



**A comparative literature study of the place of
worship in pastoral counseling in a multi-
cultural church facing conflict**

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DECLARATION

I, Emilia Dafe De Sousa Muiquita Fakiera, declare herewith that the thesis entitled A comparative literature study of the place of worship in pastoral counseling in a multi-cultural church facing conflict, which I herewith submit to the North-West University is in compliance with the requirements set for the degree: Master of Theology in Pastoral Studies, is my own work, has been text-edited in accordance with the requirements and has not already been submitted to any other university.

ABSTRACT

This study intends to recommend guidelines on how a multicultural congregation can address worship-related challenges brought about by diversity. Also, to identify strategies that can be adopted to mitigate worship challenges. For example, a church can be multiracial yet culturally homogenous because members of the same cultural group hold all power and influence in the congregation.

The study's objective is to evaluate unique challenges and potential of how worship can enrich believers' lives when worshipping in Spirit and truth in the mission context. Presenting critical aspects in worship in a multicultural congregation means presenting an inter-cultural engagement that models critical multiculturalism and focuses on relationship building and survival, which embodies learning from one another through empathy, interactions, and respect. Therefore, the study proposes worship as a possible guideline for the unique challenges in a multicultural congregation.

The study reviews literature on conflicts associated with multicultural congregations in order to understand the construct and possible solutions. Furthermore, it assesses grammatical-historical exegesis of relevant passages from the Bible concerned with worship in Spirit and truth. This diversity of methods enabled the researcher to understand the theme: the conflict between believers from different cultures and the relation of this problem to the correct worship practices. Such an understanding define the contribution of worship to tolerance and peace among members. The model of practical theology designed by Osmer (2008:4) was used to guide the study. This model identifies four tasks of practical-theological research, descriptive, interpretative, normative, and pragmatic tasks. The four tasks aim to assess the problem and its possible solution. Osmer's primary objective is for leaders to be efficient, interpretive guides to teach congregants (Osmer, 2008:22). As such, this study aimed to suggest a model that church leaders may consider in addressing intercultural conflict.

ABSTRATO

Este estudo pretende recomendar diretrizes sobre como uma congregação multicultural pode enfrentar os desafios relacionados aos cultos trazidos pela diversidade. Além disso, identificar estratégias que podem ser adotadas para mitigar os desafios do culto. Por exemplo, uma igreja pode ser multirracial mas culturalmente homogênea porque os membros de um mesmo grupo cultural detêm todo o poder e influência na congregação.

O objetivo do estudo é avaliar os desafios únicos e o potencial de como a adoração pode enriquecer a vida dos crentes quando adoramos em Espírito e em verdade no contexto missionário. Apresentar aspectos críticos do culto numa congregação multicultural significa apresentar um envolvimento intercultural que modele o multiculturalismo crítico e se concentre na construção de relacionamentos e na sobrevivência, que incorpora a aprendizagem mútua através da empatia, interações e respeito. Portanto, o estudo propõe o culto como uma possível diretriz para os desafios únicos em uma congregação multicultural.

O estudo revisa a literatura sobre conflitos associados a congregações multiculturais, a fim de compreender a construção e possíveis soluções. Além disso, avalia a exegese histórico-gramatical de passagens relevantes da Bíblia relacionadas com a adoração em Espírito e em verdade. Essa diversidade de métodos possibilitou ao pesquisador compreender o tema: o conflito entre crentes de diferentes culturas e a relação desse problema com as práticas corretas de culto. Tal entendimento define a contribuição do culto para a tolerância e a paz entre os membros. O modelo de teologia prática desenhado por Osmer (2008:4) foi utilizado para orientar o estudo. Este modelo identifica quatro tarefas de pesquisa prático-teológica, tarefas descritivas, interpretativas, normativas e pragmáticas. As quatro tarefas visam avaliar o problema e sua possível solução. O objetivo principal de Osmer é que os líderes sejam guias interpretativos e eficientes para ensinar os congregados (Osmer, 2008:22). Como tal, este estudo teve como objetivo sugerir um modelo que os líderes da igreja possam considerar na abordagem do conflito intercultural.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Proposed title and key terms

1.1.1 Title

A comparative literature study of the place of worship in pastoral counseling in a multi-cultural church facing conflict

1.1.2 Key terms

Conflict, culture, multicultural community, transformation, worship in Spirit, and truth

1.1.3 Concept clarification

The following concepts are central to the study:

Intercultural conflict - Intercultural conflict arises from the resistance between individuals and groups for territory, different religious belonging, differing values, differing cultural norms, or incompatibility of interests (Gumucio, 2008:317). In addition, the term "interculturality" can indicate how culture flows and how it merges with other cultures (Brynjolfson, 2004:xiii).

Cross-cultural - The term cross-cultural means between cultures. According to Stadler (2018:1), the word cross-cultural refers to exploring issues of intracultural communication. According to some authors, the term "transcultural" tends to focus more on cultures as nationalities. At the same time, "intercultural" would give a broader sense to the idea, including any cultural group, from nationality to religion, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender and so on (Dagnino, 2012:4,12). In this study, the term "cross-cultural" is used interchangeably with intercultural, multicultural and transcultural. Basarab (2015:38) states that "Intercultural communication is the overall encompassing term that refers to communication between people from different cultural backgrounds".

Multicultural community - A multicultural community refers to people of different cultures, nations, languages or religious communities (Josefová, 2014:1010) that coexist in the same geographical or social space.

Multicultural church - A multicultural church can be defined as having two or more cultures or languages that form an essential proportion of a congregation that comes together to worship God. According to Marzouk (2019:3), this church answers to the biblical vision of the church as a diverse faith community that has an intentional commitment to promoting relationships across cultural boundaries.

1.2 Background and research problem

The world is experiencing the biggest migrant crisis since World War II and as experts describe it, it is one of the biggest challenges of the twenty-first century (Einashe & Roueche, 2019). It is largely the need for survival in this fast becoming overpopulated world that inhabited about 7.9 billion in 2021 (Worldometer, 2021) that drives especially human societies to move from one place to another. Dokos (2017:102) argues that there are other various causes of migration and these include globalisation, economic inequalities, and demographic developments. In the main, most people migrate in order to escape poverty, seek sustenance or flee from political upheavals and civil strife (World migration report, 2022:71). The World social report, (2010:ii) reported that interestingly, the largest migratory flows in the world are observed from the Global South to the Global North.

Having listed the various causes of migration, there are people who are forced to migrate and their number has been increasing. These people, wherever they settle, are regarded as refugees and the UNHCR Global trends (2015) showed that by the end of 2015, the rate at which their numbers increased was at a crisis level. In fact, by the end of 2017, the world experienced the highest number of people that were displaced forcefully since World War II with more than 65 million people that were forced to leave their countries, regions, or housing (UNHCR Global trends, 2017:2). Of the world population, one in every 113 people is an asylum seeker, internally displaced or refugee, most of the refugees come from the Middle East and Africa. According to the UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database's (2021) latest figures, as of 18 June 2021, more than 82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly

displaced. This figure is the highest recorded by the United Nations since the Second World War. Out of the 82.4 million forcibly displaced people, more than 26.4 million were refugees, 4.1 million asylum-seekers while about half of them were under the age of 18. The UNHCR Global Trends (2020:6) reported a two-fold increase in the number of displaced people between 2010 and 2020: there were about 41 million in 2010 and about 82.4 million in 2020. As to be expected, about eighty percent (80%) of the world's displaced people are in countries affected by acute food insecurity and malnutrition. In addition, one in five displaced women living in humanitarian crises and armed conflict have experienced gender-based violence (Perrin *et al.*, 2019:2).

Among other and diverse causes of the refugee crisis is an increase in migratory flows, a phenomenon that has accompanied humanity since its inception (Migration data SADC, 2021). According to Brunson *et al.* (2020:6), migrating refugees are part of a new kind of transnational movement. Moreover, these authors position these causes as a new mode of being within global forces, dictating the agenda of market-driven economies and expectations created by social media.

While the most common cause of migration among refugees is the search for better living conditions (Castelli, 2018:2), other causes are: armed conflicts, political conflicts, religious conflicts, disasters, poverty, and hunger (World migration report, 2022:173). Of late, some people flee their countries for fear of uncertainties caused by undemocratic criminal syndicates that at times dominate their local political scene. For others, it is as a result of losing everything in a war, and the country's situation prevents them from rebuilding their lives (World economic forum, 2017:15). Such victims often find it challenging to resettle or have their residences in other countries documented legally. This is despite the fact that they migrate to their new destinations and apply to be refugees because they do not have other options such as staying in their place of origin where there are imminent risks to their lives and the lives of their families (United Nations Human Rights, 2015:17). Many migrants' families belong to a middle class in their home countries and live decent lives until such deadly conflicts force them to abandon everything they would have accrued. Therefore, fellow humans in other countries ought to understand that most refugees are simply looking for an opportunity to restructure their lives in other countries. This mean, their hosts should think like global citizens, have a sense of humanity, and value the lives, freedom and dignity

while offering them support (Phoenix, 2019:198). No country or city in the world is so immune to migration or a conflict that it cannot fall into civil or military war, can be dominated by criminal organisations or suffer from a lack of resources in the future (United nations human rights, 2015:18).

When there is a sudden and significant wave of migratory flow of especially humans to a location, the phenomenon that geography calls a "demographic explosion" occurs. The receiving country is expected to feel the consequences as the demographic explosion directly affects its economy and social relations (Lehohla, 2015:126). The sudden migration entails a chain of events that can be disastrous including: migrating to areas without proper infrastructure and thereby compromising access to health, sanitation, security, and education. This results in hunger and misery among both the migrant population and the local population. In addition, it leads to competition for businesses and jobs, often to the disadvantage of the uneducated locals and can lead to and increase the rate of crime. However, migrants have made significant socio-cultural, civic-political, and economic contributions in origin and destination countries and communities by being essential agents of change in various sectors (World migration report, 2020:162-163).

Currently in Africa, many countries such as the Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, suffer from political conflicts that generate migrants who migrate to neighbouring countries especially South Africa. Their migration is also due to crises like hunger, unemployment, and economic instability that put them in need of humanitarian aid, drastically affecting the population (Crush *et al.*, 2017:30). The UNHCR Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2021:1) states that South Africa hosts around 266,694 refugees and asylum seekers. At midyear 2020, South Africa was inhabited by an estimated 2.9 million migrants (Migration data SADC, 2021) and about 1 564 861 of them were hosted by the Gauteng Province (Stats SA, 2021:vi). The largest number of refugees residing in the Gauteng Province is despite the fact that it is already the most populous as it is home to 15.81 million South Africans and receives the highest number of international migrants (Tibane, 2019:13).

The researcher lives in Tshwane (formerly known as Pretoria) which is the capital city of South Africa and within the province of Gauteng with an estimated population of 2 655 282 (World population, 2021). Tshwane is a diverse and culturally vibrant capital

city (Capital Economic Outlook, 2016:33) and has many creeds that maintain its traditions despite the daily bombardment of post-modernity. It has many churches that are used by many migrants belonging to various denominations, religious affiliations, and ministries. According to Connor (2014:19) at Pew Research Center, the migrants bring along more than their nationality with them; they also bring their religion, anguish and hopes, uncertainty and trust, sadness and joy, which must lead to review old paradigms. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2012:25) also emphasises that half of the world's migrants come from a Christian background. In this study, the researcher refers to all migrants from Christian background. Due to their diversity, one cannot expect them to behave strictly like the local congregation. These seemingly differences are not always understood by the receiving Church. The work or the challenge is then to harmonise or rather adjust their practices in this new setup to lessen conflicts and facilitate their integration. Therefore, all processes concerning the reception and "integration" of migrants can instigate dialogue among migrants and members of the local Church. At this level, the challenges are immense.

In essence, adapting to cultures of the local church can be challenging (Blanton, 2017:28-29) in that it can create tensions and clashes among believers, leading to misunderstandings and even conflicts. According to Brynjolfson (2004:7), intercultural conflict happens when someone disrupts another person's worldview, leading to tension and distrust. Hence, Mayer (2000:72) defines culture as "the enduring norms, values, customs, and behavioural patterns common to a particular group of people". According to Turner (1993:412), culture refers primarily to collective social identity engaged in struggles for social equality. Therefore, "culture is not an end in itself (whether as an object of theoretical research or teaching), but a means to an end, not all aspects of culture as conceived by anthropologists are relevant to the achievement of that end". Culture is how a community lives, expresses itself and organises itself (Mabovula, 2011:39). The culture of people includes language, art, clothing, social hierarchies, ways of thinking, moral rules, etc. The Bible is written in the context of several different cultures (Hill, 2014:20) and has applications for people of all cultures. Christians who are entirely disconnected from the culture around them will not be able to communicate the gospel to the unbelievers in their community. For instance, the apostle Paul quoted Greek philosophers in his sermon to Greek people (Acts 17:22-28). He never compromised the truth about Jesus, but he used what was good in the

culture to get the message across (1 Cor 9:21-23). This biblical text shows that sharing knowledge about other cultures makes communication possible.

Hence, the word Spirit (Pneuma) in the biblical context carries the meaning of "life-giving spirit" that is, of the essence of life, of a unique element that can animate the flesh, bringing life. The Greek word points to an action of the Spirit that gives life to the body, the source and seat of insight, the power by which the human being feels and thinks. The Spirit is seen as the representative part of the inner man, i.e., simple essence, devoid of and possessed of the power of knowledge (Bauer *et al.*, 1979:674-675). Thus, the interpretation of the meaning of "worshipping in the Spirit" refers to the transformation caused by the action of the Spirit, overlapping human reason. It is something intense since the breath of life underlies it; it is continuous, and not limited to a place (temple, city), a form (ritual, Law), or an ethnic group.

Also, the word truth (aletheia) has a deep Christological meaning, as Jesus reveals himself as the truth, facilitating access to the Father, leading prospectives to experience his redemptive certainty. Jesus is the authentic testifier to the Father's truthfulness as the incarnate. According to Hakola (2005:108), the truth in the gospel of John is closely linked to the person of Jesus. Jesus is the truth of God's revelation (1:14, 14:6). John encourages the audience to test the veracity of truth, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). One of the concepts of truth in harmony with Jesus' statement was expounded by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. For this thinker, truth is what completely correspond to reality, not with that transitory or ephemeral reality but with that which lasts or is eternal (Ntotsika, 2017:41). Thus, using the Aristotelian statement, the biblical statement can be understood and it can be known that the only eternal reality is God, therefore, the only truth. To worship God in truth is to observe in obedience the precepts of his doctrines. Thus, biblically worshipping in Spirit and truth refers to completely worshipping with sincerity and faith grounded in the truth about God (John 4:23-24). For Wright (2002:11), Christian worship integrates the whole person, the whole community, and the entire creation, enfolding the whole person loving God, as the Shema insists, with heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Therefore, in a church, worshipping in Spirit and truth should be about Christians partaking in the service of worship through liturgy that enriches the liturgy life,

according to Kruger and De Klerk (2016:1). A great deal of pastoral care is developed in the liturgy through the sacraments and a community life. This "*leitourgia*" (liturgy) is performed to provide people with a liveliest reality and most eloquent expression of the Church's life. It is not the act of men in the Church, but Christ in the Church, and it is a meaningful relationship. Grundmann (2007:1) maintains that the aspect of healing (physical and spiritual) has been present within the Christian's assembly from the beginning. It is evident in Matthew 10:1, where Jesus healed the sick and, in Luke's 16:15-18 where Jesus sent the disciples "to proclaim the good news and lay hands on the sick to be healed". As Louw (1997:79) points out, spiritual healing (*cura vitae*) that function the center of pastoral care.

