pour themselves into the raising up and training of young people.	5	3	1	177	54	240	0	0	0	4	16	20
32	Class Leaders never lose contact with his/her former class members once they take over new classes.	5	4	1	177	53	240	0	0	0	4	16	20
33	Class Leaders are committed to both evangelism and discipleship in their ministry	5	5	1	179	50	240	0	0	0	4	16	20
34	Class Leaders focus on the nurture of those they help into the Kingdom.	6	7	2	167	58	240	0	0	0	4	16	20
35	Class Leaders are committed to seeing people grow in their holiness and obedience.	9	11	2	147	71	240	0	0	0	4	16	20

TABLE 6.4: EVANGELISM

For Question 31 in Appendix E, participants were required to indicate whether Class Leaders pour themselves into raising and training young people.

The responses from individual participants on question 31 in Table 6.4, reveal that five (5) participants strongly agreed, while three (3) agreed that Class Leaders pour themselves into the raising up and training of young people. Only one (1) of the 240 participants provided a neutral answer. Instead, the overwhelming majority of two hundred and thirty-one (231) participants are in disagreement that Class Leaders pour themselves into the raising up and training of young people. To reinforce this argument, fifty-four (54) of the participants strongly disagreed, while one hundred and seventy-seven (177) disagreed that Class Leaders pour themselves into raising and training young people.

In the response from the group participants on question 31, in Table 6.4, none of the participants (0) strongly agreed (0) or agreed (0) that Class Leaders pour themselves into the raising up and training of young people. Sixteen (16) of the twenty (20) groups of participants strongly disagreed, while the remaining four (4) groups disagreed that Class Leaders pour themselves into the raising up and training of young people.

Question 32 wants to establish whether Class Leaders do or do not lose contact of their former class members once they take over new classes,

The response from the individual participation on question 32: Nine (9) participants were not in agreement with this statement. Five (5) participants strongly agreed, while four (4) agreed that Class Leaders never lose contact with former Class members once they take over new classes. Of the two hundred and forty (240) participants, fifty-three (53) strongly disagreed, and 177 disagreed. At the same, only one (1) response decided to be neutral.

The response from the group participants on question 32, in Table 6.4, none of the participants were in agreement (0) either strongly agreed (0) or agreed (0) that Class Leaders never lose contact with his/her former class members once they take over new classes. All groups disagreed (20) that Class Leaders never lose contact with his/her former class members once they take over new classes. To be specific sixteen (16) of the groups of participants strongly disagreed, while four (4) disagreed that Class Leaders never lose contact with his/her former class members once they take over new classes.

Being at the helm of the AME Church's activities, question 33 (Appendix E) asked participants if Class Leaders are committed to both evangelism and discipleship in their ministry.

The response from the individual participation on question 33: Out of two hundred and twenty (240) answers provided in Table 6.4, only 1 participant decided to withhold the response. There is an equal split on those agreeing with the statement, varying on the level of agreement. Five (5) of the participants strongly agreed while another five (5) agreed that Class Leaders are committed to both evangelism and discipleship in their ministry.

Besides this, Table 6.4 depicts that two hundred and twenty-nine (229) participants are not in agreement with the statement "Class Leaders are committed to both evangelism and discipleship in their ministry. Fifty (50) of the two hundred and twenty-nine (229) strongly disagreed while the remaining one hundred and seventy-nine (179) disagreed that Class Leaders are committed to both evangelism and discipleship in their ministry.

The response from the group participants on question 33, in Table 6.4, none of the groups agreed (0) either strongly agreed (0) or agreed (0) that Class Leaders are committed to both Evangelism and discipleship in their ministry. All twenty (20) groups disagreed that Class Leaders are committed to both Evangelism and discipleship in their ministry. Sixteen (16) of the twenty (20) participating groups strongly disagreed while the remaining four (4) disagreed that Class Leaders are committed to evangelism and discipleship in their ministry.

Class Leaders focus on the nurture of those they help into the Kingdom, asked question 34 of the research questionnaire reflected in Appendix E.

The response from the individual participation on question 34: Table 6.4 shows that thirteen (13) of the participants were in agreement, while two hundred and twenty-five (225) totally disagreed. Only two (2) of the participants didn't express their view. To be specific fifty-eight (58) of the participants strongly disagreed, and one hundred and sixty-seven (167) disagreed.

The responses from the group participants on question 34, in Table 6.4 show that twenty (20) of the participants were in disagreement. At the same time, sixteen (16) strongly disagreed, and four (4)

disagreed that Class Leaders focus on the nurture of those they help into the Kingdom. None of the participants expressed their view (0), strongly disagreed (0), and disagreed (0).

On question 35 (Appendix E), participants were asked if “Class Leaders are committed to seeing people grow in their holiness and obedience”.

The responses from the individual participants on question 35 revealed that nine (9) strongly agreed and eleven (11) agreed, while two (2) of the participants gave a neutral answer to this question. Two Hundred and eighteen (218) participants as reflected in Table 6.4 expressed their disagreement.

Of the Two Hundred and eighteen (218) participants, seventy (71) strongly disagreed, and one hundred and forty-seven (147) disagreed that Class Leaders are committed to seeing people grow in their holiness and obedience.

The responses from the group participants on question 35, in Table 6.4, revealed that all twenty (20) groups disagreed with the view that Class Leaders are committed to seeing people grow in their holiness and obedience; sixteen (16) strongly disagreed, while the other four (4) disagreed and none of the groups strongly agreed (0), agreed (0), while none remained mum (0).

6.2.6 NEW MEMBERS

This section looks at the impact which dealing with new members has on the growth or decline in the Church's membership. Participants were requested to 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].

NO	TABLE 6.5: NEW MEMBERS	SA	A	DK	D A	S D	T	SA	A	D K	D	S D	T
36	Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class.	169	66	5	0	0	240	16	4	0	0	0	20
37	Church members that joined the local Church from other denominations assigned to classes feel welcomed.	169	66	5	0	0	240	16	4	0	0	0	20
38	Our Class Leaders have a strategy to draw members from other denominations.	0	13	89	66	72	240	0	0	1	9	10	20
39	There are no class activities causing members to leave the local Church.	0	86	23	67	63	239	0	16	0	4	0	20
40	Members of the local Church have left for greener pastures due to a lack of activities in the classes.	55	42	77	32	34	240	4	4	0	6	6	20
41	The structure and size of the classes present a possibility for growth.	98	95	7	25	11	236	12	8	0	0	0	20
42	The Class Leaders of Churches in the vicinity of our Church create a situation for migration from our Church	33	65	34	49	59	240	0	16	0	4	0	20

TABLE 6.5: NEW MEMBERS

The participants were required to affirm that Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class, as shown in question 36 (Appendix E).

The response from the individual participation on question 36: Table 6.5 depicts that the overwhelming majority of the participants affirm that new members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class. Two hundred thirty-five (235) of these participants are in agreement with this statement. To reinforce this point, one hundred and sixty-nine (169) of the participants strongly agreed, while sixty-six (66) agreed that Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class. Given this overwhelming majority of responses, only five (5) of the participants were not sure, whilst none of them were in disagreement (0) that Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class.

The responses from the group participants on question 36, in Table 6.5 depicts that the overwhelming majority of the new members agree (20) with the view that Church members that

join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class. To reinforce this point, sixteen (16) of the participants strongly agreed, while four (4) agreed that Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class. Given this overwhelming majority of the responses, none of the participants were hesitant to express their views. In contrast, none disagreed (0) that Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class.

In question 37, the research questionnaire reflected in Appendix E, the researcher asked if Church members that joined the local Church from other denominations assigned to classes feel welcomed.

The response from the individual participation on question 37 revealed that of the 240 participants, the researcher solicited responses to the question, Table 6.5 indicates that Sixty-six (66) agreed and one hundred and sixty-nine (169) strongly agreed with the above statement. Only five (5) of the participants were indecisive, while none disagreed that **Church** members that joined the local Church from other denominations assigned to classes feel welcomed.

The responses from the group participants on question 37, in Table 6.5 revealed that of the 20 groups the researcher solicited responses, sixteen (16) strongly agreed, and four (4) agreed with the above statement. None of the participants were in disagreement, either strongly disagreed (0) or disagreed (0), while none (0) were not sure.

Question 38 poses a question of despondence whether Our Class Leaders have a strategy to draw members from other denominations, as reflected in Appendix E.

The response from the individual participation on question 38: Table 6.5 displayed that none of the participants strongly agreed (0), thirteen (13) agreed and eighty-nine (89) were not sure. The remaining one hundred and thirty-eight (138) participants were brave enough to respond, seventy-two (72) strongly disagreed, and sixty-six (66) disagreed that the Class Leaders have a strategy to draw members from other denominations.