1.2.2 Research problem

While respect for cultural diversity guarantees the promoting of human rights (Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001) and an essential task of the church, the co-existence of humans within an environment that is culturally diverse is complex, challenging, painful, and one of humanity's most significant problems. The church is in the community and exists for the sake of the community. Her mission is to cater and care for men in all dimensions. Therefore, the Church, faithful to her mission of making the kingdom of God present in the world also assumes the challenge of being present to defend and promote humanity in society. This is one of the theological approaches of the social responsibility of the Church and allows for pastoral care in the applicability of human rights. This is due to the persistent violations of human dignity that creates a distance between the "letter" and the "spirit" (Grindheim, 2001:97) of the rights of humankind.

Many churches have welcomed migrants and their pastors within their congregations. These believers have come from distant countries in pursuit of greater freedom and opportunities (Kritzinger & Mande, 2016:6). Unsurprisingly, members of the multicultural groups speak different languages and worship in different ways, displaying different spiritualities. Because migrants carry their religious and cultural customs with them, there is frequently an attempt to harmonise the many cultures between the local members of the congregation and the newcomers. However, Sarmiento (2014:606) contends that diverse groups may have contact in this space, but they often ignore the differences and similarities, leading to unfairness or prejudice.

The Hebrew writings reflect aspects of the Egyptian and Persian cultures (Siljanen, 2017:248-249) and the New Testament of Greek and Roman cultures, implying the need for understanding these cultures to interpret the Bible. Because globalisation is a fact of present times, the Bible sheds light on intercultural relations in the global village. Believers develop their spiritual formation through a multicultural community that exercises the fruits of the Holy Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22. In multicultural communities, people maintain, transmit, celebrate, and share their unique cultural ways of life, art, traditions, and behaviours. Lauterbach (2021:152) argues that these believers are more concerned with their transformation and the supernatural impact of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. Hence, the migrants are not joining the standard practices of the local church. Fight and refusal on their side to accommodate would be the less expected behaviour.

The existence of a language barrier is a reality because of suspicions between people who do not share the same understanding or approach in doing things. In that perspective, the newcomers are perceived as presenting a threat, a perception that is not always justified. In spite of the varied worship customs between the local church and the migrant joining the new church to accept people from other nations. According to Brunson *et al.* (2020:41), this phenomenon consisting of migrants from different nations has created several challenges for the faith community. Among other challenges a lack of a common tongue which may lead to misunderstandings and different worship styles based on diverse spiritualities. In some cases, it may even be related to homophobic prejudices, resulting in racist challenges. Homophobic and racist can exclude one another and can also act prejudiced toward one own race.

To address these challenges, many churches in South Africa (like in Tshwane, where the researcher lives) need to have specific strategies and goals aimed at engaging pedagogically with subjects connected to religious diversity. It is critical to consider the diverse religious context and would likely enable the comprehension of religious diversity. Marks *et al.* (2014:245) point out that misunderstanding religious diversity can literally put people in danger if they do not endeavour toward this deep understanding. Hence, the lack of knowledge on religious diversity by Christians using different worship styles contributes to conflicts in worship among believers. Basden (1999:33) argues that many Christians may be disturbed by the concept of worship

styles they do not recognise because they erroneously believe that all churches should worship in the same way. People who hold this perspective, according to Basden (1999:34), suffer from spiritual and cultural blindness, presuming that all Christians walk, talk, and worship in the same way.

For this reason, history has shown how worship has significantly evolved over centuries, among different customs, traditions, and denominations. In concurring with Basden (1999:34), today's congregational worship has probably a greater diversity of worship than at any time in the church's history. Thus, understanding the attitudes of tolerance, reciprocity, and civility between believers who profess different beliefs could enhance co-worship in unity.

The focus of this study is that true worship of God ought to be the very essence of a Christian's life. When believers worship God in truth (John 4:24), they need to know that He receives their devotion. The essence of worshipping is to be closer to God. Thus, worshipping should not only demonstrate love and devotion to God but also give believers the strength to obey his commands. Human understanding and faithfulness grow as a result of worship. If believers put anything or anybody above God's love, it implies they worship that object or person, that is, idolatry (Ex 20:3-6). Worshipping encourages God's children to appreciate him. If this is not the consequence of the church's worship, it can imply that it is not true but spurious, a simple form without essence (Morgenthaler, 1999:23).

An example of this in the Bible involve the Samaritan woman who asked a question due to a conflict between Jews and Samaritans that had lasted for centuries and directly interfered in their worship lifestyle: "where should one worship?" (John 4:20). God looks at the state of people's hearts when it comes to worship. His presence manifests where believers gather (Woo, 2009:16), regardless of colour, creed or style.

The researcher intends to analyse worship from a multicultural perspective. Thus, talking about worshipping in Spirit and truth in a church involves the complexities of the global culture and migration of the present time. Worship (*latreía*) is an attitude of extreme respect for the divine, expressed with singular actions of reverence and worship. It results in the renewal of values, exchanging the world's status quo for acceptance and trust in God's plan for justice in people's lives in practice, not just "by

mouth" (Jam 2:17; 1 John 3:18). Pearson (2019) defines worship (*Shachah*) in the Old Testament as kneeling, prostrating (primarily reflexive, in homage to royalty or God and humbly beseeching as in Ex 20:5, 2 Sam 16:4). Pearson (2019) also defines worship (*proskuneo*) in the New Testament as to kiss someone (the master's hand), to show reverence, kneel or prostrate, to submit, respect or supplicate as in Matthew 4:10 and John 4:24.

The church ought to seek to develop creative, critical, and dialogical forms of relationships between different members and contexts regarding different worship styles among the different cultures. Cultural diversity needs to be recognised, valued, and understood as a heritage of humanity, even when it requires efforts for coexistence between different peoples, cultures, and religions.

One of the most critical challenges facing humanity is to improve intercultural relationships (Kiss, 2005:215-216). Dialogue enforces relationships even between distinct cultural histories and creates a lively, cooperative, and creative solution to serious problems. Such a relationship especially between cultures ensures that there is cooperation between believers and enables the construction of a sustainable model of interactions. However, developing relationships between different people is not easy, even if they are church members. It is profoundly conflicting and dramatic. History reveals (Campbell, 2009:150) that interactions between people and social groups has resulted in wars, genocides, and colonisation processes. A particular behaviour by a certain socio-cultural group can be seen as "strange" and "offensive" by other believers (Kritzinger & Mande, 2016:5) because the logic cultural context that determines its meaning is different from the logic inherent in their cultural patterns. Thus, conversing with others - and not talking about them - seems to be the condition for developing a critical understanding of the Christians' actions, meanings, and significant structures (World Council of Churches, 1979).

Intercultural dialogue is an alternative to the world's uniformity and is considered liberating, especially given that humankind has diverse religious and cultural beliefs (O'Callaghan, 2017:38). It is a means through which cultures and religions can be brought together to worship and coexist and thereby replace the world's conventional individuality. However, the western world is still viewed as individualistic (Kealotswe, 2014:236), they prioritise the individual over the community, but many societies and

peoples in the global south are not; they understand the vital role of community and family unity (D'Souza, 2017:1). Hence, Hollinger (2020:893) suggests that in the global south, the contemporary Christians are more origin, not just for what they are, but for what they were at its inception of Christianity. Additionally, Bahovec (2015:336) also argues that the weak spiritual foundation of modern Western civilisation is the root of this dilemma and that individualism is why church growth is declining. Therefore, churches need to cultivate a culture of peace, respect and welcoming in its multiple and differentiated ways of being and manifesting itself (Woodward, 2013:28).

Regular worship that involves people from diverse and different cultures can be challenging, but it is worth it. This is because diverse worship groups are characterised by differences in worship styles and types of songs, art-consciousness, liturgy, and priorities (Van der Merve *et al.*, 2013:1-2). As the argument put forth by Maynard-Reid (2000:19), liturgy and culture must coexist in worship, which is the self-expression of a certain community. The presence of God in worship validates people's cultural expression. Or else, worship remains strange, imposed, and irrelevant unless it is grounded in people's lives and cultural experiences. Hence, Hiebert (1978:7) argues that worship should be at the heart of the Christian life. However, Basden (1999:33) noted that many receiving churches wish to worship with people of other cultures, but unconsciously they desire others to worship in the same way they do, or they try to ignore diversity.

Therefore, secularism in church or secular worship equates to no consensus on matters related to worship. This concept implies negation of "others" way of worship, considered contrary to local church acceptance. As explained by Schmemmann, (1972:2), secular worship is "negation of worship". In addition, the same author advocates two points to substantiate his argument. On the one hand, "it must be proven that the very concept of worship involves a specific understanding of man's relationship not just to God but also to the world". On the other hand, Secularism must be shown to reject or influence this idea of worship both explicitly and indirectly. Thus, if secularised worship is practised, it does not nurture, build, challenge, inspire or shape the spirituality of the congregation. Despite the effects of secularism on worship, Christian worship must remain centered on its mission. Furthermore, Conaty (1977:290) is of the view that both believers and non-believers are important as long

as man lives. However, holiness, or communion with God, is truly found in the heart of man, "in Spirit and in truth" not in Jerusalem, Gerizim, or Rome.

The church should be the best place to guide believers and allow them to talk about these challenges as prophetic voices to fulfil Christ's mandate as a peacemaker in the world (Resane, 2020a:5). The church must allow members to gain a better understanding that although diversity is associated with different cultural, traditional, personal, and other differences, there is a commonality: Jesus Christ. Furthermore, that through conventional worship, achieving a multicultural church is possible because Christians represent one voice and one body of Christ.

In a church, the Bible must define and direct worship. Basden (1999:19) is correct in stating that Christians must turn to Holy Scripture as their primary source of understanding worship. For example, the first four of the Ten Commandments deal with worship (Ex 20:3-8). Divine worship, according to John 4:24, is worship "in Spirit and truth". Therefore, worship services must be guided by the Scriptures and filled with God's Word and the Holy Spirit. At the same time, however, a multicultural church ought also to provide a worship service that serves diverse cultures. The better the church fulfils this role, the more effective its outreach and service would be. The Church should follow the biblical principles in matters related to worship. In this study, the gospel of Jesus Christ in a multicultural church defines the church's foundation (Matt 7:24-27). The church is universal because salvation reaches all who believe, both Jew and Gentile. In concurring with Lee (2010:6), a multicultural church "affirms the absolute value, authority and dignity of individuals and expresses the belief that all are created in the likeness of God. Hence, understanding diversity based on the biblical foundation gives us a different perspective to see and relate to others".

Since ancient times, multicultural worship has been a challenge (Blount & Tisdale, 2000:x). John 4:24 teaches the direction or course that biblical worship should take and what the worship of true worshipers should look like. A model can be the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, and it can be every believer's primary vocation. Literature show that people from other cultures and religious beliefs such as John the Baptist's disciples, were not always welcomed by the Johannine traditional community (John 1:35-42). Also excluded were Greek Hellenists (Thomaskutty, 2020:4; John 7:35, 12:20-21), Samaritans (John 4:39-42)

and Jews (John 9:22-23). The co-existence among individuals who did not share the same ideas and values was difficult, because of that, it makes worshipping together a challenge. Being Samaritan did not discourage the Samaritan woman to know the gift of God. Inculturation is an issue that believers must take seriously when evangelising to people (Nche *et al.*, 2016:6). In this context, (Roxborough, 2014:5) inculturation focuses on transforming culture to become more authentic to Christian beliefs. It, too, is syncretic and must be assessed. The fact that it is purposeful does not negate its syncretic nature or the need to evaluate if it is fit for the culture and gospel. Hence for Potgieter (2016:1) multicultural implies recognising, accepting and celebrating other diversity present in the church and the community.

The encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well is an example of how a believer should relate to other people. This encounter can be described as the gospel's victory over socio-cultural prejudices (Smuts, 2019:133). By accepting and communing with a "heathen" woman, Jesus transgressed several social customs and serves as a model of believers' behaviour toward people that do not form a part of their immediate world and culture. In travelling through Samaria and asking a Samaritan woman for water (Mukansengimana-Nyirimana & Draper, 2012:300), Jesus was breaking down centuries-old barriers of cultural prejudice.

A multicultural congregation embraces and accepts diverse groups as part of the faith community. Shuler (2019:1) writes that clear goals and objectives are essential to creating an effective multicultural congregation. To minimise conflict, acknowledging differences and respecting differences are the most important goals for building a productive interaction between cultures. The diversity of Christian communities can be seen as nourishing pastoral counseling. Furthermore, some researchers like Clinebell and Mckeever (2011:2) agree that pastoral care and counseling are important instruments that a church can use to resolve problems. Therefore, an effective multicultural congregation must commit to reconciliation before getting beyond the exterior appearances of diversity and enjoying the assembly of diverse individuals in a worship service.

The study hypothesises that the Holy Spirit can get believers out of their comfort zones and unite them with the gospel message (Eph 4:11-12). When congregants share in

charismatic worship that leaves room for diverse cultural and religious traditions, only then can multicultural congregations accommodate the diversity of their members.

True worshippers experience God's presence and involvement in several places. Paul affirmed that true worshippers are those "who serve God by his Spirit, not trusting in the flesh, but rejoicing in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:3). Wheeler and Whaley (2011:21) also stress that a true worshipper must be "transformed by the renewing of their mind" to reveal to the unredeemed world the "good, acceptable, and perfect will of God". It is congregational leaders that ought to encourage and affirm especially worshippers with different identities of other cultural groups in their modern congregations. In addition, understanding culture can help believers cultivate a respectful attitude towards one another build better relationships and mitigate church conflict. In this study, church conflict refers to conflicts that arises from differences in how different faith community and cultures interpret and apply the gospel.

1.3 Research questions, Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 The main research question of this study was:

How can worship help solve conflict experienced in a multicultural church?

The following subquestions supported the inquiry into the central question:

Subquestions:

- Can a descriptive literature study provide knowledge on conflicts that members experience in a multicultural church in the South African context?
- What are interpretative aspects from a socio-cultural paradigm essential to assist with conflict in a multicultural church?
- What normative aspects can be learned from Scripture and the theological paradigm of Pentecostalism about multicultural inter-relationships in public worship?
- What pragmatic guidelines can be formulated to assist a pastor and members with conflict in a multicultural church?

1.3.2 Aim and objectives of the Research

This study aimed to investigate how worship can help resolve conflict between members in a multicultural congregation when they worship in Spirit and truth.

The objectives of the study were:

- To determine what can be learned from a descriptive literature study about the experiences of members of a multicultural church.
- To determine interpretative aspects from a socio-cultural paradigm are essential to assist with conflict in a multicultural church.
- To determine normative aspects that can be learned from Scripture and a theological paradigm of Pentecostalism about multicultural inter-relationships in the context of worship.
- To determine paradigmatic guidelines that can be formulated to assist members and pastors in understanding how conflict in multicultural church can be resolved by means of worship.

1.4 Value of the study

Woodward and Pattison (2000:2) define pastoral study as the theological reflection and the foundation that guides pastoral care as directed towards ensuring the well-being of the individual Christian flock. Furthermore, they emphasise that pastoral theology is “theological activity and tradition” associated with ‘shepherding’ or ‘pastoring’ and is characteristic of this field. Finally, Louw (1998:66-68) sustains that pastoral care is an encounter. This encounter is an event of knowledge, an interpretation process that is characterised by dualities; encounter implies experience, reciprocity and interaction; encounter involves influencing as well as transforming and changing.