The responses from the group participants on question 38, in Table 6.5 displayed that none of the new members in agreement (0), neither strongly agreed (0) nor agreed (0) that their Class Leaders have a strategy to draw members from other denominations. While only one (1) group chose not to

air one's comment, of the remaining nineteen (19) responses, ten (10) strongly disagreed, and the remaining nine (9) disagreed that their Class Leaders have a strategy to draw members from other denominations.

On question 39 (Appendix E), participants were asked if “there were any class activities causing members to leave the local Church.

The response from the individual participants on question 39 revealed that none of the participants strongly agreed (0), eighty-six (86) agreed, and twenty-three (23) decided to withhold their responses. As depicted in Table 6.5, Sixty-three (63) participants strongly disagreed and sixty seven (67) disagreed with the above statement.

The responses from the group participants on question 39, in Table 6.5, revealed that none of the participants strongly agreed (0), and sixteen (16) of them agreed that there are no class activities causing members to leave the local Church. None of the groups strongly disagreed (0), and no group decided to be neutral (0), while four (4) of them disagreed with the above statement.

On question 40 (Appendix E), participants were asked if "Members of the local Church have left the local AME Church for greener pastures due to a lack of activities in the classes.

The responses from the individual participants on question 40 revealed that seventy-seven (77) participants remained neutral, as reflected in Table 6.5, fifty-five (55) of them strongly agreed, and forty-two (42) agreed that members of the local Church have left for greener pastures due to a lack of activities in the classes. In contrast, sixty-six (66) of these participants were in disagreement that the members of the local Church have left for greener pastures due to a lack of activities in the classes.

The responses from the group participants on question 40, indicates that of the 20 groups responded as shown in Table 6.5, there is an equal split of responses on strongly agree (4), and agree (4), as well as on strongly disagree (6), and disagree (6) on the view that members of the local Church have left for greener pastures due to lack of activities in the classes.

Linked to the Church activities, question 41 of the research questionnaire, reflected in Appendix E asked the participants if the structure and size of the classes present a possibility for growth.

The responses from the individual participants on question 41 revealed that one hundred and ninety-three (193) of the participants support the statement, where ninety-eight (98) strongly agree, and ninety-five (95) agree that the structure and size of the classes present a possibility for growth. Thirty-six (36) of the participants did not support this statement, broken down as follows: eleven (11) strongly disagreed, and twenty-five (25) disagreed. Seven (7) of these participants did not know.

The responses from the group participants on question 41, in Table 6.5, indicated that Twelve (12) groups strongly agreed, and eight (8) agreed that the structure and size of the classes present a possibility for growth. None of the groups strongly disagreed (0) and disagreed (0)—none of the groups decided to be indecisive (0).

On question 42 (Appendix E), participants were asked if “the Class Leaders of Churches in the vicinity of our Church create a situation for migration from our Church”.

The response from the individual participants on question 42 as depicted in Table 6.5 above reveals that thirty-three (33) of them strongly agreed, and sixty-five (65) agreed that the Class Leaders of Churches in the vicinity of our Church create a situation for migration from our Church. Fifty-nine (59) strongly disagreed, and forty-nine (49) disagreed with the above statement. The remaining thirty-four (34) decided to remain neutral.

The response from the group participants on question 42, in Table 6.5 shows that sixteen (16) groups agree that Class Leaders of Churches in the vicinity of our Church create a situation for migration from our Church. Nobody strongly agreed (0), while four (4) groups disagreed.

6.2.7 CHURCH FINANCES

This section looks at the impact which Church finances have on the growth or decline in the Church's membership. Participants were requested to 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 [D], or strongly disagree [SD].

NO	TABLE 6.6: CHURCH FINANCES	SA	A	DK	DA	SD	T	SA	A	DK	D	SD	T
43	The Class Leaders collect Church dues from members at their homes.	176	43	7	9	5	240	16	4	0	0	0	20
44	Members are happy with Class Leaders collecting money from homes.	23	27	33	69	88	240	0	0	2	9	9	20
45	Class Leaders demand money from members.	106	121	1	6	6	240	8	12	0	0	0	20
46	The Class Leaders provide training on the importance of giving with joy.	0	0	34	107	99	240	0	0	2	9	9	20
47	The Class Leaders are trained on how to collect and receive monies from members.	0	0	34	105	101	240	0	0	2	9	9	20

TABLE 6.6: CHURCH FINANCES

Regarding the finances, question 43 in Appendix E asked if the Class Leaders collect Church dues from members at their homes.

The responses from the individual participants on question 43 revealed on Table 6.6 highlights that the overwhelming majority of the participants were in agreement that Class Leaders collect Church dues from members at their homes, while a small portion of them were in disagreement. To reinforce this argument further, one hundred and seventy-six (176) strongly agreed, and forty-three (43) agreed that the Class Leaders collect Church dues from members at their homes.

Although 7 of the participants decided to be neutral, of the remaining fourteen (14), five (5) strongly disagreed while nine (9) disagreed that the in the vicinity of their Churches, Class Leaders of Churches create a situation for migration from our Church.

The responses from the group participants on question 43, in Table 6.6 highlight that the overwhelming majority (20) of the participants agreed that Class Leaders collect Church dues from members at their homes. To reinforce this argument further, from the majority of the responses, sixteen (16) groups strongly agreed, and four (4) groups agreed that the Class Leaders collect Church dues from members at their homes. None of them (0) of the groups were undecided.

On question 44 (Appendix E), participants were asked if "Members are happy with Class Leaders collecting money from homes".

The responses from the individual participants on question 44 as depicted on Table 6.6 depict that twenty-three (23) strongly agree and twenty-seven (27) agreed. Whilst thirty-three (33) of the participants remains indecisive; however, eighty-eight (88) strongly disagreed, and sixty-nine (69) disagreed that members are happy with Class Leaders collecting money from homes.

The response from the group participants on question 44, in Table 6.6 shows that none of the responses (0) agreed that members are happy with Class Leaders collecting money from homes. Instead, only two (2) groups were not sure, while eighteen (18) disagreed with the above statement. Of the eighteen groups, nine (9) strongly disagreed and the other nine (9) disagreed with the statement.

Regardless of the above situation, question 45 intended to determine whether the Class Leaders demand money from members.

The response from the individual participants on question 45 revealed that the overwhelming majority of the participants agreed (227) that Class Leaders demand money from members. To reinforce this, Table 6.6 show that one hundred and six (106) of the participants strongly agreed and one hundred and twenty-one (121) agreed that Class Leaders demand money from members. At the same, out of 240 responses received, only one (1) remains neutral. However, there is an equal split of Six (6) responses for strongly disagree and Six (6) disagree.

The response from the group participants on question 45, the overwhelming majority of the group responses (20) in Table 6.6 support the statement that Class Leaders demand money from members. To be specific eight (8) groups of the participants strongly agreed while twelve (12) agreed that Class Leaders demand money from members, and none of the groups disagreed with this statement.

In question 46, Appendix E, participants were asked if Class Leaders provide training on the importance of giving with joy.

The response from the individual participants on question 46 revealed that none of the participants were in agreement with the above statement, and Thirty-four (34) of them also chose to be neutral. Two hundred six (206) participants are in disagreement, as depicted in Table 6.6, to be specific, ninety-nine (99) strongly disagreed, and one hundred and seven (107) disagreed that Class Leaders provide training on the importance of giving with joy.

The response from the group participants on question 46, in Table 6.6, none of the participants (0) agreed with the above statement. An equal split of eighteen (18) groups responded as follows: Nine (9) strongly disagreed, and the other nine (9) disagreed that Class Leaders provide training on the importance of giving with joy. The remaining two (2) groups decided to be neutral.

Besides the training and development of the Class Leaders on the importance of giving with joy in local Church settings, Question 47 also enquired whether there was a training session that integrated the collection and receivable of monies from fellow members.

The response from the individual participants on question 47 drawing from Table 6.6, none of the solicited responses were in agreement (0) that the Class Leaders are trained on how to collect and receive monies from members. Added to this, thirty-four (34) of the participants also remained indecisive and neutral. The overwhelming majority (206) of the participants did not support the statement, where one hundred and one (101) strongly disagreed, and one hundred and five (105) disagreed with the imposed question.

The response from the group participants on question 47, Drawing from Table 6.6 shows that none of the participants agreed (0) with the above statement, which means that neither of the participants strongly agreed (0) nor agreed (0) that the Class Leaders are trained on how to collect and receive

monies from members. Additionally, only two (2) groups decided to remain neutral. The rest disagreed with this statement; nine (9) strongly disagreed, and the remaining nine (9) disagreed.