In this study, the conflict that accompanies multicultural congregations as a result of members being from diverse backgrounds was described and analysed to determine how to mitigate culturally diverse conflict among church members. The findings of the study’s analysis can guide how pastors and members can respond in a biblical and

responsible manner. Furthermore, the findings can serve as a tool that can assist in managing conflict in such congregations. The researcher was motivated to conduct this study by observing conflicts in a multicultural church and it that motivated her to develop such a model. In essence, that is where this research study emanates from.

1.5 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that there is a regular occurrence of misunderstandings and conflicts in a multicultural church and this largely happen due to different perceptions of worship. Therefore, worship is proposed as a possible guideline for unique challenges in a multicultural church.

1.6 Research methodology

This study was conducted through employing a comparative literature and grammatical-historical exegesis of some Scriptural passages to clarify the subject. First, the researcher selected sources through specialised database search at the NWU Libguide, and google scholar using a few keywords. Sources included books, journals, reports, case studies, dissertations, and encyclopaedias. The collection of data is an integral part of every research and the process ought to be guided by a methodology. Sefotho (2015:31) states that a methodology addresses the why, what, from where, when, and how data is collected and analysed. There are several research models that are available for use especially when conducting research in practical theology. According to Ballard and Pritchard (2006:71), a basic model for doing practical theology (and in the process covering the aspects at work in a situation where interaction between theory and praxis is set into motion) is suggested by the widespread use of the so-called pastoral cycle. There are numerous variations and refinements of this basic method that exist. However, to avoid the risk of oversimplification, the following cycle typifies the most usual deployment of practical theological research: The approach starts with the present situation, which is subject to analysis in order to reveal the reality of what is going on. This is followed by a stage that involves theological reflection, asking how the gospel should be heard in these circumstances to elucidate the path of Christian obedience. On this basis, plans can be laid, goals articulated, and resources deployed. This in turn leads to action, which becomes the basis for further reflection and the cycle continues (Green, 1990:27,29).

1.6.1 Comparative literature study

The literature study focuses on establishing the theoretical roots of the research (Kumar, 2019:58), explaining the texts, recognising their phonetic and semantic categories, giving a comparative-historical analysis perspective, and helping the researcher integrate the findings with the existing body of knowledge.

The first objective of the literature study was to determine guidelines that may help members and leaders to manage multicultural conflict.

Secondly, the researcher utilised sources on multicultural worship from social sciences and religious studies. This multicultural conflict has been visited by Naidoo (2017:1-2) among others (Dougherty & Huyser, 2008:25-26). According to this author, the root for multicultural conflicts in a worship community is complex relationships. It stem from unequal relationships of dominance, submission, resistance, and change. People interact within these kinds of Christian communities through classifications of meanings religious beliefs, communal rituals and shared traditions (Naidoo, 2017:2). Strecker (2018:7) also supports this view, which leads to challenges like cultural differences, such as language, sub-culture, understanding of church, minorities and majorities, natural, social cliques, or a different upbringing. All these factors contribute to conflict within a worship church community.

The second objective of the literature study is to enable members of a multicultural church to comprehend their own and others' cultures and nurture respect, empathy, and acceptance of others. Such a profound knowledge can strengthen the relationship and thereby bridge the gap between believers from diverse backgrounds (Grasso, 2016:4).

Finally, the study used a deductive approach which starts with a compelling social theory from general principles and presuppositions then tests its implications with data. The researcher studies published scholarly studies on theories and then tested the hypotheses that may have emerged from those theories to reach a more particular conclusion (DeCarlo, 2018:155).

1.6.2 Exegetical method

By definition, a method is a set of procedures, an orderly way that is used to analyse an object. An exegetical method is a tool that lets the Scripture guide the interpretation (Zuck, 2002:10) and that helps interpret the passage. Subsequently, it leads to the discovery of meaning and implications of a biblical text with the purpose of resolving an interpretive problem in the text in order to determine its original meaning. This includes analysis of the text, analysis of its social and historical environment, and lastly, analysis of its contents. The exegetical method aims to let the text speak for itself and helps the reader to contextualise the meaning of a passage in their own culture.

The study employed a grammatical-historical approach and used the exegetical task to interpret the meaning of worship in Spirit and truth (John 4:23). The grammatical-historical approach refers to the literary study of biblical passages which considers the historical background of its original context and the literary genre and grammar of the text. The objective of using this approach is to understand the author's intended message(s) for its target recipient(s), as far as it is possible to do so. In addition, the researcher intended to assess the effect of cultural differences on the interactions between believers at a mission church and compare it to biblical guidelines for worship in Spirit and truth.

The method of grammatical-historical exegesis proposes a scientific study of biblical texts based on the grammatical and historical dimensions of the text, which can support its proper interpretation (Aune, 2010:102). It understands that biblical texts are expressions of divine revelation to humanity in very concrete and defined historical situations. The grammatical aspect is important because these hermeneutic and exegesis principles of grammatical-historical interpretation derive from the Bible. It attempts to explain a possible intention of the author of a biblical text for its original audience (McCartney & Clayton, 1994:112). Interpretation is performed according to grammatical and semantic rules common to the exegesis of any literary text, based on the situation of the author and readers. The grammatical-historical method is linked to the analysis of the grammar of the text in the light of the historical narrative contained in the text. The more complicated part of grammatical-historical exegesis, according to Longman (1990:141), is to make the authorial intention the goal of the exegesis.

This search for the original historical sense still protects against the improper manipulation of the sense of the texts by interests or interpretations that are merely subjective or determined by ideological or social class positions.

The researcher used a pentecostal hermeneutic. Pentecostal hermeneutics can be understood as reading the Bible with the preunderstanding of Spirit baptism and subsequent charismatic encounters with the Spirit. Pentecostal hermeneutics is characterised by its emphasis on the experience of the Spirit, on the existence of spiritual gifts, and the truth of biblical accounts. Pentecostal hermeneutic is built on the dialogical interdependence between Scripture, Spirit, and community (Archer, 2001:2). Nel (2015a:8) also affirms that pentecostal hermeneutics approaches post-modern assumptions such as the diversity of meaning and the dialogical role of experience. An important part of pentecostal hermeneutics is the expectation to re-experience biblical texts.

1.7 Ethical considerations

As a standard practice, all research should be carried out within the boundaries of acceptable ethical practice for research. The literature study is frequently done in religious studies, and it requires careful consideration of the researcher's ethical responsibility. According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:57), ethics can be defined as "the moral principles which determine the rules and expectations of correct conduct in a given setting". The researcher attempted to contribute new knowledge to existing literature especially on intercultural conflict resolution in multicultural churches. The ethics risk was low because this was a comparative literature study and grammatical-historical exegesis of relevant passages from the Bible. The researcher did not generate any data from participants. However, the researcher conducted a literature search of research sources ethically and acknowledged the authors of cited sources. The study seek ethics approval from the Research Ethics Committee, Theology Faculty of North-West University. The study will benefit multicultural churches.

1.8 Provisional classification of chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 (study overview) introduce the research and give a broad study outline. The chapter include a brief overview of the purpose of the study, a discussion of what compelled the researcher to embark on the proposed topic, the rationale of the study and the research questions. Finally, the aim and objectives indicate the study process and how much the outcome of the findings guided the methodology.

Chapter 2 - Unique challenges of a multicultural church

The chapter determine what can be learned from a descriptive literature study about members' experiences in a multicultural church.

Chapter 3 - Solving conflict in a multicultural church.

Chapter 3 determine the particular interpretative aspects from a socio-cultural paradigm that are essential to assist with conflict in a multicultural church.

Chapter 4 - Scriptures and multicultural inter-relationships.

Chapter 4 determine what normative aspects can be learned from Scripture and a theological paradigm of Pentecostalism about multicultural inter-relationships.

Chapter 5 - Guidelines assisting the pastor with conflict in a multicultural church.

Chapter 5 reports on paradigmatic guidelines that can be formulated to assist a pastor with conflict in a multicultural church.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter 6 conclude the study and evaluate how the objectives have been met. The chapter propose solutions that should be acceptable to all different cultural groups. Finally, practical recommendations are made for further research on the topic.

1.9 Schematic presentation of the research procedure

The research can be outlined according to the following schematic presentation.

<p>Research title: A comparative literature study of the place of worship in pastoral counseling in a multi-cultural church facing conflict</p>		
<p>Research question</p> <p>In what way can worship help solve challenges of conflict experienced in a multicultural church?</p>	<p>Aim and objectives</p> <p>Aim: to examine ways through which worship can help solve challenges experienced in a multicultural church and propose possible solutions to assist believers and pastors of a multicultural church.</p> <p>Objective: to determine from socio-cultural aspect to assist with solving conflict in multicultural, apply the learnings of scriptures and theological paradigm about multicultural inter-relationships, and draw recommended guidelines to assist pastors in a multicultural church.</p>	<p>Research method</p> <p>Literature study and grammatical-historical exegesis.</p>

Task and Question	Objective	Chapter 2: Literature review
Descriptive task: What is going on?	To describe the unique challenges and conflicts among members in a multicultural church.	Literature study
Task and question	Objective	Chapter 3: Literature review
Interpretative task: Why is this going on?	To determine what interpretative aspects from a socio-cultural paradigm are important to assist with conflict in a multicultural church.	Literature study
Task and question	Objective	Chapter 4: Biblical perspective on worship
Normative task: What should be going on?	To determine what normative aspects can be learned from Scripture and the theological paradigm about multicultural inter-relationships.	Grammatical-historical exegesis
Task and question	Objective	Chapter 5: Application of the findings

<p>Pragmatic task:</p> <p>How are we going to respond?</p>	<p>To determine paradigmatic guidelines that can be formulated to assist a pastor in understanding how conflict in a multicultural church can be resolved by means of worship.</p>	<p>Practical theological</p>
		<p>Chapter 6</p>
		<p>The concluding part of the study evaluates how the objectives have been met, proposing solutions for different cultural groups. Practical recommendations for new research was also proposed.</p>

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the research along with a general study outline. Chapter 2 examines the lessons from the literature study applying the descriptive task of Osmer's (2008) model and asks, 'What is going on?' The goal is to acquire data to comprehend certain events, situations, and the context in which they occur in a multicultural church. These data assist in examining conflict dynamics and trends in particular cases or contexts. The spirituality of presence is at the core of this work. According to Osmer (2008:33-34), the descriptive duty is grounded by "a spirituality of present". Also, a descriptive study aims to attend to what is going on in members, leaders, and the church's lives (Osmer, 2008:34). The concept behind this exercise is "priestly hearing", which takes the form of listening to members' daily lives and the situation in the church in God's presence (Osmer, 2008:33-34). In turn, this exercise has empowered churches to learn and understand the value of priestly listening in a place of worship because pastoral care in a multicultural church is more effective when different people listen to one another's stories (Breed & Du Plessis, (2020:6).

2.1.2 Worship: sacred and precious period in faith meeting places

Research on worship has evidenced a renewed interest in this subject lately. Bredenkamp and Schoeman (2015:137) assert that true worship is one of the great driving forces, influencing church members to move between churches rather than doctrinal, geographical or biblical teaching. In South Africa, religious diversity presents new forms of Christian experience (Burchardt, 2017:260), exhibiting an understanding of cultural differences and personal transformation. Churches in the social area have seen several developments in their practices. For instance, Pentecostal churches have impacted believers' social life and economic order while dismantling numerous man made boundaries (Johnston, 2008:28). This is evident from most Pentecostal congregations' moral character and life orientation. Hence, Sochor (2020) strongly emphasises that Christians cannot ignore social issues like sinful behaviours (Phil 2:15-16) that can hinder us from preparing to be the light in the world according to the

understanding of biblical teaching about true worship, the example of Christ and the lessons of history. However, multicultural churches face challenges that can be presented today in a diverse community. Sometimes these intolerances of others manifest themselves in real fights. In many places, it is more a question of generalised relativist indifference related to the disappointment and the crisis of ideologies that occurred as a reaction to everything that seems oppressive. Consequently, this behaviour harms the church and social life in general, making it difficult for Christians to want to worship together.

2.2 Challenges posed by multiculturalism to a church

In this section, the author analyses concepts related to the place of worship and its activities; therefore, this work begins with a lateral understanding of a multicultural church facing conflict. The author explores the ambiguity and strength of a multicultural church by defining concepts that allow a better overview of the place of worship, referring to and discussing different challenges caused by diversity. Mainly, the dissertation refers to associated concepts and addresses the challenges posed by multiculturalism for a church. Worship must emerge as a discipline that brings a new way of seeing, living together, and getting to know the diversities that exist in everyday life; by creating opportunities for Christians to understand and incorporate respect for others and collaborate in building a more harmonious and peaceful society. Some authors (Creanza *et al.*, 2017:7782) also indicate that contact between other people and cultures proved to be, from an early age, one of the driving forces behind the evolution of societies. No one lives in a homogeneous or egalitarian world, including churches where Christians worship. Different cultures worship in the same space; not everyone has the same recognition and power. However, having a place to worship helps Christians feel closer to God, find like-minded Christians and feel part of a community of believers who come together regularly to express their faith and grow spiritually (Teo, 2017:143). Hence, Christianity is founded on worship (Robertson, 1965:25).

2.2.1 Place of worship

A Christian place of worship is referred to as a church, meaning a gathering of people for worship. The Christian church is where people come together to worship and praise

God. Some people describe this place as a beautiful building, others describe it as a religious organisation, but the church is a living organism. It is not built with blocks and cement but with living stones (1 Pet 2:4-8). The church is the place God's Son bought with his blood and to which all the saved belong, the one true universal church (Thiesen (1972:310). As the unique witness to Jesus Christ, the church is governed by the Scriptural witness and the Spirit because of its Spirit-enabled orientation to Jesus Christ and, through him, to the triune God (Healy, 2000:17-18). The Bible defines the church as the union of all those called of God, who, by the Holy Spirit, believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God sent into the world to redeem them from their sins (Eph 4:13, 12:4-5). Thus, the church refers to all diverse Christian groups (Healy 2000:6), and it is distinct from and superior to all other religious and nonreligious entities. In the words of Vosko (2006:22), the church is a place of worship where Christians perform the many rituals that commemorate these meetings between God and people throughout the life cycle.

Therefore, the church as an organism symbolise the spiritual union of all saved in Jesus Christ. In Matthew 16:13-20 Jesus said some specific keys about the church that the researcher extracted because they are crucial. Jesus speaks of the church: a) The church is His; b) He builds it up; c) Disclosure of the Holy Spirit (not men's ideas, but the conviction that the Spirit God is the one who acts, making it work and be powerful; d) She has the correct doctrine (based and established in Christ); and e) She has authority and power Christ himself granted to help change human beings and the world. In this line of thought, ecclesial political theologians Hauerwas and Wells (2011:18) view the church as a people assembled only through the strength of Christ's presence among them.

The above explanation and description are evident in the Scripture that the church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:22, 5:25, 32). The Body of Christ illustration allows us to understand how Christ manages, watches over, and cares for the church as an organism. When the Bible refers to the church as the body of Christ, Christians must know that it supports not only the cohesion of the Christian community but also the truth that the body of Christ cannot be divided from Christ. Consequently, the church is created to function like an organism since it is the very body of Christ. Therefore,

regardless of the number of people, the church's existence is to carry out its function here on earth: to worship God, preach the good news to the world and serve others.