6.2.8 CLASS LEADER/PASTOR RELATIONSHIP

This section looks at the impact which the Class Leader/pastor relationship has on the growth or decline in the Church's membership. Participants were requested to 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].

NO	TABLE 6.7: CLASS LEADER/PASTOR RELATIONSHIP	INDIVIDUAL						GROUP					
		SA	A	DK	DA	SD	T	SA	A	DK	DA	SD	T
48	The local Church provides shared leadership between Class Leaders and the pastor.	10	21	34	98	71	234	0	3	1	8	8	20
49	The local Church encourages the servant leadership style in the Church.	3	8	41	124	64	240	0	0	1	9	10	20
50	The Church Doctrine and Discipline encourages a good relationship between both pastor and Class Leaders	98	102	0	21	19	240	8	12	0	0	0	20
51	The local Church provides training on the Class Leader/pastor relationship.	0	5	67	103	65	240	0	0	4	8	8	20
52	The local Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationship.	0	0	58	143	39	240	0	0	0	12	8	20

TABLE 6.7: CLASS LEADER-PASTOR RELATIONSHIP

In question 48 (Appendix E), the researcher asked if the local Church provides shared leadership between Class Leaders and pastor.

The response from the individual participants on question 48 in Table 6.7, revealed that thirty-one (31) of the participants were in agreement, and one hundred and sixty-nine (169) were in disagreement, and thirty-four (34) decided to be neutral.

Of the thirty-one (31) responses that support the statement, ten (10) strongly agreed, and twenty-one (21) agreed that local Churches provide shared leadership between Class Leaders and pastor. On the contrary, seventy-one (71) strongly disagreed, and ninety-eight (98) disagreed.

The response from the group participants on question 48, in Table 6.7, revealed that only three (3) groups of participants agreed, none of the groups strongly agreed with the above statement as shown in Table 6.7, while the one (1) group of participants decided to be neutral. Eight (8) disagreed, and the other eight (8) strongly disagreed that the local Church provides shared leadership between Class Leaders and the pastor.

The local Church encourages the servant leadership style in the Church, asked in question 49 in Appendix E

The response from the individual participants on question 49 as depicted in Table 6.7 shows that eleven (11) participants are in agreement, three (3) of them strongly agreed and eight (8) agreed. The other one hundred and eighty-eight (188) of the responses received did not support the statement. To be specific, sixty-four (64) strongly disagreed, and one hundred and twenty-four (124) disagreed that the local Church encourages the servant leadership style in the Church. The remaining forty-one (41) did not know.

The **response** from the group participants on question 49, in Table 6.7 shows that none of the responses agree (0), and one (1) group did not know. Of the remaining nineteen (19) groups responses received, ten (10) strongly disagreed, and nine (9) disagreed that the local Church encourages the servant leadership style in the Church.

In question 50, the researcher asked if the Church Doctrine and Discipline encourage a good relationship between both pastor and Class Leaders.

The response from the individual participants on question 50, **Appendix E**, revealed that Ninety-eight (98) of the participants strongly agreed, as reflected in Table 6.7, one hundred and two (102) of the participants agreed that the Church Doctrine and Discipline encourage a good relationship

between both pastor and Class Leaders. Yet, forty (40) of the participants do not support this notion; of the forty (40), nineteen (19) strongly disagreed, and twenty-one (21) disagreed.

The response from the group participants on question 50, indicates that eight (8) groups of the participants strongly agreed, and twelve (12) agreed with the above view, as reflected in Table 6.7 above. None of the group disagreed that the Church Doctrine and Discipline encourage a good relationship between both pastor and Class Leaders.

In question 51 in Appendix E, the researcher asked that the local Church provides training on the Class Leader/pastor relationship.

The response from the individual participants on question 51 revealed that none of the participants strongly agreed, but only five (5) of the participants agreed. Sixty-seven (67) of the participants remained neutral, while the overwhelming majority (168) of the participants disagreed with the statement. Of those one hundred and sixty-eight (168) responses received sixty-five (65) strongly disagreed and one hundred and three (103) disagreed that the local Church provides training on the Class Leader/pastor relationship.

The response from the group participants on question 51, in Table 6.7, revealed that none of the participants agreed that the local Church provides training on the Class Leader/pastor relationship. All sixteen (16) groups disagreed that the local Church provides Class Leader/pastor relationship training, while the remaining four (4) groups provided a neutral response.

The local Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationship, as asked in question 52 in Appendix E.

The response from the individual participants on question 52 revealed that none of the participants agree that the local Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationships. In fact, one hundred and eighty-two (182) of the participants were not in agreement with the statement. To reinforce this standpoint, thirty-nine (39) of the participants strongly disagreed, and one hundred and forty-three (143) disagreed that the local Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationships, while the remaining fifty-eight (58) did not know that the local Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationship.

The response from the group participants on question 52, revealed that none of the participants agreed (0) that the local Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationship. In fact, of the 20 groups of responses. Table 6.7 above survey results depict that eight (8) strongly disagreed, and the remaining twelve (12) groups disagreed with the above statement.

CHAPTER 7

7 FINDINGS, SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION AND THE POSSIBLE FUTURE STUDIES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter 6, the researcher presented the research summary of responses. This chapter presents the findings, Summary of the study, recommendations, conclusion and remarks and proposals for future research.

7.1 FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate how the Class Leader Ministry can become the backbone of an appropriate strategy for Church growth in the AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. A qualitative research method was used for the study.

This chapter presents the empirical findings of this study as envisaged in Section 1.7.2 in Chapter One. As outlined in the questionnaire, the presentation of findings starts with the job description and ends with Class Leaders-pastor relationships. These findings will be linked to the discussion in chapters one to six.

7.1.1 *Job Description*

The demographic data on Job Description is shown in Figure 6.1 (in Chapter 6 above); a stereotypical view is usually placed that Class members do not know the job description of a Class Leader, especially in the AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. In the context of this study, a question to ask is: “*Will this stereotype not be a generalization but a valid comment*”? Looking at the summary of the survey results (Figure 6.1), it is clear that 101 (42%) of participants believe that the Class Leaders have job descriptions. In comparison, 72 (30%) are unsure if Class Leaders have job descriptions or not, while of those Church members who responded to the research questionnaire, 67 (28%) think Class Leaders do not have job descriptions.

This suggests that the stereotype is not only a generalization but a valid comment. Consistently with this, Kroeger & Evans (2002:228) believe that David called all the princes of Israel, the priests, and Levites so that they could understand the order of the work and services of the Temple. He

eventually put systems of worship in place in the Temple. Scholars like Gill concluded that most Class Leaders seek a calling and not necessarily a job (Gill, 2011:188).

As shown in Chapter 2 (2.3.5.5.1), David did not just give people work. He assigned Levites to specific duties; that way, he was able to measure performance. It is important for the Class Leaders to be given specific duties as described in the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church as discussed in section 4.1.2.8 to section 4.1.2.17. These duties must also be understood by members. Looking at the results, there is an existing job description for Class Leaders, but not all members know this fact. The AME Church is responsible for ensuring that Class Leaders and Church members know about the existence of job descriptions for Class Leaders and these Class leaders should equally understand what is expected of them. Annual training on the job description or duties of Class Leaders should be mandatory upon the appointment of members onto the Class leaders.

7.1.2 Gender, Age, and Marital Status

This part of the questionnaire was intended to determine the participants' marital status, Age and Gender. The need to determine participants' marital status was done to enable the researcher to make demographic inferences concerning the participants. To reinforce this, in the passages in Genesis 2, as discussed in section 2.3.1.4 of chapter 2, both marriage and family units have been deemed the foundation of many institutions like the Church and its ministries.

Of those Class Leaders who responded, as shown in Figure 6.4 (in Chapter 6 above), it is realized that single people account for 29%, married 41%, widows 25%, and divorced 5% of participants. The survey results suggest that most participants are married, which is very important for a Church setting in light of I Timothy 3:10-13 and Titus 1.

These findings suggest that males are under-represented as Class Leaders. Figure 6.2 Survey results indicate that females are more involved in the Class Leader Ministry activities than their male counterparts. This means we have more women (149) than men (91) representing the Churches in this survey, assuming that there are more females in the Church than males. This assumption can be confirmed by scholars like de Vaus & McAllister, who said parents socialize the community to believe that Church is good for mothers as primary caregivers (de Vaus & McAllister, 1987:473). According to Trzebiatowska & Bruce (2012:112), religious institutions afford females with an

opportunity to be in touch with their religious rituals, belief, and self-reflections. This is good for their spirituality.

Regardless of race, gender, or social/economic status or for who they are, Paul is informing the members of the Church that they have a responsibility (as Christians) to accept others, with all their differences, for who they are. (Gill, 2011:180). The determination of age has always been important. Scholars like Kroeger & Evans (2002:229), in chapter 2 (2.3.5.5.2), indicate that David ordered that those at the age of twenty be counted, even those that were given minor jobs. In Figure 6.3, the surveyed data reveals a group of active middle as comprising of persons between the age of 40 and 55. This group constitute a majority with 101 members, and 12 of them are Class Leaders. The survey reveals that people between the age of 40 and 55 are more active and constitute the majority in the AME sampled Churches.

Looking at the above results, it is clear that young people account only for 5% of the sampled population. Notably, the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, as indicated in section 4.1 above, does not allow members below the age of eighteen to be appointed officers. It is therefore not surprising that the participation of persons between the age of 19 and 39 is also lower than that of persons above the age of forty in this study. The introduction of more young people, especially those between the age of 19 and 39, in this Ministry is extremely important for the Church to continue to grow through young, dynamic, and strong leaders.

7.1.3 Education levels and Subjects Attained

From the finding in Figure 6.5, the survey results summarised show that the respondents' educational background varies with matric (60%), College Certificate (25%), and Bachelor's Degree (10%).

The data gathered in *Figure 6.6* above depicts a sad reality of this study, except Theology most members pursued different qualifications. A total of 70% of the participants have pursued qualifications other than Theology. In comparison, qualifications in administration (15%), finance (5%), and Biblical qualification (5%) have been less considered by the participants.

In light of this negative reaction on the education level, as indicated in Section 6.2.1.5 above, for Class Leaders as Church leaders, Gill (2011:184) points out that their varied educational levels highlight the need for strong leadership and a focused training curriculum for Church Leaders.

This study indicates that 65% of the participants currently do not have post-high school qualifications. This is worrisome, looking at the suggestion by Katozai (2005:66) that knowledge is a chief weapon in the hand of a leader. He continues to emphasize the fact that leaders must continue to equip themselves. We also learn from Adeniji (2008:24), as discussed in chapter 2 (2.3.2.4), that qualifications are important. God sent Jethro to counsel Moses to delegate work to qualified personnel. The Class Leaders qualification level has dropped from that of being a qualified teacher to most of the Class Leaders possessing high school qualifications. The interview results, as shared in in section 4.3.3.3.1, established that Classes were in the past led mainly by persons holding a teaching qualification. It was also revealed that Church members were elected to office based on their skills, expertise, and academic qualifications.

7.1.4 Years of experience as Class Leaders and their membership in the AME Local Churches

In Figure 6.7 above, the surveyed results show that 8 participants served as Class Leaders for a period between 7 and 10, while 5 participants served as Class Leaders for more than ten (10) years. This paints a picture that most Class Leaders should have experience in their work by looking at the number of years in service. The findings from the survey show that all participants have been in the Church for more than 13 years. None of the Class Leaders is not qualified to hold a Class Leader position. The results are consistent with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.

In view of this study, there is a significant relationship between their position as Class Leaders and the length of their membership at their respective AME Local Churches. Rothwell (2005: xvii) believes that experienced leaders have the capacity and requisite wisdom to do the work. Experience is important for those to be sent. Chapter 2, section 2.3.5.5.1, emphasizes the importance of Jesus teaching his disciples before sending them. Jesus ensured that they gained experience by taking advantage of real-life situations to explain complex doctrinal issues. Wessel and Strauss (2010:245; 356-357) emphasize that Christ knew that theory without practice would have little lasting value.

7.1.5 *Training*

This second set of questions following demographic profile questions was intended to obtain information on the training of the Class Leaders. These questions were linked to the objective of understanding **the place and role of Class Leaders and their Ministry** in sections 2.1 and 2.2 above.

The six (6) questions of the research questionnaire were asked in this category pertaining to the training for Class Leaders, structured strategic planning, the purpose of the Church, duties, and roles of the Class Leader, mentoring and coaching, as well as the ability to instil piety and religious commitment in members.

The results of the questions summarized in Table 6.1 above show that:

- The local Church does not train Class Leaders in their purpose, duties, and requirements in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.
- There is a mixed feeling on whether the local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders.
- Individually, participants presented mixed reactions to the question on mentoring and coaching. On the contrary, most groups disagreed that Class members are provided an opportunity for monitoring and coaching as necessary conditions to train and develop Class Leaders. Published Church material suggests that the general idea is to develop and conduct training programmes that stimulate character development (AME Church, 2017:148).

Mature followers of Jesus (Class Leaders) were trusted with leading and training others in the way of Jesus (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The overwhelming majority of responses from both groups and individuals present a lack of training for Class Leaders in several aspects. Based on the surveyed results on training for both groups and individuals, the findings of this study reveal a deficiency in Class Leader's training. The surveyed data reveals that all participants (240) in groups and out of groups disagreed with the notion that the local Churches train Class Leaders to instil piety and religious commitment in members.

It is important for the pastors to train Class Leaders before they can assign them to Classes. This is clear in Chapter 2, (2.3.2.6), where Jethro ensures that Moses imparts skills to the leaders before appointing them. The training is visible not only in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament. Chapter 2 (2.4.1) indicates that Jesus trained his twelve disciples before he could send them. In the same chapter 2 (2.3.2.6) above, Sherley (2019:231) believes that delegation should be accompanied by training for optimal results. Looking at the chapter on the history of leadership training (section 3.2.3), members of the Clergy were subjected to specific training. Once the performance of members of the Clergy was satisfactory and they had passed the training, such members would not be kept but released to their own ministries (Smither, 2009:89).

In effectively winning the souls of Group Members, Gill suggested religious training that changes the people's lives (Gill, 2011:224). The varied educational levels among leaders (Class Leaders) highlights the need for strong leadership and a focused training curriculum for Church leaders for coherent results (Gill, 2011:184).

7.1.6 Leadership

This third set of questions obtained information on leadership skills to be attained by the Class Leaders. The eight (8) questions asked also linked to the objective of understanding the place and role of Class Leaders and their Ministry and asked about the styles of leadership possessed by the Class Leaders. As in Table 6.2 above, the knowledge pertaining to faith in Jesus, the Christ, redemption, and being propelled by the Gospel, constant contact with both members and the pastor, reporting on Class activities, own salvation, addresses and contact details of all Class members, preparation of reports before Official Board meetings is crucial. Such information may assist in determining the leadership styles needed for such Ministries.

For the leadership attributes possessed by the Class Leaders, the qualitative data in Table 6.2 reveals that a substantial amount of the participants (individuals and groups) strongly agreed that Class Leaders do have addresses and contact details of all members in their Class. There is also a common understanding about the importance of this fact amongst the participants. All participants strongly agreed that Class Leaders should stay in constant contact with both their members and the pastor. They also agree that Class Leaders should meet with their pastors on a monthly basis in order for them to report on their Class activities. It is important for Class Leaders to have members' contact; it is not a new thing; Paul, as indicated in section 3.4.2, made disciples by trading contacts and reaching many people. Most groups in chapter 2 were in constant contact with one another.

Looking at both groups and individual responses in question 15 and question 19, there is a lack of teaching on salvation in Class Leaders.

Historical small groups outlined in Chapter 3 were more instrumental when coming to teaching about salvation. In Section 3.4.3, we learn that a leader who is not seeking his own glory but the honour of God, the prosperity of the Church, and the salvation of the people, and who does God's will and uncovers the wiles of the anti-Christ, preaching the law of Christ" possesses all the marks which show that God sent him. (Hus, 1915: 195–196.). Section 3.2.1 indicates that Wesley preached the word of God, and a number of people used to attend his preaching and hoped to obtain assurance of salvation. John Wesley continued to teach and admonish them about eternal matters in a temporal world. It is important for Class Leaders to seek the salvation of the people.

The lack of reporting by Class Leaders as per responses for question 22 is in contradiction with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, as discussed in chapter 4 (4.2.2). According to AME (2012:63) Class Leaders must report the life of members to the Official Board as part of their duties. In chapter three, Synder (1980:55) indicated that the Methodist Church Class meetings were not a highly organized event. He asserts that although these Class meetings would only meet for one hour, their main event would be reserved for Class Leaders to report on the spiritual life of members. As outlined in Section 2.3.5.5.1, Jesus received reports from His disciples and praised them wherever they did well, pointed out their mistakes, and then exhorted them where necessary. It must be noted that going out and coming back with the report must be part of the training for Class Leaders as it was for disciples.

Although the survey results show that addresses and contact details of all Class members, constant contact with both members and the pastor, and reporting on Class activities are crucial to the Class Leader to showcase leadership, still the AME Local Churches are confronted with challenges in leadership which Class Leaders lack faith in Jesus, the Christ, are not redeemed and propelled by the Gospel. Furthermore, they do not prepare reports for the Steward Board Meeting.