The concept of church, the figures she represents, and her mission demand and describes something indisputable: 'church unity' which is encouraged and expressed in John 17:21-23, the high priestly prayer, a unity generated according to the will of God the Father, through his son Jesus Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit. The unity of the church in its complexity presents many exciting and vital features. The church is a multiform body characterised by differences. The church must know when and how to join or exclude itself from certain groups or movements that are intent on keeping together (Berkouwer, 1976:45). Accordingly to Paul (Eph 3:10), the church aims to share God's infinite wisdom throughout the world according to God's eternal purpose, established in Christ. Even though it seems burdensome, Christian unity is fundamental, as it has some purposes, such as glorifying God, reaching unbelievers, conferring growth and maturity, and strengthening and reviving God's people. For this, the church needs to clarify, teach and work on basic and practical principles of Christian unity.

The place of worship was a contention and controversy between Jews and Samaritans during Jesus' time based on Scripture. Traditionally, the place of worship is closely connected with a holy place, Mount Gerizim for Samaritans and Jerusalem for Jews (Was, 2017:45). In John 4, Jesus clarifies to the Samaritan woman that the place of worship would no longer be Jerusalem or Mount Samaria. There would no longer be a place in the physical sense, like a mountain, but God's character in the sense of whether there is a place continues. Jesus clarifies this by establishing that He would be where two or three are gathered in his name (Matt 18:19-20). The place is not physical but, let us say, moral, and spiritual. That is to say, it is where his name and authority are recognised.

Worshipping God is not restricted to a particular place or location, as Wong (2021:6) argues that the gift of grace is not out of reach. Wong's argument was evident during the lockdown due to COVID-19. Christians worship God anywhere, at home, online, and at work. Therefore, it is not where but how that counts in worship. True worship occupies an important place in Christian life because it is central to the story of

redemption (Gudgeon, 2021:13). By its spiritual nature, true worship is only possible when prompted by the work of the Holy Spirit within us (John 4:23-24).

For this reason, the highest and most dignified activity that human beings of all cultures can engage in is true worship since true worship flows from empowerment with divine love, empowering believers to treat conflicts in their midst in a God-honouring way. Unfortunately, a lack of understanding of the importance of the integral mission of the church in contemporary society opens precedents for interpretations and action of the church that is not consistent with the pillars of the Holy Scriptures. Actions rather than deeds often judge Christians because the church's authority is based on discipleship sincerity. Subsequently, this demonstrates God's love for people and the natural world (Percy, 2016:40).

2.2.2 Contemporary understanding of the place of worship

In a multicultural society, if a person wants to see how the will of man prevail, they ask for a place where people meet to worship. Likely, the answer would be to look for a place where God is honoured or where they preach the Word of God. Christians today believe that they can worship wherever they are. However, the church is the place of worship God chose to work through here on earth. God created the church (Matt 16:18) not as a venue for social gatherings or a convenient meeting place. Geiger and Peck (2016:6) said that God forms the church providentially to bless the world as a holy gathering of people who make disciples. Based on Geiger and Peck's beliefs, the church is designed to have a steady rhythm of gathering people and scattering them to gather more. God has always required his people to build places of worship for him, as Paul says, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12), even in periods of extreme poverty and hardship. Therefore, worshipers need a church just as much as a family needs a house, whether a small grassy hut or a massive stone cathedral. And this place is the church, "and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18).

Vosko (2006:xv) adds that an earnest place of worship is not designed by an architectural or artistic idea but by liturgy. In other words, the physical structure must first serve the assembly's worship and foster engagement. Hence, Coelho Filho refers to a place of worship as a liturgical or sacred place. From Coelho Filho (2019:653)

point of view, the liturgical spaces must be locations where God's people can actively participate in setting up, outfitting, worshipping, planning and other potential actions through the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the place must be where fundamental theology is practised in the total sense of the Word.

Many people believe a place of worship can be a house church, a building labelled a church, a majestic cathedral, or a synagogue. These serve the same purpose: to hear the Gospel, celebrate communion in the assembly and sing praises to the Lord. They argue that Jesus often preached at the synagogue (Matassa, 2018:33). The church and the synagogue indeed share many similarities. Still, they differ significantly in several other ways: "I will build my church" (Matt 16:18) offers a powerful contrast. Hence this could not refer to the synagogue because, before the existence of the Christian church, there were synagogues, places where Jews gathered to praise God and learn more about the Scripture together.

Notwithstanding, they neglected to mention in words reminiscent of John 9:29 that Jews agreed to exclude anyone who confessed Jesus as Messiah from the synagogue. Jesus attended synagogues with his disciples, setting an example for us (Matt 4:23). But, after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the disciples began to meet regularly to praise God and learn as they had done in the synagogues before. They started by meeting in the temple courtyard and their homes, then in more prominent places when they had many members (Acts 2:46). Thus, the church as we know it today was born for every Christian of different races and ages. This shift shows the general thrust of the biblical story, which expands the boundaries of the covenant people to include all humankind. In the Old Testament, it is evident that the number of Abraham's children will be like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore (Gen 22:17). The New Testament amazement is that, through the New Covenant, these children will come from every tribe, language, and nation (Rev 7:9). This reflects characteristics of a multicultural church. In the following section, the researcher examines whether the church is multicultural.

2.2.3 Is the place of worship multicultural?

The church must reflect both diversity and unity because it is the body of Christ (Van der Borght, 2011:319). To fully integrate all Christian from different cultures into the

place of worship, the local church host must actively resist the dominance and suppression of the newcomers despite the researcher's experience in a multicultural congregation. No believer should be excluded on the ground of culture because spiritual unity must be manifested in acts of common worship, fellowship, and harmony (Brown, 2022:49). Additionally, the church must reflect every race and culture and be united because Christ is for all. A multicultural church is no exception to the church of Christ. Therefore, it is essential to understand what a multicultural church is. The author refers to different scholars and the Bible to better understand the definition of a multicultural church.

Multicultural is characterised as "having an understanding of various cultures and adapting to them" (Lin, 2020:1). The term "multicultural" is applied throughout the study instead of ethnicity when referring to different cultures represented in the South African community. In Christian churches, the phrase "multicultural" denotes a departure from the standard of gatherings of believers based on their immense ethnic or cultural history. In this sense, there is truth in what Rhodes (1998:17) opines that a multicultural church is uniquely positioned to reach the great diversity of God's people who reside in our communities and serve as a role model for our culture for how to live in harmony despite differences. To carry out the Great Commission, the Christian church must be multicultural, especially at the local church level. The Gospel can be contemplated as more plausible in a multicultural congregation in the postmodern age, according to Rhodes (1998:18).

Most logically, the research believes that a multicultural church is consistent with the church's nature of being a redemptive community of baptised believers reflecting the new humanity in Christ as Paul stated (Eph 2:11-22). Furthermore, with people of diverse ethnicities and cultures, the local church is privileged to demonstrate how the Holy Spirit has broken down the walls of animosity and hatred within them. Therefore, the action of a multicultural church can contribute to the mission entrusted to her by Jesus, setting an example of solid and unified behaviour of camaraderie in an increasingly fragmented and conflicted world.

2.2.4 Multicultural congregation reflects the whole church to the world

A church with diverse cultures paints a picture of heavenly worship because every nation, tribe, people, and language worship together around the throne of God (Rev 7:9-12). The local church has the providential privilege of demonstrating this aspect of the unified worship experience that would occur in the future heavenly community. Based on the researcher's experience and past observation, certain local churches exhibit certain aspects of a unified worship experience, like the Apostolic Faith Mission in Sunnyside (AFM Sunnyside). This congregation has been a multicultural church for more than two decades. A diverse range of cultures as well as over twenty more nationalities, are represented in this congregation. Despite the potential dangers of division, this diversity in a congregation can also reflect the church in heaven described in Revelation 7:9.

Therefore, a multicultural congregation is a church that loves old and young people, where Greek or Jews, or any other language is spoken. This church welcomes people from different places who are different from other members of the congregation. It consist of people of different economic status, gender, and cultures who are capable of being welcoming and loving, despite their its diversity and without prejudice. For example, the AFM Sunnyside testifies to the merging and integrating cultures and languages, the whole Pentecost! A multicultural congregation represents the community and church while celebrating cultural diversity Potgieter (2016:1). Marzouk (2019:15) also points out that a multicultural church celebrates racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural heterogeneity. In such a hypothetical church, people ought to stand side by side without being affected or impacted by one another. A multicultural congregation's reality confirms conflict between unity and division that many churches face and the discrepancy between the idealised picture of the church that can be gleaned from the Scriptures and the experience of a particular community. Despite conflict, divisions and other challenges faced by multi-racial churches, the world expect to witness unity among the diverse congregants who should work to live in a way that spreads the joy of Christ to all people, despite conflictual differences among Christians.

2.2.5 Purpose of a multicultural congregation

The church occupies the central point of God's purpose for the world and is the agent God promoted to spread the Gospel. Naidoo (2017:5) believes that the task of multicultural churches is to successfully bring together Christians from different racial groupings in a nation where religious activity is still largely segregated. Marzouk (2019:7) also understands a multicultural church as a missional church that offers pastoral care to individuals in need, particularly those who experience fear and anxiety due to global changes. However, according to Bower (2017:7), a multicultural church tries embodying the church of Christ while finding methods to respect, embrace, and even celebrate a diversity of cultural origins. Furthermore, Bower (2017:6) contends that a multicultural congregation intentionally engages with cultures and not just a combination of races and nationalities. Multicultural congregation deliberately seeks to bring people together from many cultural origins as a sacramental and missional community in the city.

For Naidoo (2017:2), a multicultural congregation creates and applies multiple paradigms for sharing the Gospel through actions and beliefs that consider a multicultural audience's demands. However, Davis (2003:2) believes that multicultural congregations endeavour to empower leadership procedures. That includes varied social voices in the congregation's decision-making structures and reconciliatory, in addition to relational processes that accept and embrace a diversity of people.

For Rhodes (1998:20), a multicultural congregation is necessary for the survival of the local communities. According to Rhodes' Bible interpretation, God has always intended for the church to be multicultural. Therefore, this model church publicly declares unity towards shared belief in Jesus Christ. In support of this statement, Rhodes (1998:20) cites Genesis 1 to show that God constantly takes pleasure in creating opposites that complement one another rather than competing with one another and opposites that harmonise rather than clash. The following section analyses whether conflicts are new in Christian ministry in understanding the Christian faith and forming a community based on that faith.

2.3 Overview of worship conflict in Christian ministry and multicultural congregations

Since the beginning, it is evident from the Bible that there have always been conflicts in the church. Largely, the church dealt and todate, deals with tensions caused by divisions. Christians live in a fateful time where many believers are divided. People are no longer committed to the truth or the alliance of love. Christians should be aware that they are undergoing progressive sanctification, and the church is made up of people set apart by God and for God (1 Cor 1:1-3). Jesus represented and taught the truth that there should be no division or discrimination between Israel and other countries regarding God (John 4: 4-42; Luke 9:51-56; Matt 15:21-28). Paul stated (Eph 3:6), "The Gentiles are co-workers, members of the same body, and co-participants in the pledge in Christ Jesus through the gospel". Subsequently, everyone who follows Christ is of the same blood. Therefore, there should be no favouritism among them based on socioeconomic status, nationality, ethnicity, or colour, "One in Christ Jesus" refers to the international human bond that makes up God's elect (Gal 3:28).

The balance of consistency and variety in Christian worship in South Africa is fascinating. People practice the same structures and services every Christian has practised for the past two thousand years, but they do so in unique ways. However, scholars, community and church members are sometimes confused by and do not appreciate the varied worship styles used by Christians. Some among Christians claim that the lack of appreciation of each other's worship styles (Brown, 2003:3) is as a result of cultural differences. Lack of appreciation of different worship style leads to conflict and as seen in the Bible, in Genesis 4:3-8, it is written that the first conflict following the Fall was over worship. In the New Testament, Paul fights against the Corinthian Christians' propensity to split into different groups under various leaders (1 Cor 1-4). Disageements that arise in the church, including that caused by conflicts, as has happened since the church's early years, have caused separation among the various church members.

The Gospel of John proves that conflict is not new in Christian ministry (John 2:12-25). Kingsbury (1987:67) also confirms the cause of conflict between Jesus and the Jews was largely caused by practices of Jews particularly that they demonstrated devotion in synagogues, which was seen as against worshipping God rather as

gaining attention from the public. According to Richard (2019:1), the aforesaid conflict between Jesus and the religious leader, Jesus offered alternative thoughts, an alternative perspective on reality, and a distinct way of thinking. As opposed to Jesus, who represented truth, the Jews were buried in tradition. Jesus held a different worldview from the Jewish authorities and saw the world differently. Richard's (2019) point is that Jesus and the Jews had a unique perspective on the world.

According to Luke in Acts (1-5), there were some disputes among the early Christians because of interpersonal prejudices and significant discrepancies in how they understood essential Old Testament rituals and stories. To ease these conflicts, devoted apostles and leaders turned to the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures for direction (Neh 5:9; Matt 18:23-35). Conflict situations are painful but not always harmful (Lathrop, 2015:186). In contrast, Lathrop believes that, when managed correctly, conflict can become the driving force for positive change in the church. Hence, styles of worship are prevalent among Christians.

2.3.1 Challenge to worship in unison as a community

If a person studies South Africa's historical foundation, the challenge to worship together was laid way back on the political system in place in the country for decades, if not centuries. Various regulations directly impeded or indirectly the Church's charitable activities (Randall, 2072:13). The pastoral care of whites and evangelisation of people of colour were maintained separately within the church, according to Randall (1972:18). This truth called for the fundamental reformation of the churches. According to Randall this division was encouraged by the Nationalist Government's separate development agenda. In this research, reformation denotes worship-reformation, which means that the Church should still worship together and depending on the enlightenment, empowerment, guidance and the moving of the Spirit that propels us into a life of sincere and true service to the Lord and not to tradition.

Kuyler (2017:13), in support of Richardson's (1986:1) argument, agrees that apartheid or separation between people is a sin, and its moral and theological justifications are travesties of the Gospel. However, as a believer, the researcher believes there is little call for downplaying the past or renouncing the churches' current convictions; otherwise, their consciences would suffer. Oliver (2011:72) also argues that there needs to be a reduction of apologetic confrontations, particularly between the

churches, to engage in a critical intellectual effort with clarity when analysing historical divisions of the Christian universe.

2.3.2 The church in perspective of biblical teaching

As Christians, multiculturalism poses a challenge because embracing it requires us to consider how others see us (Naidoo, 2017:1). Hence, the presence of the other, even if ignoring and rejecting, it does not leave us indifferent. By interacting and coexisting with this reality, Christians know that encountering different cultures questions their deep sense of self (Rosner, 2017:42). God intends that human beings prioritise worship over cultural differences. Zaki (2014:1) believes that Christians must avoid idolising a specific culture in Christian worship and should focus on worship as the heart of the Christian church. In contrast to this suggestion, it calls Christians to examine our culture critically in light of biblical teachings, rather than becoming antisocial. Zaki (2014:1) put forth the following phrase: The wise church resists cultural elements that undermine the integrity of the gospel and joyfully embrace the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who comes to each culture but are not constrained by any culture (John 15:19). In support of this, Rosner (2017:44) says that the New Testament teaches that believers should identify themselves with Christ, not with cultural distinctions because believers are all equal in value and status. True worship confronts the injustice and oppression that permeate local cultures (Rom 12:2). Thus, justice can “flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream”, and grace can abound. It also gives us the courage to work together for reconciliation (Amos 5:24).

Hence, this priority requires God’s followers to worship according to the precepts that God left for us. This means that the Bible provides the basic principles of worshipping God. The fact and manner of worship cannot be considered irrelevant in a multicultural church. As accurately stated by Baloyi (2018:1), some churches perceived worshipping in multicultural churches as unreformed and inappropriate because it was noisy and unfamiliar to them. However, the true Church of Christ should have a more expansive mission than acting as a paternalistic institution, attempting to comprehend what is happening in the Christian community. Baloyi (2018:7) supported his statement by giving an example of Lazarus and the rich man, where the wealthy man intended to retain Lazarus as his servant after his death despite doing little to improve the

miserable circumstances of Lazarus' existence (Luke 16:24, 27). The work of God in reality is better than merely theorising about it through theological deliberations, rather than taking part in the reconstruction of the world and fully integrating the individual into God's kingdom. In the following section, the research highlights some knowledge of what is happening in multicultural communities.

2.4 What happens in a multicultural church

Van der Merwe *et al.* (2013:8) claim that in the South African multicultural church, the challenge lies in complex and sometimes not fully conscious defending conventional identities and the absolute necessity to acknowledging each member's individuality and originality. The basis of conflict in multicultural churches in South Africa include human migration (Nzayabino, 2010:1), culture shock, ignorance of cultures, and language barriers. According to Resane (2021:8-9), some challenges fuel cultural tensions too: wars that can result in various cultural conflicts, natural disasters, social segregation, religious intolerance and racial tensions that have existed for all these reasons throughout humanity's history. Constant changes in all areas of life disturb the inner state of human beings and contribute to the formation of an ethos of uncertainty and restlessness. The researcher agrees with Resane's (2021:2) view that South Africa is a melting pot of cultures. However, can one talk about a single South African culture? Should everyone speak about different cultures when considering the South African context, in its geographic immensity and cultural diversity, from north to south? South Africans will exhibit cultural uniformity, which can be described and acknowledged as cultural (Baines, 1998:7-9). Therefore, culture should be a way of expressing a human group and everything that an individual or human group must know or believe in acting in a manner acceptable to other members.

2.4.1 An overview of a multicultural church in South Africa

Humanity is one. It has only one house (*oikos*), which must be settled based on biblical principles. However, according to Louw (2017:2), citizens who live in the twenty-first-century global village experience displacement, disruption of a sense of belonging, existential dread and unhope (*inespoir*), which also affects the Christians in the multicultural church. Louw (2017:2) suggests that this sensation of despair by citizens is caused by refugee crises, which lead to xenophobic crises, due to the localised

fearing prejudice against foreigners. Hence, Louw sees the church as an *oikos* (household) and explores whether democratic and civil societies can promote a *habitus* of caring, a sense of belonging, and hospitable inclusiveness. The book of Revelation describes the last assembly of God's people from "every country, tribe, and tongue" (Rev 7:9). Therefore, it should be senseless for Christians who think they can exclude themselves from the community. According to Louw (2017:3), an atmosphere of suspicion and resistance creates a dilemma between tolerance and accommodation.

In the global village, there is a reciprocal interdependence, requiring humanity to be aware of establishing a single family with members of different degrees of kinship and fraternity. The globalised world lacks an ecumenical spirit. This ecumenism pursues the goal of building global solidarity. When speaking of the church's contribution to promoting peace and justice, in the first place the emphasis ought to be on the importance of a stable society that lives and walks based on fundamental and indispensable values, coexistence, and a culture of unity based on Christ principles. Furthermore, as posited by Louw (2017:5), this needs to be built on the familial homecoming within the framework of South Africa's cultural variety, which denotes both the affirmation of one's culture and the opportunity for intercultural dialogue and enrichment. There is a need to underline the church's importance in South African society. The church is an important part of the community. Everyone is welcome to worship in Spirit and Truth, live together in harmony as kinship, and engage and interact without being hindered by cultural, religious, or linguistic differences

2.4.2 Conflict in the church

Religious conflicts among cultural distinctions of Christians were a significant issue in South African society. Lafferty (1990:36) posited that Christians were concerned about prejudice because it jeopardised the church's core purpose of sharing the complete Gospel with everyone. Punt (1999:274) deems that this realisation probably contributes to why some of the most severe religiously motivated violence occurs not between religious traditions but within one religion-that is, intra-religious conflict-between various groups. Therefore Coertze (2007:112) believes that when Desmond Tutu spoke about religious tolerance, this implies that Christians should have an inclusive rather than an exclusive stance when discussing how the many religions in

South Africa interact. According to Coertze, this claim is based on a Scripture passage from the creation history, that we are created in God's likeness, we are his children (Gen 1:27). Based on Coertze interpretation, God says, "My offspring will know that they are members of one family, the human family, God's family". For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor 12:12-13), as if they were God's own words. Hence, in God's family, the author asserts that there are no outsiders, but all are insiders, white or black, wealthy and poor.

Multicultural churches in South Africa face problems and conflicts arising from cultural, social, and spiritual matters. Many Christian churches going through conflicts involving pastors, leaders, and members should learn and implement the principles and strategies for solving practical church problems biblically and effectively. Oppenshaw *et al.* (2018:10) have noted that congregations should handle conflict at the earliest opportunity to avoid strife. From a sociological and religious perspective, churches should embrace conflict instead of trying to avoid it. To achieve the local church's mission of being a beacon of light in the world, pastoral leadership founded on biblical principles is essential.

Conflicts can be transformed into excellent chances for learning and progress on all levels-personal, spiritual, and professional-when handled effectively and didactically. Hence, Nel (2015b:234) is convinced that conflict will develop regardless of the course a congregation purposefully or inadvertently takes and needs to be understood and addressed theologically. If conflict is governed prayerfully within the church to limit its impact and spread, it will win fellow believers to reconciliation. Oppenshaw *et al.* (2018:4) exhort congregations not to avoid conflict; otherwise, it could cause additional issues because the fundamental issues causing conflict are not resolved.

According to Oppenshaw *et al.* (2018:9), leaders must be presented with biblical principles that govern their practical actions. The ability to train or teach others and foster unity around what is being taught will enable them to guide others effectively. The future of the Church of Jesus Christ depends primarily on its leaders if it is to fulfil its responsibilities of being a beacon of hope. The next section discusses the concerns and challenges the modern church faces due to multiculturalism.

2.4.3 Multicultural challenges and conflicts faced by the contemporary church

Multiculturalism has a polysemy of meanings; in the study of Van der Merwe's (2004:150) article, it can be understood that multiculturalism refers to the study of various cultures around the globe, aiming to understand the significance of each culture to prevent societal conflicts. However, it can also mean focusing on politics in situations where other groups of people seek their rights and responsibilities as citizens before political authorities. For instance, South Africa has multicultural conflicts for several reasons, including hunger, unemployment, inequality, and poverty (Van der Westhuizen & Swart, 2015:732), many of which reflect larger societal problems.

Contemporary churches in South Africa face multicultural conflicts and challenges like cultural divergences; the country is a multicultural nation with a wide range of customs and cultures, and church members come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, which leads to disagreements about customs, expectations, and principles; racial conflicts because of apartheid there are still racial conflicts in South African society and churches (Andrew *et al.*, 2021:1-2) about representation, leadership, and how members from various racial origins are treated, and this is due to historical legacies. Hence, disagreements over justice and reconciliation may arise from churches' ongoing struggles with the effects of their historical participation in apartheid or other injustices (Pillay, 2017:13-14). For instance, the political differences and the political climate in South Africa are complicated, and churches tend to get involved in political matters. This can cause rifts among their members who adhere to various political parties or views.

Furthermore, the contemporary church faces the challenge of linguistic limitation. Even though there are eleven official languages in South Africa, some church members may still have language barriers, which can hinder inclusivity and communication because they do not want to participate in the services of people who speak different languages. In addition to these conflicts, differentiation of generational division also leads to conflicts because the congregation's younger and older members may hold differing cultural or societal ideals, which can cause disagreements about the church's priorities and course (Andrew *et al.*, 2021:1-2).

The great challenge that manipulates a church event's normativity and leads to conflict is doctrinal differences; disagreements about doctrine, worship services, or religious practices can result from different cultural groups' interpretations of religious teachings or priorities. To resolve these conflicts, members must frequently be willing to communicate openly, tolerate other people's differences, and work towards mutual understanding (Resane, 2020:3). The next section addresses why misperceptions about other people might lead to conflict and unhealthy alliances.

2.4.4 Why negative perceptions of others can create conflict and unhealthy alliances?

In South Africa, due to the country's diversity and numbers in terms of religion, many Christians have experienced instances of prejudice, intolerance and religious discrimination daily. Several intolerances characterise violence. Throughout human history, it is evident that preconceptions have been a source of violence and inequality in societies. Regarding its meaning, Oliveira (2011) states that prejudice is an attitude, a perception. Therefore, some people value their culture and beliefs higher than others. Negative judgments about people, their cultures, symbolic imagery and their religions can reinforce and legitimise group prejudices.

Thus, according to Nzayabino (2010:1), Christian migrants must overcome negative judgement and preconceptions from the locals, which is a barrier to growth and unity for such a community. In the words of Bhugra and Becker (2005:3), migration results in the loss of authentic features, including language, especially colloquial and dialect, attitudes, social institutions, and support networks. This rejection is one of the primary ways that conflict manifests in a multicultural church. The host church's rejection leads to the development of protective personal isolationism and is the basis on which a few African communities are transplanted abroad. Based on some authors (Brunsdon *et al.*, 2020:190), the church must seek divine direction from the Holy Spirit to comprehend what is occurring in these quickening and intensifying changes. The church will be better able to fend off threats and be ready to use any helpful advancements to expand God's kingdom and the glory of Christ if it is proactive.

2.4.5 Relationships are built in worship through pastoral care

Sills (2015:211) argues that the church can only respond to society's challenges by standing on God's Word and never compromising it. Hence, in responding to the Good

News, according to Tompo *et al.* (2022:691), the church, as a community of believers, should worship together and not as individuals. Therefore, collective worship should be for the benefit of God's people, creating insight into life and increasing empathy for others through worship. Furthermore, collective worship encourages believers to approach worship with a worshipful mindset since it aims to foster spiritual, moral, and cultural development.

Hence, Abemethy *et al.* (2015:267) argue that worship should be conducted in unison and that the worship leader should instruct followers to focus on worshipping God in Spirit and truth. To be clear, worship is not about the leader but about the ability of worshippers to respond to God. As Barna (1998:20) observes, most people without godly leadership or adequate skills would be left over with little more than the phrase "Jesus Christ is my Lord" in their lives. God never intended for pastoral power, seniority, or any other aspect of leadership to become the focus of worship; instead, God designed for leaders to lead and instruct the congregation in praising and worshipping God. Highly effective churches can achieve the aim of worship in Spirit and truth because they seriously take the task of connecting people to God via worship.

In a multicultural church, worship ought to be the very essence of the church, which is its nature and purpose. Therefore, attending church and serving God with others enable us to take advantage of divine possibilities that aid in overcoming the individualism of this contemporary era. The challenge of a multicultural congregation is that Christian members should ask themselves what they truly know about the cultures of those with which they interact, the worlds that arrive through the mass media, that imperceptibly enter our habits, language, and beliefs. The risk of trivialising or distorting encounters between different cultures is healthy. In Volf's (1996:23) view, Christians act uncaring when they distort encounters with other cultures in a manner deemed not fit. This implies that instead of being concerned with their spirituality or with loving others for the sake of loving the truth, they are much more focused on administrative and organisational concerns and order among the called flock. Hence, it displays a lack of unity and a wrong ideology. These thoughts spoke of an ideal church that does not exist and a perfect world that does not exist. As he and the Father are one, Jesus prayed directly to the Father that Christians be "complete in unity" (John

17:22-23). It is necessary to consider the overt and covert motivations for actions when church worship becomes a contentious issue.

The Church is a living organism that contributes to society. Magezi in Brunsdon *et al.* (2020:95) emphasises that Christian morality is one of the healthiest expressions of the church. Under Christ's sovereignty, consideration of morals is essential to measure how the church and Christianity should function since the church exists to serve the Lord by helping the needy, including immigrants. To be a multicultural congregation following Woodward's (2013:31) vivid understanding of a mature community is to want to experience life in Christ and for Christ, to be willing to congregate, to live in solidarity, to weave organic and solidary networks.

In relation to demonstrating, the essence of the church as a community of communities is to leaven and joy a spirit of sharing and free service to life at the service of others, acceptance of the Word (Woodward, 2013:31). Pastoral relationships, however, present a challenge for pastoral counseling since the community needs to develop a language of relationship to deal with lives. Contemplating the commitment of many brethren to the pastoral care of the church community, one can imagine new forms of the church's effective presence that urges to "come out" of itself because animated by the Spirit. Therefore, to understand the challenge of comprehensive counseling, the following section guides us on how the church deals with counseling, its role and challenges during this process, and its function related to a culture of individualism and distrust in stable relationships.

2.5 What are the challenges of comprehensive counseling

Pastoral counseling is the cornerstone of a church that upholds its bonds by working tirelessly to bring about reconciliations in people's lives and defend the value of love. Essentially, pastoral counseling entails activities in which the Christian community seeks to fulfill its ministry of poimenics, a ministry of mutual assistance among Christians and assistance to those who seek it in conflicts. Poimenics gives the church strong connections that empower members to heal, deliver and grow in their community. In this position, poimenics refers to pastoral care in its purpose of "healing souls". The Soul concept can be translated as "care of the soul", and goes back to the

Latin concept of *cura animarum*, which described solicitude and attributions in the exercise of pastoral ministry, whether in worship or service in communities).

Therefore, it is essential to provide pastoral care and counseling as crucial elements in the life of a church. There is a lack of bond between the church leadership and members without pastoral care, and as such members' problems would not be identified or addressed. As a result, members would not be counseled or receive help for their problems (Asamoah, 2018:1). Based on the author's understanding, there have been situations where faith is weak or absent in members and the church as a whole is not perceived as support. This probably happens due to a wrong and moralistic perception of ecclesial life due to the socio-cultural context in which Christians live, where the community finds itself in crisis.

The church can play a crucial role in clarifying differences and overcoming prejudice against migrants/newcomers, due to the impact refugees have on the future generation. Additionally, Christianity can bring people together through the understanding of worshipping. However, little has changed in reflecting on pastoral counseling, where the voices are dispersed. A difficulty facing the church in Africa, according to Mugambi (1997:56-57), is the complicated interaction between the church and society due to the church's different identity from the community and its special calling within the community. Hence, certain scholars have alleged that churches in South Africa are visibly experiencing an identity crisis (Coertze, 2007:4, Van Helden, 2018:1, Christian & Soal, 2022:1).

In a multicultural church, in pastoral counseling, Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the counselor whom every Christian counselor ought to emulate (Odeleye, 2022:1). The Bible is the primary reference to guide the practice of pastoral counseling. Consequently, pastoral counseling is a unique form that works from a Christian paradigm, with biblical anthropology, for example, seeing people in light of the Bible, for God sees not as man sees.

Scriptural (2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 10:24) pastoral counseling assists people in need of support in coming to the correct solution, attitudes and answers. Apostle Paul laid the groundwork for biblical counseling in his letters to Timothy. Paul's comments guide church structure, doctrine and how Christians should live in congregations. Hence, the primary instruction to Timothy (1 Tim 4:16) from Paul is adherence to sound doctrine.