7.1.7 Skills

The fourth set of questions obtained information on skills to be attained by the Class Leaders. As depicted in Table 6.3, the questions also linked to the objective of understanding the place and role

of Class Leaders and their Ministry, asked about the skills possessed by the Class Leaders. Eight (8) questions were posed about the skills most often to be possessed by the Class Leader.

Knowledge pertaining to the development of a structure for Class meetings, the strength of the Class members, determination of the members' God-given talent, communicating with both pastor and members, strategies to achieve a set of goals on evangelizing and discipleship, members' involvement in Class meetings and meeting them weekly as well as the composition of the Class as enshrined in the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church is important to provide a comprehensive understanding of either the growth or decline in Church membership.

Table 6.3 above provides the findings of each question of the research questionnaire. A summary of the key findings linked to each question shows that participants agree with the position that there is a need for greater members' involvement in Class meetings, the composition of the Class in line with the doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church, for each Class has a maximum of 12 is very important. The Class Leaders' role in communicating with the pastor and members needs some improvement.

In assessing the Skills, the following weaknesses were identified among Class Leaders:

- During Class Meetings, not enough attention is given to discovering the God-given talents of members.
- There is a need for greater involvement in Class meetings.

There are mixed feelings when looking at individual responses to question 26 as Class Leaders do know their role in communicating with the pastors and members. This confusion was dealt with during the group discussions.

Failure of Class Leaders to develop a structure for Class meetings contravenes the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church (2012:69). This policy document advocates for leadership practices that prepare its Class Leaders for ministry before meeting members. The Ministry enables the pastor and the congregation to remain a united family, to care, encourage and communicate throughout the Church (AME Church, 2012:69).

The historical groups in Chapter Three, as depicted in Table 3.1, present the importance of structured group meetings, participation of members, and caring for each other leading to growth.

7.1.8 Evangelism

The fifth set of questions aimed to obtain information on Evangelism. These questions are also linked to the objective of understanding the place and role of Class Leaders and their Ministry in sections. As in Table 6.4, five (5) questions were posed under the heading Evangelism.

Table 6.4 depicts that most participants shared similar sentiments on all the questions asked. They either disagreed or strongly disagreed that:

- Class Leaders pour themselves into the raising up and training of young people.
- Class Leaders never lose contact with his/her former Class members once they take over new Classes.
- Class Leaders are committed to both Evangelism and discipleship in their ministry.
- Class Leaders focus on nurturing those they help in the Kingdom.
- Class Leaders are committed to seeing people grow in their holiness and obedience.

Flowing from the above summary, such information is required to find a plausible solution to Evangelism required for Class Leader Ministry. Consistent with Gill's view, an effective evangelism strategy is developed in stages and requires motivating people to move from being bystanders to becoming active followers of Christ (Gill, 2011:161).

Failure of Class Leaders to focus on nurturing those they help into the Kingdom threatens the Church's growth. As discussed in chapter four, the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church expect Class Leaders to be able to give instruction in the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME, 2012:69). The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church expects members to be instructed of the Articles of Religion, which speaks mainly to the nurturing of those in the Kingdom (AME, 2012:15-18).

The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church empowers the Class Leader to report those who walk disorderly (2012:69). A Class Leader is expected to ensure that members are growing spiritually before reporting. Failure to do so contradicts the AME Churches' prescripts (AME, 2012:69).

7.1.9 New Members

The sixth set of questions is based on information on New Members. Linked to this is the objective of understanding the place and role of Class Leaders and their Ministry as outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2 above. The questions range from the responsibility of assigning members from other denominations to a Class; welcoming new members into Classes; the ability of Class Leaders to develop a strategy to draw members from other denominations, the capability of Class activities to attract members and ensure that they do not leave the local Church; prove if members of the local Church have left for greener pastures due to lack of activities in the Classes and to find out whether the structure and size of the Classes present a possibility for growth. In summary, and all taken together, these lay an important foundation for understanding the new members, as shown in Table 6.5 above.

Based on the seven (7) questions of the research questionnaire, the findings reveal that:

- There are mixed feelings on whether members of the local Church have left for greener pastures due to a lack of activities in the Classes;
- It is clear that Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to Classes;
- It is also clear that Church members that joined the local Church from other denominations feel welcomed when assigned to Classes; and
- The structure and size of the Classes present a possibility for growth.

Knowledge of the above issues presents a better understanding of how new members are handled. The results show that Class Leaders have provided leadership and advice, and new members are grateful for the Church's insight and leadership (AME Church, 2017:128). The behavior of Class Leaders in this section is Christ-like, as indicated in chapter 2.4.2.5, where Jesus and the disciples wanted to get a quiet place (solitary place) and rest. They took a boat to the other side, hoping to rest, but they could not rest because multitudes of people were already waiting for them when they reached the other side. Jesus did not return people; he welcomed them and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God. Class Leaders welcome new members with open arms.

7.1.10 Church Finances

In Table 6.6, the seventh set of questions focuses on the Class Leader's collecting Church dues from members' homes, members' un-happiness with Class Leaders collecting money from homes, Class Leader's demanding money from members, and on whether the Class Leader provides training on the significance of joyful giving and also on the proper way to collect and receive money from members. From the preceding discussions on these five (5) questions, the knowledge of these factors guides the understanding of how Class Leaders handle the Church finances.

Table 6.6 depicts that for the fiduciary duties bestowed on the Class Leaders, notable challenges were evident in the following:

- Members are not happy with Class Leaders collecting money from homes.;
- The Class Leaders do not provide training on the importance of giving with joy.
- The Class Leaders are not trained on how to collect and receive monies from members.
- Members' lack of happiness with Class Leaders demanding money from members.

Class Leaders are active in Church finances though members are unhappy with how money is collected.

The issue of collecting money by leaders is not new; in section 2.3.5.5.1, Levites collected money from rural areas (2 Chronicles 24:4-7). In the Methodist Church, as discussed in section 3.6, the Classes were originally organized also to raise money for Methodism. This is also in line with the doctrine and Discipline of the AME, as discussed in section 4.3.2.15 above that the money was collected to support the Gospel.

7.1.11 Class Leader/Pastor Relationship

The last set of questions aimed at obtaining information on the AME Church's roles in the local setting. In Table 6.7, five (5) questions linked to the objective of understanding the place and role of Class Leaders and their Ministry in the AME Church, asked about the relationship between the Class Leaders and the pastor.

In assessing the Class Leader-Pastor Relationship category, majority of participants:

- disagree that the local Churches encourage the servant leadership style in the Church.
- disagree that Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders-Pastorals relationships.

- disagree that the local Church provides shared leadership between Class Leaders and Pastors.
- Disagree that the local Church provides training on Class Leader/s relationships.
- Most participants agree that Doctrine and Discipline encourages a good relationship between the pastor and the Class Leaders.

In comparing this dyadic relationship between a Class Leader and Pastor, as referred to in Exodus 18, section 2.3.2.4 above, the Bible records how Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, devised a pragmatic solution. In cementing this relationship, In Matthew 28 (19-20), Jesus said 'surely I am with you always, to the very end.' God has placed a whole army of people around them with gifts, talents, skills, and abilities to mobilize and empower (Stetzer and Dodson, 2007), just like the Class Leaders.

Although the local Church encourages the servant leadership style in the Church and allows transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationship and shared leadership between Class Leaders and pastor, the weak impact on Class Leaders-Pastoral relationship is eminent.

7.2 SUMMARY

The above section presented the empirical findings of the current study. Based on these findings, it is also very clear that this study is extremely relevant and important. There is no doubt that Class Leader Ministry is the backbone of Church growth strategy to can be employed for Church growth in the Wilberforce District of the AME Church. There is no doubt that there is a need for strategies to improve the Class Leader Ministry in the relevant local Churches. Therefore, the importance and relevancy of this study cannot be exaggerated. A summary of the study is presented below in terms of the contribution of each chapter.

7.2.1 Chapter 1

Chapter One presents the skeleton of this study. It is made up of the following sections:

7.2.1.1 Created the basis of the study by presenting the research problem; it discussed the orientation and background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the aims and objectives of the study, the hypothesis, and the objective of the study;

- 7.2.1.2 Introduced issues central to the contribution Class Leader Ministry play towards local Churches declining or increasing in membership and concludes by providing the structure of the study;
- 7.2.1.3 Motivated the importance of investigating the identified problem; and
- 7.2.1.4 Explored the research methodology and the organization of the research project to complete the study.