According to Magezi (2016:1), pastoral care, also called *cura animarum* or “cure of souls”, is the comprehensive treatment of persons in their existential circumstances. Magezi (2016:2) thus asserts that pastoral counseling emphasises pastoral caring through discourse and communication to ease the pain within the context of pastoral ministry. Therefore, pastoral conversation and other methods of communication that methodologically reflect in acts of construction and deconstruction of interpretation are used in counseling to connect the Christian symbolic tradition with individuals’ history and practical actions. In this perspective, counselors need to understand and deal with diverse Christian cultures in the theory and practice of pastoral counseling.

2.5.1 Dearth of understanding diversity in Christian counseling

When the term counseling is mentioned in place of worship, churches sometimes tend to ignore the breadth of this term. Counseling is an activity belonging to the ministry of the Spirit. Jesus clarifies the existence of the Holy Spirit and how he will guide us in John 14:15-26. The counselor’s skill is like charisma, a gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit, whose purpose is to equip the Christian to work. From this perspective, no successful counseling can be carried out apart from dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Marsella (2015:vii) indicates that counselors’ training excluded multicultural theories in the past. Meyer (2020:7) also contends that the consideration of societal and institutional structures contributed to some problems, including critical theories that, from the 1970s to the 2000s, were absent from pastoral counseling methods in South Africa, reconciling the client with society and unfair practices. Given its history of violence, inequality, and the wide variety of cultures and religions that make up its population, South Africa could not withstand these effects.

Furthermore, according to Meyer (2020:7), these problems are because most ministers lack the necessary training to provide specialised pastoral care and counseling. The few South Africans serving their churches receive informal training instead of formal training in pastoral counseling. Formal education covers topics such as contextualising cultures and religions and identifying African-related components. There is, therefore, a significant gap between academic endeavors and practical pastoral actions. The author agrees with past scholars’ argument (Browning, 1993:9) that pastoral counseling’s primary goal is to assist individuals and groups in overcoming excessive self-interest, which Christians traditionally have referred to as

sin. Since it cares about redeeming transformation rather than just the broad fulfilment of human potential, health, and well-being, undoubtedly, it is concerned about all these things as well; however, it engages in bringing about redemptive change. An understanding of pastoral counseling can be expressed as hearing and interacting with the big story of God's journey with creation and humans.

2.5.2 Challenges the church did not anticipate with Christians

Migration is an obligatory passage of life, a transition from a place of comfort where it turned into discomfort. According to Dingle and Drakes (2007:113), the word migration conjures up images of "heroic" movements of populations over great distances in the minds of the public and many biologists. However, Kok (1999:20) defines migration as crossing a physical boundary by one or more people. Migration is not just about the migrants. The arrival in a new and unknown land is not always experienced positively because new conflicts can arise with the local population instead of being welcomed. Transhumance requires constant attention because it is about people and not statistical numbers. According to Ocak (2017:440), every inhabited continent practices as transhumance, the act of seasonal and cyclical movement between complementary natural regions by people. Thus, in particular, for Christians, migration becomes an experience polysemous. On the one hand, it is a reality that questions the effective commitment, in the present, with the proposal of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus; on the other hand, characterises the whole existence as a pilgrimage open to the future.

The migrant nature of human beings is present throughout the Bible. The stories about the beginnings of humanity are marked by migration. In Genesis 1-11, men and women - individually or in groups/families - are continuously on the march, be it a mere displacement in search of better pastures or a forced departure as a divine punishment. Even today, many exoduses of people, families and entire populations who, with desperate hope, set out on their way, searching for refuge in distant foreign lands.

Therefore, it is apparent from the Scripture of God's concern for migrants. Repeatedly, the people of Israel are taught to remember the strangers who live among them and to treat them with love and justice. God commands the Israelites not to mistreat them (Ex 22:21) - "You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you

yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt” - and do not take advantage of them (Deut 24:14). From this argument, one can interpret that migration obliges humanity to move to an unknown place that requires patience and maturity, as evidenced by the Scriptures (Gen 12:1-3). This transition is undoubtedly not simple-minded but full of expectation, anxiety, and fear. Migrants who cross borders arrive at our doors, making the gravity of their vulnerability felt awakening in us with their cry of pain. The social-ethical and religious-moral commitment towards a threatened life stimulates communities to seek the Word of God. The foundation and motivation for a socio-pastoral response in favour of migrants. Christians reach the highest level of welcome when they realise that in person, the other encounters Christ himself (Matt 10,40-42). our relations Interpersonal relationships are occasions for living a vertical relationship with God himself (Heb 13:2).

Thus, migration brings sad transformations if the process is full of challenges experienced by God’s people (Ex 16:3-4). The Bible teaches Christians to love migrants based on God’s love, “And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt” (Deut 10:19). According to Magezi (2020:4), God migrated the Israelites from Egyptian bonds to the promised land to accomplish his redemptive plans and purposes for humankind. The pastoral counselor has a great responsibility in this process by placing themselves as ‘God’s instrument for change’, helping the migrant newcomers in this stage. However, church counselors face numerous difficulties because of the complexity of this time. Therefore, Magezi (2020:9) argues that the absence of biblical-theological fundamental positions for migration theology explains why the modern church cannot react to migration concerns effectively. Some speak of resistance and the desire for self-affirmation. In contrast, others discuss the socio-political-religious environment in which they live, characterised by social inequity and violence, a lack of expectations, and religious pluralism.

As is clear from the epistemological paradigm of practical theology, pastoral counseling centers on questions and problems that arise during existence. These questions help individuals develop across all facets of a relationship and literary analysis of the church and conflict. In a multicultural church, pastoral counseling should deal with inner tensions and different complexes that interfere with believers’ quality of life. Society has experienced disconcerting changes. Meyer (2020:1) showed

that the community increases the demand for pastoral counselors in South Africa - and faith-based organisations' requirements to lessen the counseling needs of their beneficiaries at all socioeconomic levels. There is no doubt that the church can play a significant role.

Schipani (2013:1-2) argues that the primary goals of pastoral counseling are to awaken, nurture, and grow from a theological reflection on the biblical tradition of wisdom practised in biblical times and how Christ embodies the very essence of wisdom in its ministerial form. However, Brunsdon (2015:15) is adamant that the goal of pastoral care should not be to address spiritual deficits as a means of healing but to recognise, nurture, and build upon emotional and spiritual strengths with knowledge as the culmination result.

2.5.3 Effect of pastoral counseling in a multicultural congregation

Pastoral counseling is an activity that needs planning to produce fruitful outcomes. According to Odeleye (2022:1-2), since the appointment of deacons in Acts 7, pastoral counseling has been a primary responsibility of all individuals charged with spiritual leadership, such as pastors or ministers in a particular congregation. As a result, pastors, ministry leaders, or anyone holding a leadership position within the church should be able to advise anyone in need (Odeleye, 2022:2). Talking to a friend is not the same as counseling. Counselors must base themselves on the Bible, use caution when expressing personal beliefs, and be prepared as Paul says "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom" (Col 3:16).

It is interesting to note how Paul perceived the ministry of the Word at work among believers. In the text above, Paul exhorts that the Word of God reign in worship services of the church, and peace should reign in the mutual relationships between the brethren (Col 3.15). To the Romans Paul writes, "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another" (Rom 15:14). Paul notices qualities among the Romans that made them fit for counseling, which Pauls refers to as "admonishing".

In the event of challenges, the Christian Church plays a vital role because no cultural norms can adequately address the existential crisis. Frahm-Arp (2015:117) points out

that Pentecostal congregations have more members than traditional churches in South Africa. However, many of its pastors lack formal training. Magezi (2016:5) also asserts that in Africa, the people who provide pastoral care in congregation or ministry tend to use various techniques to administer pastoral care where practical and social issues are involved. These methods resolve some of the individual's needs in their environment. However, this proactive approach falls short in addressing new problems since it fails to deal with new and pressing situations in modern Africa. Magezi (2016:6) states that these challenges include the fact that Africa is caught between modernity and indigenous cultural practices. Therefore, it is crucial to train Christian counselors' in cultural contextualisation discussion, where they search for categories pertinent to African culture and ought to be incorporated into pastoral care, much to intellectual students. As McClure (2010:238) puts forth, salvation and healing are experiences associated with discovering and experiencing God in profound social contexts.

2.5.4 Church responsibility for Christian refuge

The church's responsibility is to provide guidelines that have long served as a spiritual road map for Christians (Meyer, 2020:11). However, modernity has shifted from focusing strongly on Christianity-based caring for souls to favouring social science. Meyer argues that the psychological perspective is the primary tool for comprehending the human condition that modernity focuses predominantly on. This observation raises the question of pastoral practices in Christian churches. For example, what does pastoral counseling practice in the different Christian churches do to avoid conflicts? Pastoral counseling is rooted in the trajectory of God's path. For Kellemen and Viars (2021:12), the comprehensive truth of the Scripture guides Christians to be passionate about the Word of God. This burden of compassion has been scoring points for at least two thousand years. It is evident that concerning counseling in the New Testament, as the Scriptures instruct and demonstrate in Galatians 6:2, to "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ". Paul also says to Christians that they are competent to counsel one another "But I myself am fully convinced about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another" (Rom 15:14). From the above Scriptures, there is an observation of the continuation of a practice that integrates spiritual and physical healing, counseling, worship, interpretation of divine laws, and popular wisdom.

It is clear from the Bible that counseling agents in the New Testament are all believers, as is evident in the Old Testament. The church offers comfort to bereaved believers by pointing to Christ's sacrifice, who "was despised and rejected by men. He has shared our griefs and carried our sorrows; but we deemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted" (Isa 53:3-4). God's people have always been committed to loving and mutual care for neighbour and enemy, as written in Ephesians 4:1-3, where Paul exhorts the brethren to work in a manner worthy of calling bearing one another in love to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Counseling is associated with an effort to reintegrate a relationship with God through liturgy. Therefore, denoting Mokhoathi's (2020:9) words, for comprehensive counseling, the Scriptures must serve as a filter for Christian counselors' to produce a conducive environment for African converts to experience Christianity within their diverse cultural contexts. A church without theological vision perishes. The vision of worship allows believers to perceive where they are and where they are going and see all creation as sacraments of God's grace (Wong, 2021:4). Likewise, the church's success depends on the Holy Spirit's guidance and adherence to the apostles' teachings (Acts 2:42-46).

Theological vision cannot remain purely theoretical: the example of the various stages and adventures of the integration of Christians of non-Jewish origin into the church gives us eloquent testimony. The New Testament becomes our guide and instigator for concrete, innovative solutions faced with the problems of integrating diversity in the Church. In pastoral ministry, Christians serve God and obey the sovereign call to the head of the shepherds (1 Pet 5:1-4). As Paul told the Ephesian churches (Acts 20:27), the congregation must be formed by following the counsel of God. Also, Whiteman believes that hermeneutics ties the gospel to a particular context and represents an evolving approach to biblical interpretation. Thus, Christians cannot ignore the fact that understanding the gospel entails addressing the problem of migration, cultural diversity, and religious backgrounds within the Christian community (Whiteman, 1997:2).

2.6 Conclusion

The first chapter laid out the basis of the problem established as this study's starting point. This chapter examined church members' experiences from different cultural

backgrounds and presented what can be learned from a descriptive literature review. The first step towards this goal was to provide pertinent information to interpret the focus of the study: challenges a multicultural congregation faces and the complex relationship between the church and society due to the church's distinct identity from the community. Next, the chapter determined worship as a special time in places of worship, for worship is the highest and most honourable activity because it springs from divine love, which enables believers to deal with interpersonal problems in a way that honours God. After addressing these aspects, the chapter presented the inimitable difficulties a multicultural church faces, followed by an analysis of the place of worship, while emphasising the church as the body of Christ. Therefore no believer should be excluded based on culture since the church is established to exhibit diversity and unity. Multicultural churches are no exception since spiritual unity is expressed through unity in worship, fellowship and harmony.

Subsequently, the chapter presented the impact pastoral counseling has on a multicultural congregation and the foundation for biblical counseling according to the Scriptures, with the assertion that pastoral counseling emphasises pastoral care through discourse and communication to lessen suffering within the framework of pastoral ministry. In this sense, Jesus Christ demonstrates that pastoral counseling is the comprehensive care of people in their existential circumstances and is unquestionably the counselor every Christian counselor must imitate. The chapter concluded by emphasising the importance of the church's obligation to provide Christian refugees with guidelines that act as a spiritual road map. Therefore, within the Christian community, it is essential to remember that understanding the Gospel requires dealing with the issue of migration, cultural diversity, and religious backgrounds. The next chapter deals with overcoming conflicts. This chapter provides an overview of socio-cultural interpretive facets needed to help resolve conflicts in a multicultural congregation. The chapter proposes that this vision serves as a strategy to overcome conflicts between local and new Christian community members to restore the dream of a non-framed Christian community.

CHAPTER 3

WHY DOES CONFLICT OCCUR IN A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH?

3.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the researcher examined lessons from various published literature, using the descriptive task of Osmer's (2008:4) model, and asked, 'What is going on?' The objective was to gather information to understand specific occurrences, circumstances, and the environment in which they occur in a multicultural church. In resolving conflict in a multicultural church, chapter 3 determines the necessary interpretive components of socio-cultural paradigms. Given the strong ethos of a multicultural church, conflict management processes increasingly call for rationalisation (Bar-Tal, 2000:357). Therefore, in this chapter, the researcher's task included answering "Why is it happening?" to respond to the typology of disputes that acceptably arise in today's congregation (Osmer, 2008:7).

3.1.1 Why does conflict still occur in today's churches?

This section briefly elaborates on what can cause conflict in a church with a diverse population. Conflict in the church can result from various factors, including divergent theologies, opposing leadership ideologies, conflicting cultures, and differing expectations. The following concrete examples of conflict that could occur in a multicultural church are cultural norms and values, integration and Inclusion, language, leadership and decision-making, resource allocation, theology and doctrine and worship styles (Naidoo, 2017:7; Resane, 2020:3-4). These instances show how complicated intercultural disputes may be in the church and how crucial it is to handle cultural differences with patience, respect, and an openness to discussion and tolerance (Modise, 2020:5).

There is no conflict-free society. Conflict is not an accident in the life of the Christian community but part of it. According to Sande (2004:30), the Bible teaches that some differences are natural and healthy. Because of this, there is also disagreement inside the Christian community, which needs to be resolved by patience, kindness, and respect. Sande believes that conflict is not always harmful. Unusual as it may seem, Poirier (2006:75) also points out that God can use conflict to further his purpose. Therefore, Paul urged the Christians in Corinthians to live a life of holiness and not to

take internal matters to the public like the magistrate court. Paul implied that the church brethren had wisdom and discernment in God to take the right attitude and discipline those who sinned (1 Cor 11). By this, Paul recognised that the Christian society could not resolve many interpersonal disputes. However, Blount (2020:1) claims that conflict occurs because of cultures that breed negativity, disunity, hostility, and division. Such behaviour can damage individuals and local churches as well as the reputation and witness of the church all over.

Finding ecclesial communities without internal or member conflicts is unusual. The early Christian church also experienced regular conflicts among brethren based on biblical texts besides disagreements within churches. Similarly, Stenschke (2016:211) claims that Jesus had disputes with his followers, Romans, and Jews. According to Stenschke (2016:215), many conflict-related stories in Acts parallel those in the Gospels, like disputes between Jesus, Peter and the Jewish religious authorities (Matt 5,10; Luke 12:49-29).

Understanding why conflict arises in a multicultural church is pertinent. Conflict is part of human nature because of personality, interests, opinions or values. Therefore, our sinful nature (Gal 5:19-20) and differences lead to conflict. The author argues that many conflicts arise from the inability to deal with cultural differences in modern churches. Based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO (2001:1), in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Article 1 states that cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity. Hence, cultural elements make part of the decisive reason for breaking communion among Christians.

Conflict in church concerns how each religion and culture understands and lives the gospel. Christians must aim to honour God's presence in all cultures (Rah, 2010:29) instead of attempting to erase cultural diversity because of conflict. Christians should not separate churches from culture; all are one in Christ (Gal 3:28). Thus, Christians must address concerns through the gospel's teaching that values variety. According to Pali (2018:3), the challenge for churches is dealing with disputes biblically while maintaining spiritual maturity. Thus, churches must use conflict to transform the situation by managing it efficiently. The church is where multiculturalism permeates, and problems resulting from cultural clashes, such as a lack of good communication,

trust, and rejection, arise. The following section briefly define culture to attain the correct understanding of culture in this context.

3.1.2 What is culture?

One of the issues that society and the modern world must deal with is that the secularist vision of society tends to label “culture” as everything that defines a group and views these modes of expression as morally neutral. Whether it is sophisticated or mainstream, whatever people produce is seen as culture. Culture is a general term that refers to a particular social group’s traditions, values, and practices or a set of peculiar characteristics that identify a society at a given time. It is transmitted to succeeding generations through imitation or conversation (Pietersen & Fourie 2015:1). Culture is viewed by social sciences (including sociology and anthropology) as a network for exchanging symbols, meanings, and principles of a group or society. UNESCO defined culture as the distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a community or group; and undertakes that respect for the diversity of cultures and an awareness of the unity of humankind and the development of intercultural exchanges are among the best guarantees of international peace and security (UNESCO 2001:1). According to a study by Gündoğan (2021:37), culture is defined so broadly that it may encompass all human evolutionary processes, not just everything artificial in history, but also everything prehistoric, especially regarding human origins.

Understanding that there is no right or wrong in culture because it represents a specific group’s usage and customs is not a biblical view. Believers must always have the moral discernment to separate the cultural behavioural forms that do not agree with the Word of God, regardless of whether they are classified as popular culture, from what honours God. According to Kösternberger and O’Brien (2001:251), humanity must establish a wholesome culture that allows humankind to exist as true beings per God’s order and creative intent. The Bible presents the testimony of the people’s faith. Linguistic diversity and, consequently, cultural diversity are part of human existence, which the Bible mentions in its reports. The Christian faith shows unity in plurality and cultural diversity. The texts of Babel and Pentecost exemplify what the Bible says and reflect on cultural and linguistic diversity. Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:1-13 reveal that God assumes cultural diversity in its action with humanity.

Hence, Ituma and Peters (2021:5) submit that Jesus' approach to conflict resolution suggest that Jesus desired his disciples to be dynamic in handling various conflicts. Nyuyki (2018:673) also argues that the dynamics and complications that characterised the relationship between Christ and culture demonstrate how important it is to assimilate the Gospel into each culture. God enables every Christian to contribute positively and meaningfully to culture. Christians are Christ's representatives who live in and for the benefit of their cultural contexts and whose cultural lives are marked by obedience and testimony.

Therefore, Christians must comprehend how culture and Christianity interact because culture plays a significant role in evangelism and church worship. A great example is Itulua-Abumere (2013:2), by quoting Paul saying that the Corinthian believers should carefully consider their culture's impact on the preaching of the gospel as Paul himself did. Itulua-Abumere submit that Paul explained to the Corinthian believers that his culture had had a significant impact on the gospel message. However, Paul adjusted it to biblical ways to remove unnecessary obstacles (1 Cor 9:19-23), instead separating the gospel teaching from culture.

3.1.3 Why is culture a significant factor in terms of conflict?

This section analyses why culture can be a fundamental challenge in the church. From the beginning of history until today, the religious phenomenon has been present in all cultures because religion and culture have always had a close relationship (Beyers, 2017:1). Because of this, all churches, including our church, are cultural churches, according to Walls (1982:98), in the sense that religious experience occurs in the context of a specific cultural group and their customs. Therefore, pastoral theology must be viewed as an effort to aid in communicating the gospel; if the message cannot engage its audience and elicit an active response from them, it would have been delivered and announced in vain. For salvation to be communicative, it must locate, enter, and permeate the human culture. The gospel and human civilisations differ, but they do not necessarily conflict. On the contrary, the two realities are distinct but linked (Hiebert, 2009:32).

It is right to say that no human has ever lived in a culture without being influenced by it (Inglis, 2005:20). However, Christianity sees it as good fundamentally but lacking and requiring improvement. Therefore, Christians should uphold a higher ideal

inspired by God's love when they partake in all legitimate cultural activities, which they should do. There are numerous connections between the gospel and humankind's culture. God spoke according to the culture of all eras when revealing himself to his people until his complete presence in the incarnation of the Son (Yannoulatos 1985:186). The premise above is supported by Bell's (2006:146) assertion that religions exhibit specific cultural settings and a form of cultural logic or patterning that makes particular and distinct sense within those contexts.

Therefore, to spread the gospel the church must do the same, utilising resources from various cultural contexts. It delves more deeply to provide a better expression in celebrating the liturgy and the life of the diverse faith community. It aims to reach out to all people as they live in various contexts over time. Hence, Bangura (2016:6) says that by applying the Scriptures to examine aspects of peoples' culture, the church develops its capacity to identify the truth. To be noted is Shenk's (2005:73) contention that although the Bible cannot be translated, Christians must comprehend that the church's structure must engage with its cultural-linguistic environment in that culture's idiom.

The church, however, is not exclusively and inextricably linked to any culture, way of life, or ancient or contemporary tradition. Yannoulatos (1985:197) indicates that it is not sufficient to acquire the Gospel of God's glory by simply using the mind, teaching, or using a set of ideas. Instead, it is necessary to open all human perceptions. Because of this, worship, the doxological invocation of the Holy Spirit for transforming visible things and the final union with Christ is the most representative process. Therefore, adhering to and following its traditions while being conscious of its universal mission allows the church to interact with various forms of culture, enriched by both the church and these different cultures. For this reason, Tennent (2009:3) point out that in the New Testament, Jewish missionaries decided to take a chance in Antioch and make a controversial decision to cross significant cultural and religious boundaries and share the Gospel with unbelievers and uncircumcised Gentiles. As a result, the Gospel of Christ continuously renews the fallen man's culture and way of life, and the people's traditions are constantly exalted and purified.

Churches and culture have often been intertwined in the most intimate ways over the centuries. Yannoulatos (1985:188) argues succinctly that this observation

demonstrates how historically, culture and the “Holy” (the experience of worshipping the transcendent divine and its patterns) have been interwoven. Many that belonged to church life over centuries also found their way into many cultures and still play an important role, sometimes depending on the churches. Hence, Eyong *et al.* (2004:3-4) view literature on culture as a reflection of people’s beliefs, roots, customs, scientific advancements, and anything else that can be assessed from the perspective of an inferential reading. Literature, in its cultural essence, is considered an essential part of the historical construction of people. Humanity uses traits related to the culture they belong to as personal identification. The meaning of being is contemplated and perfected with this cultural identification.

Walls (1982:97) argues similarly that both differing inclinations (church and culture) have roots in the Gospel. Church history has always been a battleground of conflict between the two. On the one hand, it is fundamental to the gospel’s message that God welcomes Christians for who they are-not for what they have become or are attempting to become-but for what Christ has done for us. But on the other hand, Walls goes on to say that God welcomes us in Christ along with our interpersonal relationships with the cultural conditioning that causes us to feel more at home in some areas of human society and less at home in others. As Paul says, all are saved by grace, which is a gift from God and not the product of our efforts (Eph 2:8-9).

3.1.4 What must happen to link the gospel and culture?

Scripture must guide the church. The Bible provides essential and indispensable knowledge for our communion with God and others. The church is God’s primary instrument for bringing his message to the world (John 17:18), the Pillar and foundation of truth (1 Tim 3:15). God’s compass is his word, the Bible, which guides the Christian. In Shenk’s (2005:73) view, the Bible strongly emphasises the church’s inimitable obligation to the world. Thus, the church must always apply the authority of the scriptures when dealing with Christians. According to Jesus and Paul (Matt 15:3, Col 2:8), Scripture is the standard-bearer of overall traditions, including those of the religious authorities. Hence, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 passage says that the Bible is available so that the servant of God “may be completely equipped for every good work”. God prepared the deeds listed in the Scriptures. Only the good deeds that God has already planned for us to engage in are outstanding in God’s eyes (Eph 2:10). The Bible is

what the church needs to be wholly equipped or prepared for these good works. The only source of faith and practice is the Bible. Because God is sovereign, his word is the only source of absolute law in our lives, enabling us to serve Him through it.

However, Groody (2009:659) brings up an essential argument by pointing out that the church's central mission is to create and make space for people to approach God in their own manner. Humankind is God's creation, and some cultures are rich in kindness and beauty, but according to Nyuyki (2018:677), Scriptures must always be used to evaluate and assess all cultures (Mark 7:8- 9,13). Because the gospel is above all culture, Lienhard (1995:ix) strengthens this argument by holding that the Bible must guide the church because it is the foundation and authority of its existence.

Christians can utilise religious or cultural allusions to introduce people to the gospel, much like the apostle Paul did, as long as they do not claim divine inspiration or equal standing with the Bible (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:2; 1 Cor 15:33-34). Culture must be rejected and opposed when it conflicts with the revealed truth. Therefore, the gospel assesses all cultures using its standards of truth and righteousness rather than assuming that any culture is superior to another (Nyuyki, 2018:677). The church can engage with different and contemporary cultures wisely to fulfil the gospel function in the ministry of the Word. For instance, Jesus instructed his listeners using parables related to their everyday lives and cultural experiences. Parables like the sower, the lost sheep, the prodigal son, the mustard seed, the unfair judge, and many more reveal the Lord's extensive cultural knowledge.

Therefore, Christian workers are responsible for being well-versed in contemporary culture to perform pastoral duties effectively. Subsequently, they can draw better ethical conclusions through their biblical and cultural knowledge. Resane (2020a:1) contends that churches should serve as a platform for contentious discussions about diversity. Because having difficult conversations increases the likelihood of conflict in a multicultural congregation, this should be prioritised as a church's missional focus. Furthermore, Resane argues that since everyday life comprises intricate relationships between ideological, discursive, and affective articulations, different perspectives are both unavoidable and pragmatically essential. Despite all crucial arguments, Francis (2019:503) deems that diversity across populations, including demographics of age,

gender, race, and region, is one of the significant factors that qualitatively altered religious trajectories despite these anomalies.

Hence, Nel (2015b:234) put forward that conflicts develop regardless of the course a church purposefully or inadvertently takes and need to be understood and addressed theologically. Therefore, issues cannot be disaggregated, relativised or ignored. Many things constitute misunderstandings in worship with a culturally diverse population. After all, the main factor for the cause of conflicts is present there: people. However, if the church brings and shares the gospel in a way that focuses only on Scripture and not a culturally biased understanding of the gospel, it can prevent conflicts from arising. After all, the message of the gospel transcends culture and context.

Notwithstanding, Hiebert (2009:29) adduces that local churches are responsible for interpreting and implementing the gospel in their contexts. Still, they also must work with the universal church to avoid biases and constrained viewpoints that Christians bring that might distort the gospel. The following section discusses the challenges of meeting in a multicultural congregation.

3 2 Why is it a challenge to meet in a multicultural church

The relationship between church and culture provokes us to place ourselves in front of the questions posed today by multiculturalism in the planetary scope, national and local realities in which humanity lives. The continent of Africa is built on a solid multicultural base. For example, Africa's diverse history and culture differ critically from country to country and within different regions and countries among ethnic groups (Elrashdi, 2021:1). Therefore, living together is sometimes challenging because mutual acceptance and community integration do not occur overnight. The vision, ecclesiology, and expectations of different cultural groups regarding the church's functioning and the role of leaders and pastors can differ significantly, resulting in significant differences or sometimes conflicts.

However, it is possible to see different ways of working and expressing faith and being Church as manifestations of the universality of the Church when there is an integrating and inclusive process rather than an assimilative process based on acceptance and reconciliation. This concept reflects a deeply ecclesial and Trinitarian spirit of "unity in diversity", characterised by a spirit of communion, solidarity and mission.

The massive growth of the South African community and the influx of immigrants from many other parts of the world is transforming once monolithic and monolingual South African churches into culturally diverse communities that come together under one roof and share the same pastor, space, structures, and resources. And here, they also learn to share responsibility for church facilities, resources, and sustainability. The diversity of experiences certainly requires all communities' knowledge and education processes, particularly for church members and leadership.

Thus, in many Christian churches, conflict might arise from many reasons ranging from a lack of knowledge of cultural values. Elmer (1993:13) submits that there are rational theological justifications for committing to comprehending and appreciating different cultures wherever possible. Elmer further notes that this commitment reveals unique and unexpected facets of God. Understanding diverse cultures is vital for ministry leaders. Hence, Menjívar (2003:25) vehemently contends that immigration is often a theological reflection because religion provides an ethical perspective and the resources to nurture an immigrant's outlook amid confusion and alienation. Henceforth, migrations favour shared knowledge and are an occasion for dialogue, communion, and possibly integration at various levels.

Multiculturalism is quickly evolving into a survival skill as more and more cities and nations become increasingly culturally diverse. Therefore, believers must make an effort to commit to learning about and appreciating different cultures wherever possible for reasonable theological grounds. Because Christians can represent God appropriately through diversity, making that commitment would reveal a new and magnificent facet of God's character to all. Hence, Elmer (1993:13) firmly holds that acknowledging diversity in creation entails tolerating differences in humanity and achieving this cannot be done while being ignorant of the subject. Conflict mediation and care are there to support the church in the process of the Gospel.

Therefore, it is essential to know that different groups are always involved in the same goal in mission work, with varying levels of experience and perspectives to reach this common goal. Most of the time, this is a multicultural group, which is already a sign of the likelihood of conflicts. For a church that wants to respond obediently and continuously to the Lord's call (Mark 16:15), learning how to act in the face of conflicts is one of the necessary responses to overcome barriers that will arise. Conflict is

natural, predictable, and necessary. According to Elmer (1993:22), underlying cultural values and corresponding rules are unknown. Hence, many cultural conflicts happen unintentionally rather than intentionally. Leaders must understand the essence of conflict and cultural differences to manage it effectively (Van Wyk, 2017:3). Therefore, pastors and leaders must comprehend their unique role in South African local congregations to advance the transformative agenda.

Many Christians perceive that socio-cultural changes in the church threaten their faith identities (O'Callaghan, 2017:25). Consequently, Mvududu (2019:4) elucidates that accepting diversity entails being receptive to interpretations that differ from our own, even though it is not easy, but it takes respect and sincere interest. However, many Christians attempt to live apart from one another and are unprepared to recognise their surroundings and the privileges they enjoy as gifts. When describing faith (O'Callaghan, 2017:26) and applying it to this study, it refers to having faith in Christian beliefs, in God or other people, or even in reality. Hence, Mvududu (2019:4) maintains that it is of utmost importance for Christians to acquaint themselves with several views to improve their knowledge. Cultural understanding aims to foster multiculturalism rather than replacing one culture with another. For instance, Moses (an Egyptian Jew), Esther (a Persian Jew), and Paul (a Greek Jew) were able to be used by God because they were a part of various cultures.