7.2.2 Chapter 2

Chapter Two of the study provides a foundation for the rest of the project; it presents the Biblical and Theological foundation of Class Leader Ministry. It consists of two sections, namely:

- 7.2.2.1 The Old Testament Biblical and Theological Foundation of the Class Leader Ministry; and
- 7.2.2.2 The New Testament Biblical and Theological Foundation of the Class Leader Ministry.

The Class Leader Ministry is founded on both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. It utilized small group ministry as its basis and presents relevant commonly used methods.

7.2.3 Chapter 3

Chapter Three of the study explores the historical literature that varies from one period to another relevant to the Class Leader Ministry. The chapter consists of six sections. These are listed below.

- 7.2.3.1 It described the method to be followed to investigate the History of small groups.
- 7.2.3.2 It looked at the historical overview of the small group in the early Church period. These periods vary from the days of the apostles (A.D. 33-100) and apostolic fathers (AD 100-200) to the times of the Church fathers.
- 7.2.3.3 It examined the historical overview of small groups by discussing the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods dwelling on the monks in terms of their contribution to the history of the Church.
- 7.2.3.4 It presented the historical overview of small groups during the Pre-16th Century Reformation Period. This section glanced at the three pre-16 century reformation groups (the Waldensians, the Lollards, and the Hussites) as key groups lying at the heart of this section of the study.
- 7.2.3.5 It presented the historical overview of a small group during the Reformation focusing on the small groups in the views and practices associated with Luther, Bucer, Anabaptists, Puritans, Pietism, and the Moravian Church.

7.2.3.6 The chapter concludes by looking at the Methodist Church Small Group.

7.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter Four of the study is divided into three sections. These sections provide a general understanding of the historical background of the AME Church Class Leader Ministry.

7.2.4.1 It explores the abridged History of the AME Church, looking at relevant sections of the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church;

7.2.4.2 It describes the AME Church Class Leader Ministry, and

7.2.4.3 Provides the History of Class Leader Ministry of the AME Church in Wilberforce District, zooming into the selected AME Churches in the Wilberforce District.

7.2.5 Chapter 5

Chapter Five serves as the empirical section of the study. It focuses on the methodology used to empirically study and to critically evaluate the ways in which the Class Leader Ministry can become the backbone and an appropriate strategy for Church growth in the AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. This chapter of the study is accordingly divided into the following Six sections:

7.2.5.1 Literature Review

7.2.5.2 Discussed the research design and a description of the applicable method for this study. The section accordingly highlights the research design that is followed in the investigation, including the relevant underlying philosophical assumptions, as well as the population sample of the study and the data collection technique.

7.2.5.3 Discussed the issues regarding the study's research instruments and data collection mechanism.

7.2.5.4 Explored the administration of the questionnaire and looked at the issues and factors pertaining to the validity and reliability of the data used in the study.

7.2.5.5 Explored how data is handled and analyzed.

7.2.5.6 Considered the relevant research ethics issues involved in the study.

7.2.6 Chapter 6

In chapter Six of the study, the researcher presents the research summary of responses obtained through a self-administered questionnaire.

7.2.6.1 discussed the focus of the questionnaire used in this research study.

7.2.6.2 Presented responses.

7.2.7 Chapter 7

Chapter Seven of the study presents the findings, summary, recommendations, conclusion, and proposed future study.

7.2.7.1 It determines the findings of the research

7.2.7.2 It recommends strategies on how Class Leader Ministry can function optimally as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in accordance with the research aims and objectives in chapter one.

7.2.7.3 In conclusion, this chapter establishes whether the research questions had been answered.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The above section presented the summary of the study. In light of the literature and empirical study, this section presents the study's recommended strategies based on the findings of the study on how Class Leader Ministry can function optimally as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.

The empirical evidence from the surveyed results identified weaknesses and gaps that inhibit the growth of the AME Churches within the Wilberforce District. The following are the identified gaps from the findings which justify the need to propose the strategy:

7.3.1 A total of 67% of respondents believe Class Leaders don't have a job description (Section 7.1.1); 30% of Class Leaders are males, and 42% are 40 – 55 years (Section 7.1.2).

7.3.2 The Class Leaders' qualification level has dropped from that of being a qualified teacher to most of the Class Leaders possessing high school qualifications (Section 7.1.3).

- 7.3.3 In all five (5) Local AME Churches, there is a need to enhance training for Class Leaders and Group Members (Section 7.1.5).
- 7.3.4 There is also a strong belief that the Local AME Churches do not adequately empower their Class Leaders and Group Members regarding leadership skills.
- 7.3.5 Class Leaders pose some threat to members due to their failure to commit to both Evangelism and discipleship in their ministry, as well as not focusing on the spiritual development of those they helped into the Kingdom (Section 7.1.8).
- 7.3.6 The method of collecting Church finances causes dissatisfaction among members (Section 7.1.10).

The Class Leader ministry has played a crucial role in the growth and survival of AME Churches over the years. Building on previous discussions and research objectives outlined in chapter one, the following five strategies are recommended to can assist in improving the effectiveness of the Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. These recommended strategies are aimed at closing the gaps identified in section 7.3.1 to 7.3.5. These strategies are discussed in detail below.

7.3.6.1 Strategy One: Demographics

Firstly, it is recommended that AME Churches transition from the traditional "generic" Classes, which consist of a wide range of members, to more targeted groups based on age, gender, and career, where applicable; away from the traditional “generic” Classes composed of too wide a diversity of members. This facet of the strategy is relevant to what is highlighted in section 7.1.2 of this study.

7.3.6.2 Strategy Two: Education Level and Training

Secondly, this study recommends that the AME Church ensure its Class Leaders possess the necessary qualifications and leadership qualities and are equipped with the appropriate skills to hold their influential positions effectively. To achieve this, the pastors of AME local Churches should organize training sessions every quarter aimed at enhancing the communication, leadership, and commitment skills of Class Leaders, which includes promoting Evangelism and discipleship, nurturing those they have helped bring into the Kingdom, effectively managing Church finances

without causing dissatisfaction among members, and fostering strong relationships among Class members to encourage unity and collaboration.

Aspects of the relevant education and continuous training as a strategy were highlighted in a variety of sections of this study. These entail the following:

- Appoint the right, qualified individuals.
- Develop a focused training curriculum for Class Leaders.
- Train Class Leaders before they can be assigned to Classes the same way Jesus trained disciples before they could be sent because delegation must be accompanied by training for optimal results.
- Revive the family as a learning institution, behaviour and conduct sculpting workshop, a social building platform, an instruction-manual classroom, and a worship-training home cell.

This facet of strategy is relevant to what is highlighted in section 7.1.3 of this study.

7.3.6.3 Strategy Three: Evangelism

Thirdly, it is recommended that the Church focus on retaining new members and converts in order to grow. The Class Leaders should create a warm atmosphere for the new members. The pastors should take decisive action to ensure that Classes have a clear evangelistic programme. They should also ensure optimum adherence to such a programme. The following should also be considered:

- Lapsed members should be encouraged to renew their commitment to Christ by facilitating conversations and offering opportunities for conversions and membership renewal during Class meetings.
- Class Leaders should focus on nurturing those they help bring into the Kingdom.
- Class Leaders should motivate people to move from being bystanders to become active followers of Christ.
- Evangelism should be used to increase the number of saved members.
- Class Leader Ministry should be used as a tool for Evangelism, discipleship, and Church growth.

This facet of strategy is relevant to what is highlighted in section 7.1.8 of this study.

7.3.6.4 Strategy Four: Church Finances

Fourthly, it is recommended that the African Methodist Episcopal Church re-evaluate its current method of collecting money from its members as a strategy. Members feel uncomfortable with the current strategy of collecting money through Class Leaders from their homes. The following should be considered in this regard:

- Money should be collected from those members that are unable to come to Church following the method used by Levites in II Chronicles 24:4-7.
- Money should be collected during Class Meetings.
- Additionally, it may be beneficial for the Church to consider implementing electronic banking as an alternative payment method.

This facet of strategy is relevant to what is highlighted in section 7.1.10 of this study.

7.3.6.5 Strategy Five: Class Leader Ministry activation

Lastly, it is recommended that the African Methodist Episcopal Church re-evaluate the activities of the Classes to enhance participation and spiritual growth. The activities in Class Meetings should include activities undertaken by small groups in Acts 2:42-47, namely:

1. Teaching;
2. Fellowship;
3. Worship;
4. Prayer;
5. Ministry, and
6. Evangelism.

In the 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 strategies recommended here. The exploration of the AME Church in chapters four and five demonstrated that the AME Church environment gives room for local Churches that desire to implement the strategy.

7.4 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

In conclusion, the findings of the study revealed that the Class Leader Ministry could become the backbone of the appropriate strategy for discipleship and Church growth in the AME Church. However, it was found that Classes are no longer efficient. This is mainly due to the following reasons, among others: negative feelings expressed by various groups or categories of Church members; the incompatibility of the skills set possessed by Class Leaders with the required knowledge of contemporary Class Members, lack of Evangelism as well as how money is collected. This is because, over time, the Church and its members have experienced a significant evolution.

Guided by the visited literature and the empirical findings the study makes a set of recommendation. These recommendations are biblically and universally applicable for implementation in any local Church. The findings of this study and its recommendations are presented to bring about a positive contribution to the matter of how AME Churches can grow within the Wilberforce District and beyond, through Class Leader Ministry.

7.5 FUTURE RESEARCH STUDY

Some of the aspects identified in the study that warrant further research are:

To improve our understanding of the factors that impact the growth or decline of AME Church Membership, future studies should focus on the geographical location. Additionally, it would be beneficial to encourage a larger sample size with more participants from a wider geographical area to draw more generalized inferences. Finally, expanding the study to include the entire AME Church in South Africa (19th Episcopal District) could provide valuable insights into the use of the Class Leaders' Ministry as a Church growth strategy and allow for comparison with the findings of this study.

There is also a need for comparative studies. This would broaden our knowledge, for instance, to study if Class Leader Ministry could become the backbone of the appropriate strategy for discipleship and Church growth in the Methodist using same area as the Wilberforce District of the AME Church and compare the findings.

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Appendix A



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South Africa, 2520

Tel: (018) 299-4900

Faks: (018) 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel: +27 18 299 4849

Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)** on **22/02/2018**, the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-RERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: The class leader ministry as the backbone of a church growth strategy in the Wilberforce District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church.																														
Project Leader/Supervisor: Prof Rabali																														
Student: MAM Mahloko																														
Ethics number: <table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>HS</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>1</td><td>7</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td colspan="4">Institution</td><td colspan="4">Year</td><td colspan="7">Project Number</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	HS	-	2	0	1	7	-	0	2	1	2	Institution				Year				Project Number						
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Commencement date: 2018-02-22																														
Expiry date: 2021-02-22																														
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Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the BaSSREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the study, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
- Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these changes at the BaSSREC. Would there be deviated from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-RERC via BaSSREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-RERC and BaSSREC reserves the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the BaSSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - the required annual report (or otherwise stipulated) and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately; and/ or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- BaSSREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Marinda.Malan@nwu.ac.za or 016 910 3515.

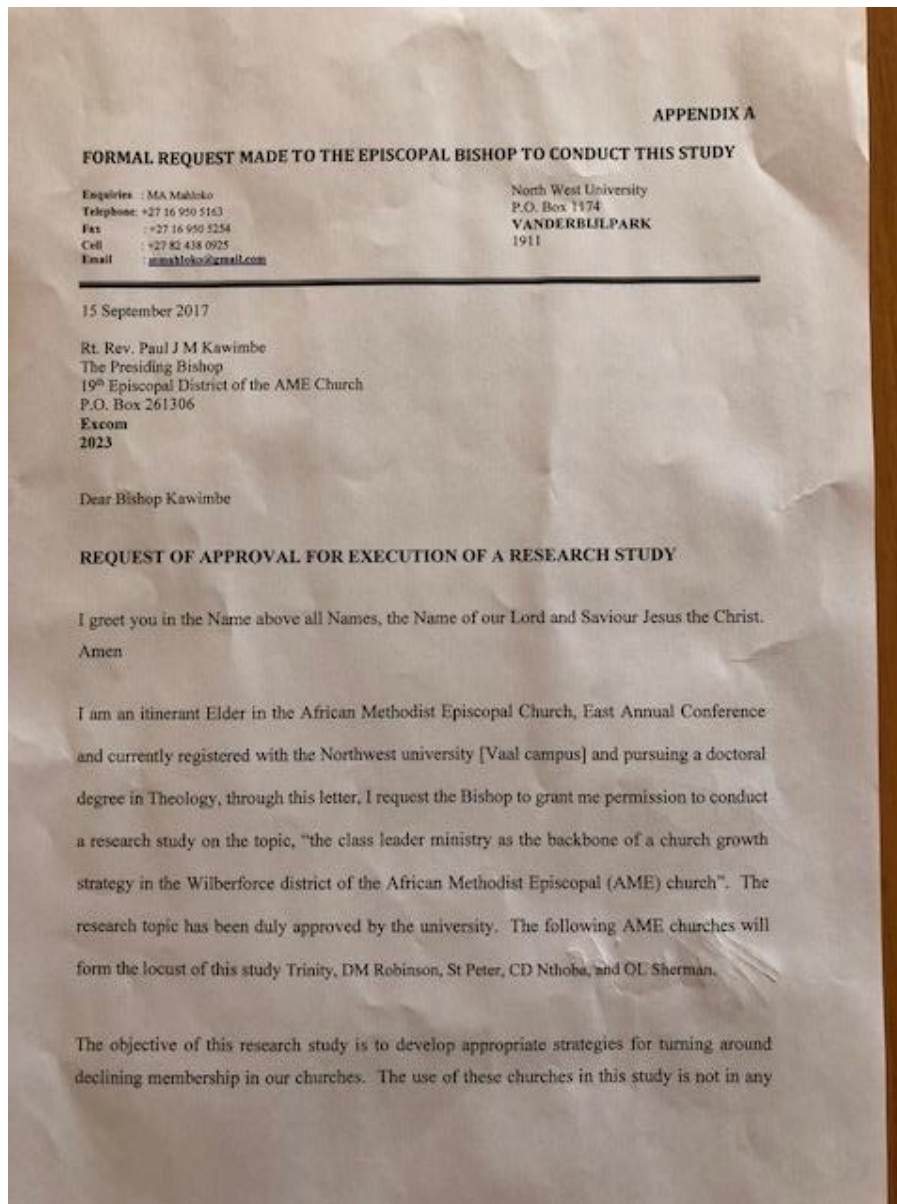
The BaSSREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-RERC or BaSSREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof Jaco Hoffman

Chair NWU Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B



APPENDIX C

CONSENT LETTER ISSUED TO PARTICIPANTS FROM SELECTED CHURCHES REQUESTING THEIR PARTICIPATION.

Enquiries : MA Mahloko
Telephone: +27 16 950 5163
Fax : +27 86
Cell : +27 82 438 0925
Email : mmahloko@gmail.com
Student No: 201711093

North West University
P.O. Box 1174
VAN DER BIJLPARK
1911

Reference Number NWU-HS- 2017-0212

20 October 2017

Class Leader

African Methodist Episcopal Church

Wilberforce District

THE CLASS LEADER MINISTRY AS THE BACKBONE OF A CHURCH GROWTH STRATEGY IN THE WILBERFORCE DISTRICT OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) CHURCH

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my doctoral degree in Theology. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask any question about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Theology of the North-West University (NWU)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that I am conducting research in an ethical manner.

This study will be conducted at your local Church and will involve all Class Leaders and Class members in your local Church. The researchers have adequate training in data collection. Approximately 40 participants will be included in this study from your local Church.

The objectives of this research are:

- To explore the biblical and theological background and basis of the Class Leader Ministry.

- To provide some of the historical terms, roots and views associated with the Class Leader Ministry.
- To provide a historical overview of the Class Leader Ministry in the AME Church.
- To give an understanding of the place and role of Class Leaders and Class Members towards membership growth in the Wilberforce District.
- To offer recommendation on how Class Leader Ministry can become the backbone of the appropriate strategy for discipleship and Church growth in the AME Church.

You have been invited to participate because you are a Class Leader in the AME Church, within the Wilberforce District. You have also been a Class Leader for more than two years, above the age of 18 and not older than 70 years of age. You will be expected to fill in the questionnaire, participate in a group discussion and also be observed during the Class meetings.

At the end of this research project, you will gain experience and receive new strategies to enhance Church growth and Class meetings. Participation in this study may increase your awareness about your perception regarding the Class Leader Ministry and how this is reflected in your current practices. In broader context, it is hoped that this research may instil a greater interest from Class Leaders and Members into the benefits of Class Leader Ministry once used as a strategy for Church growth. The risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarized in the table below:

Probable/possible risks/discomforts	Strategies to minimize risk/discomfort
Class Leaders will be involved in group discussions where they will have to discuss the best way to enhance Class leader Ministry. To avoid highly verbal members of the group to take over as spokesperson of the group and express opinions which are not of the group.	Participants in each group complete a questionnaire on their own, without discussing it with other members of the group. The facilitator will facilitate group discussion after the completion of individual questionnaire.
There is, however, a marginal probability that respondents may feel uncomfortable with some aspects, topic or themes raised during discussion, creating unease among participants. This is unlikely to amount to significant distress.	Should any problem arise, e.g. participants showing signs of psychological distress, or simply refusing to respond to any question, that question will be skipped.
Currently the AME Church membership continue to decline.	The findings from this research process will inform suggestions and/or recommendations strategies, tactics, and methods they can use in the effective running of Class Meetings/activities for Church growth

However, the benefits (as noted above) outweigh the risk. Should we learn, in the course of the research, that someone is harming you, or that you are intending to harm someone, then we must tell someone who can help you/warn the person you are intending to harm. Please let me know if you have any concerns.

The researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality and anonymity since this is a group involvement. The researcher will take all steps necessary, negotiate rules, and ensure that every participant sign a confidentiality clause. You are more than welcomed not to share anything you are not comfortable with.

Only the researchers and the supervisor will have access to the data. Data will be stored in the researcher's office for five years in a lockable cabinet. The researcher is the sole occupant of the office.

The data from this study will be reported in the form of a thesis. In all of this reporting, you will not be personally identified. This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others to know that you participated.

No payment will be offered to any participants to avoid bias and to promote voluntary participation.

The general findings of the research will be shared with you in a form of a thesis. The copy of the thesis will be given to all Churches that took part in the research. The thesis will also be available at the NWU (Vaal Campus) Library.

I assure you that all your responses given 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 perception. 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.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled: “The Class Leader Ministry as the backbone of a Church growth strategy in the Wilberforce district of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church”.

I declare that:

- I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurized to take part.
- I understand that what I contribute could be reproduced publically and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalized or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

- I declare that the group discussion and contents of the questionnaire are confidential, privileged and only for the intended recipients and many not be used or discussed outside the written consent of all participants and the Basic and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of theology of the North West University.

Signed at (place) on (date) 20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I, Maainini Annette Mahloko declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to participants
- I encouraged them to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that they adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (place) on (date) 2018

.....
Signature of the researcher

.....
Signature of witness

MA Mahloko

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

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

APPENDIX D

ETHICS CERTIFICATE



OPTENTIA
RESEARCH FOCUS AREA

To whom it may concern

Student: **Annette Mahloko**
{20711093}

Confirmation: **Research Ethics Training**

It is hereby certified that this student has successfully completed the Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) online training session presented by Prof. Werner Nell. The results of her assessment confirmed acceptable proficiency in this regard.

It is therefore recommended that she continues with her ethics application.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,

Prof. C. van Eeden

Chair: Humanities & Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC)



Certificate

January 2, 2018

This is to certify that Ms. Maanini annette Mahloko has successfully completed the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Online Training Module for the Social Sciences and Humanities.

Macquarie University

APPENDIX E

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASS LEADERS AT SELECTED CHURCHES
WITHIN THE WILBERFORCE DISTRICT**

**THE CLASS LEADER MINISTRY AS THE BACKBONE OF A CHURCH GROWTH
STRATEGY IN THE WILBERFORCE DISTRICT OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST
EPISCOPAL (AME) CHURCH**

Submission Instructions

The Class Leaders in the Church with direct responsibility for management and leadership acumen should complete this survey:

Telephone Survey Interview: If you would prefer to complete the survey by telephone interview, call 082 438 0925

E-mail Survey: If you would prefer to complete the e-mail survey, please e-mail your request to: mmahloko@gmail.com

Name :

Title :

Position :

Phone :

Fax :

E-mail :

IF NOT USING REAL NAME PLEASE USE "GEORGE COW" OR "MARY COW"

PART I: CLASS LEADERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1): DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This section of the survey contains questions of a personal nature. The information would be used solely to gather demographic profile of the respondents in order to determine if any relationship exist between respondents who exhibit similarities in their answers.

1. Does your Church have Job Descriptions for Class Leaders?

Yes No

2. What is your gender?

Male Female

3. What is your age group?

20 – 29 years 30 – 39 years
 40 - 49 years 50 – 59 years other, please specify.....

4. Marital Status

Married Single
 Divorced Widowed
 Other, Specify

5. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?

Some high school Bachelor's Degree
 Some college Honors Degree
 Other, please specify: Master's Degree

6. If you attained a Certificate/Diploma/Degree, what best describes your major or area of study?

Theology Biblical Studies
 Financial Management Administration
 Other, Please specify.....

7. Years of experience as Class Leader. 1-4 4-7 7-10 10-13

8. Membership at your local AME Church. 1-4 4-7 7-10 10-13

Section 2.): TRAINING

This section looks at the training of Class Leaders 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>
9.	The local Church has ongoing training for its Class Leaders.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
10.	The local Church has structured strategic planning sessions for its Class Leaders.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
11.	The Church train Class Leaders on what purpose of Class Leader Ministry is.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
12.	The local Church train Class Leader in their duties and requirements in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
13.	The local Church provide Class members with an opportunity for mentoring and coaching.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
14.	The local Church train Class Leaders in instilling piety and religious commitment in members.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Any Comment:

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Section 3): Leadership

This section looks at the leadership of the Class Leader 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>
15.	All Class Leaders are saved by faith in Jesus, the Christ.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
16.	All Class Leaders are redeemed and ignited by the gospel.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
17.	Class Leaders stay in constant contact with both members and pastor.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
18.	Class Leaders meet with the pastor monthly to report on class activities.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
19.	Class Leaders help members work out their own salvation.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
20.	Class Leaders have addresses and contact details of all members in their class.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
21.	Class Leaders contact their members as soon as possible if they do not see them in Church.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
22.	Class Leaders prepare reports for the Steward Board Meeting on the life of class members.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Any Comment:

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Section 4.): Skills

This section looks at the Church's effort at improving skills of Church members 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.	Class Leaders developed structures for class meetings.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
24.	Members draw strength from Class Leader's Meetings	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
25.	During Class Meetings, enough attention is given to discover members God's given talent.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
26.	Class Leaders knows their role of communicating with both the pastor and members.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
27.	Class leaders developed strategies to achieve the set goals of evangelizing and discipleship.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
28.	There is a need for greater member involvement in class meetings.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
29.	The Class Leader meet with members weekly.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
30.	Each Class has a maximum of 12 members in line with the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Any Comment:

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Section 5): 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>
31.	Class Leaders pour themselves into the raising up and training of young people.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
32.	Class Leaders never lose contact of his/her former class members once they take over new classes.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
33.	Class Leaders are committed to both evangelism and discipleship in their ministry	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
34.	Class Leaders focus on the nurture of those they help into the Kingdom.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
35.	Class Leaders are committed to seeing people grow in their holiness and obedience.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Any Comment:

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Section 6.): NEW MEMBERS

This section looks at the impact which dealing with new members 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].

SKILLS		SA	A	DK	D	SD
36.	Church members that join the local Church from other denominations are assigned to a class.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
37.	Church members that joined the local Church from other denominations assigned to classes feel welcomed.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
38.	Our Class Leaders have a strategy to draw members from other denominations.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
39.	There are no class activities causing members to leave the local Church.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
40.	Members of the local Church have left for greener pastures due to lack of activities in the classes.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
41.	The structure and size of the classes presents a possibility for growth.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
42.	The Class Leaders of Churches in the vicinity of our Church creates a situation for migration from our Church	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Any Comment:

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Section 6.): 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].

TOOLS AND RESOURCES		SA	A	DK	DA	SD
43.	The Class Leaders collect Church dues from members at their home.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
44.	Members are happy with Class Leaders collecting money from homes.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
45.	Class Leaders demand money from members.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
46.	The Class Leaders provides training on the importance of giving with joy.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
47.	The Class Leaders are trained on how to collect and received monies from members.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Any Comment:

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Section 7.): CLASS LEADER/PASTOR RELATIONSHIP

This section looks at the impact which Class Leader/pastor 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
48.	The local Church provides shared leadership between Class Leaders and pastor.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
49.	The local Church encourage the servant leadership style in the Church.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
50.	The Church Doctrine and Discipline encourages good relationship between both pastor and Class Leaders	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
51.	The local Church provides training on Class Leader/pastor relationship.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
52.	The local Church structures allow transition for Class Leaders/ Pastoral relationship.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Any Comment:

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30/05/ 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

EDITING CERTIFICATE LETTER

This serves to confirm that the academic work in a form of a Ph.D. Thesis belonging to:

Maainini Annete Mahloko

Titled

THE CLASS LEADER MINISTRY AS THE BACKBONE OF A CHURCH GROWTH STRATEGY IN THE WILBERFORCE DISTRICT OF THE AME CHURCH

was proofread and grammatically edited by our language specialist division during the period 23 -30 May, 2023.



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