Therefore, there is talk of an ecclesial identity crisis in this regard. Christians must examine more than just having faith in the message taught. They must be inspired to read the Bible to understand and have the confidence to avoid conflicts among themselves. Taking these steps helps Christians become personally acquainted and conscious of the people they serve (Hiebert 2009:25). However, many Christians maintain their identity by returning to old rituals and traditions that do not occasionally lead to acknowledgement when faced with the need to adapt. For example, when someone uses a new term, they must identify and relate it to what they say. Hence some propose rethinking Christian and ecclesial identity in a relational, dialogic, ecumenical context. A commitment to ecumenical dialogue would help Christians recognise that confessional identity has to be a Christian identity first and foremost. As Lord (2017:2) suggests, anyone identifying themselves as charismatic or

Pentecostal represents a deeper ecumenism that constantly seeks interaction with others while clinging to the centrality of the Gospel of Christ.

Thus, a church can relate to others in a spirit of partnership, searching for the best way to build and live the ecclesial and confessional identity all Christians assume. The Bible promotes adherence to cultural customs as long as they do not conflict with God's directives (1 Cor 9:22, 10:33). Therefore, clarity of conviction and purpose is what the church always requires, even in times of misunderstanding or conflict. According to Migliore (2014: xi), this implies understanding God's triune nature and being guided by the Holy Spirit.

3.2.1 How can Gospel principles help resolve conflict in a church?

The Gospel of Christ has overcome every intellectual, race, colour and societal division. It speaks to all people concerned with the total development of every individual and all facets of the human being (Groody, 2009:653). The Gospel carries a wealth of knowledge; as Paul says, "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom 11:33) can identify various ways Christians can participate in God's life and how everyone's happiness is fulfilled. However, cultural, historical, and experiential disparities can lead to misunderstandings and uncertainty between people. Ayee (2013:13) argues that regardless of a person's cultural background, the standards and guidelines in God's word suit all people. Therefore, the Christian worldview should serve as the basis for any debate on incorporating the Christian faith in communication. Magezi and Nanthambwe (2022:4) also observe the same sentiment that justice, equity and human dignity are among the ideals of God's kingdom that must be well-preserved in the church and throughout society.

The purpose of the gospel is prophetic; it directs us to the way God intends how humankind must live and assess our actions and cultural standards in light of the Word. Thus, for the church to deal with cultural challenges, it must completely adapt to how it communicates with cultural diversity based on the biblical principle (Ayee, 2013:7). The church needs to remain steadfast in its adherence to the church of Christ's teachings about spiritual unity. If the church functions according to the Bible principle as a unified body, Schoeman (2012:168) believes that diversity is acknowledged and the church will overcome every obstacle that sin has raised among

people for peace. This understanding of the church is crucial for its involvement in community development because it motivates believers to become agents and bearers of hope in society. Therefore, Magezi and Nanthambwe (2022:6) describe the church as believers, salt, and light of the world. By comparing each Christian to the salt of the earth, and by extension, the entire people of God, Jesus meant that Christians and the Church must be models of purity by upholding the standards of life, such as honesty, conscientiousness, morality and diligence in labour (Ogbonnaya (2011:66).

However, Naidoo (2016:1) contends that instead of being sites of inclusion and love, Christian churches can serve as a platform for subliminal racial tension, sexism, and homophobia due to insecurities instead of reconciling believers. Especially in multicultural churches, conflict is caused by different reactions from communication, ideas, perception, or values, as members are diverse and react differently to stimuli of the same reality. Winkelman (1994:121) explains that intercultural conflict and entanglement result from cultural differences and diversity within multicultural communities. The response to some cultural differences can lead to psychological crises or social problems since cultural differences can cause tension and interpersonal conflict. In a multicultural church, multiculturalism should focus on the issue of difference seen as a positive value. Mvududu (2019:1) believes that being culturally aware is a wise concept for Christians and a biblical requirement.

3.2.2 Why is resolution a way to solve conflict among leadership and believers?

Church leaders must develop conflict-resolution skills because conflict undermines our primary goal of loving God (Matt 22:35-40). Hence, glorying God and seeking his presence is the ultimate aim of worship. In reality, church leaders should take advice from individuals who have studied and mastered the subject. In addition to resolving internal disputes, the church is called upon to mediate interpersonal and societal conflicts. Therefore, church leaders must acquire the skills to handle disputes more effectively. Jackson-Jordan (2013:2) also argues that key traits of good long-term pastors include conflict management and the development of excellent listening skills. Therefore, this suggests that how Christians handle obstacles in life teaches them how to be leaders (Clinton, 2011:11). Conflict resolution can be understood as a form of

social interaction where conflicts are resolved by resorting to similar past cases and decisions are made with experience recognised by the Christian community.

In continuation, the research would like first for the reader to understand who a leader is or what is referred to as a leader in this part. There are numerous meanings of a leader. When consulting a synonym dictionary, the leading noun is analogous to manager, director, or leader. In Merriam-Webster's college dictionary, Mish (2004:707) defines a leader as a person who has commanding authority or influence. According to the author, a leader possesses strength, insight and knowledge and whose mission is always one of service and encouragement. Jesus is a prime example of this paradigm and a role model for all leaders. Barna's definition of leadership also serves well. Barna (1998:23) defines a leader as someone who inspires others, has followers who are ready to follow them, and whose primary goal is to encourage others; individuals who are goal-oriented and share the same orientation as those who look for them for leadership. Therefore, to be a Christian leader Barna (1998:24) argues that God must have called a person. Blackaby and Blackaby (2011:36) are consistent with this argument and allude that spiritual leadership involves advancing people along God's plan of action.

Christian leaders must have knowledge and understanding of how to handle conflict. In this context, leadership plays a fundamental role in conflict resolution in the church. According to Blackaby and Blackaby (2011:67), spiritual leaders and pastors should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and have the biblical and technical basis for different types of problems to manage conflict in the church. The author also adds that, in a multicultural church, Christians need to depend on the Holy Spirit to lead well. Conflict and division destroy faith and damages Christian witness in the community. Therefore, the church must be ready to be actively involved in reconciliation and Christians are expected to promote social harmony (Matt 5:9). Therefore, as ambassadors of Christ, Christians are responsible for using the gospel of peace to bring people to God so that they can ultimately be brought back to God's covenant people (2 Cor 5:18-20, Eph 6:15). The church is supposed to be the prophetic voice, showing society what harmonious relationships look like, and emulate Christ's manner through action, words, and perseverance to symbolise the upcoming Kingdom where all peoples, nations, tribes and tongues will worship God collectively (John 17:20-23; Rev 5:9).

Therefore, the Christian community must play a key role in helping other Christians with their social conditions, such as helping refugees, migrants, or asylum seekers. Over the decades, the Church has shown people God's love. According to Pillay (2017b:2), the message of love and kindness, which includes generosity to the needy, migrants, sick, and prisoner, was preached and practised by early Christians. They expressed love for neighbours because they were motivated by Jesus' love. The early disciples displayed genuine kindness and compassion. A paralysed beggar received the gift of health from Peter, who had no silver or gold (Acts 3:6). This testimony still applies today in a society that is becoming more interdependent and must broaden its focus. Consequently, to prevent others from feeling alone because of intolerance and apathy, accepting migrants and showing them hospitality is a crucial gesture of human solidarity.

Kritzinger & Mande (2016:2) also argued that rather than imposing one's position on others, learning to seek collective wisdom to settle disagreements between parties is possible. For example, Osmer (2008:8) convincingly argues that conflict "episodes, situations, and concerns" are rarely resolved, and relationships are seldom successfully repaired. Therefore, it is understandable that there are challenges in the experiences of multicultural communities. It is inevitable because, in all situations, humankind is confronted with cultural differences, even in the Church: the conflict between good and evil still has not ceased. The prophet Amos (5:14-16) encourages us to seek good, not evil, for eternal life. Thus, humanity is not safe from intolerance, racism, xenophobia and other disastrous prejudices that prevent many from precisely respecting the differences culturally. Therefore, conflict resolution is an integral part of the church's service, and as a healing ministry, it is based on reconciliation theologically.

Paul describes reconciliation as a gift, indicating that humanity's response to prayer entails being reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-19). So, when God's reign is fully introduced as the Christian's hope for the future, the eschatological value of reconciliation is a sign of the coming harmony among people. Speaking about reconciling, Paul suggests understanding the relationship between humankind and God. Therefore, according to Naidoo's (2017:1) study on multicultural congregations, the author understands that the purpose of a multicultural church ought to support

social reconciliation. It allows believers to distance themselves and compare their identity to others' identity models.

Paul insists that Christian identity should be founded on their union with Christ—not on traditional sociological, geographical, and ethnic connections (Rom 4; Gal 3-4; Col 3; Eph 2). Christians' love for God by extending their love for others drives them to embrace multicultural diversity. From the New Testament point of view, the service of reconciliation is, above all, communicating the message of the establishment of peace between God and humankind. Paul typically equates the act of reconciliation with the Greek verb *parakaleo*, which means to comfort, invoke, strengthen, beseech, or request assistance. Traditional pastoral and missionary activities are based on these core principles. Their understanding of prophecy is charismatic as well (1 Co 14:3). It is submitted that from the New Testament, the primary goal of the service of reconciliation is to spread the Word so that God and humanity can live in peace and society is one in Christ.

3.2.3 Why unity is vital in diverse places of worship

The apostle Paul proclaimed to the Athenian philosophers that from a single person, God created every race of people (Acts 17:26). As seen in the *imago Deo*, humankind is diverse ("So God created man in his image" (Gen 1:27) within this broader context of unity. Consequently, a multicultural church is conceived as a cultural center with different languages and expressions, as portrayed by John in Revelation 5:9. In this church, no one is a stranger, and the Christian community cannot tolerate any form of rejection, discrimination, or indifference towards any person—even a person from another religion. The Christians are consistently parochial, temporary residents wherever they may be (1 Pet 1:1, 2:11; John 17). For this reason, the geographical situation in the world should not be so important for Christians, and a sense of hospitality is innate for them.

It is interesting to observe Swanson's (1994:251) position regarding John 4:19-20 because it establishes this proximity and explains the geographical situation. Accordingly, to resolve the issue of dispersed love, Jesus clarifies that allegiances must shift from patriotic geography, which had divided cultural territories, to God's throne in heaven. In the Bible, it is clear that God cares for the marginalised, like

migrants. For example, the people of Israel are taught repeatedly to take care of strangers residing there, treat them with justice and respect, and not maltreat them (Ex 22:21). In serving God, Christians ought to see others through the eyes of God. But at the same time, they need to establish a relationship of understanding, dialogue and loving others like Jesus. Therefore, building a relationship on trust and respect between parties is necessary to maintain faith.

Christians must respect other people's beliefs and refrain from interfering with them. They must recognise others by respecting their uniqueness and dignity, being humble and mindful of the contributions that others can offer, and not undermining their differences. If Christians practice this positive attitude, it is a sign of love and tolerance towards others. Although Kritzing and Mande (2016:8) believe that many Christians' sense of helplessness in the face of enormous societal challenges begins with ignorance and fear of making mistakes rather than a lack of love or willingness, this should not be an excuse for the part of believers. As Elmer (1993:13) emphasises, love is culturally defined and necessitates knowledge of others; this means Christians intentionally love someone, and they do so by following how others define love in their unique context. Furthermore, Elmer (1993:12) asserts that for Christians to avoid many conflicts, they must develop a viewpoint on cultural diversity or, put it another way, an understanding of other cultures.

Diversity is important because it directly results from a vital truth profoundly ingrained in the Christian faith. Keeping with this, according to Platt (2017:191), the plot of the Bible shows a fundamental unity beneath the world's diversity (Acts 17:26). God created humankind's family from the beginning, consisting of an individual father and mother, and they shared ancestry. According to Platt, many different clans living in far-off places and creating new nations descend from this shared ancestry. Therefore, the Bible is an excellent source for Christians seeking guidance for unity in diversity. Christians must take the lead in spreading the Word, which is the main aim because the Gospel of Christ serves as the foundation for the unity of the church (Eph 4:11-13). Platt (2017:22) continues that Christians should not just think about the Word of God in the world but must do what the Bible says.

Given humanity's diversity and cultural role in churches, learning from the gospel on familiarising ourselves with others is essential. Jesus, our leader and model of unity,

was the perfect example of unity in diversity by being willing to go beyond boundaries in obedience to a greater law of love. A great example is Jesus' interaction and openness to the Gentiles, reaching out to the Syrophenicians and Canaanites and Jesus' response to the Roman centurion and fellowship with sinners (Groody, 2009:654).

Church unity overcomes ideological barriers and divisions and proclaims to all people of different cultures the need to seek the truth in a perspective of fair confrontation, dialogue and reciprocal acceptance (Van Wyk, 2017:5). Therefore, church leaders and members must learn to accept culture as an essential component of conflict. Otherwise, they risk being caught in its complicated web and constrained by their cultural lenses. If it does happen, the biggest challenge is overcoming the conflicts after having experienced them and creating a genuine relationship that balances the ethos. The following section discusses the repercussions on Christians for neglecting cultural diversity.

3.3 What are the adverse effects of ignoring cultural differences?

Our society's diversity, heterogeneity, and variety are related to cultural distinctions (Harunavamwe, 2020:16, May *et al.*, 2022:4771). In a culturally diverse setting, the inability to adapt and comprehend cultural similarities and differences frequently leads to linguistic misunderstanding, behaviour, and even ineffectiveness in performing certain activities (Harunavamwe, 2020:17). Therefore, the ability to understand cultural differences is crucial to adapting to new ways of being and breaking bonds of cooperation among Christians. Many conflicts and biases result from ignorance of the other, meaning knowing the famous diverse culture. Therefore, the church's unity is one of the most important reasons why it is crucial to resolve conflicts.

In this logic, Naidoo (2017:2) believes that the gospel of Christ provides the basis for local harmony and references Ephesians 4:11-13 to support this suggestion. Hence, avoiding conflict without effort to resolve it postpones an adequate response and exacerbates the problem. Circumvented and unresolved conflicts would ultimately escalate and strain relationships among church members. Therefore, Murphy (2018:76) encourages believers to emulate Christ's modesty since it promotes peace and unity. Murphy argues that imitating the devil's behaviour, like envy and jealousy, can result in conflict and self-destruction.

The ultimate goal of conflict resolution should be unity. Disunity within the Christian community tends to give rise to problems that frequently birth various social disputes (Kgatla & Gbotoe, 2017:3). Therefore, unity in the church poses a threat to the devil, who use every opportunity to take advantage of unresolved issues, especially those involving anger, self-pity and envy. These emotions are involved in most church conflicts. Thereby the Bible warns against allowing a “root of bitterness” to grow among believers since it could cause conflict and impurity (Heb 12:15). Therefore, pursuing church unity should be a top priority for Christina. Hence endeavouring to convince the world of the gospel’s truth would be undermined if Christians do not demonstrate their unity in Christ, which can lead to a division of the body of Christ and grieving the Holy Spirit.

Ignoring cultural differences is akin to neglecting church conflicts. Similarly, Oppenshaw *et al.* (2018:2-3) believe that Christians do not fight accounts for avoiding conflict and confrontation among Christian churches. Oppenshaw and others also claim that disregarding or avoiding conflict or attributing it to a lack of spirituality among its members and attempting to teach and pray it away is unhealthy. Churches that consistently avoid disagreements are also very apt to stay caught up in conflict. In many South African churches, because of cultural differences, migrant, refugee, and displacement reform is a nuanced challenge. Besides, in social settings, laws are frequently complicated, which makes migrants more vulnerable. Nel (2020:107) emphasises that the government policy in South Africa can be seen as based on anti-immigration sentiments and hence encourages a pervasive xenophobic climate among citizens primarily aimed at African immigrants. The state works in the interests of its citizens in a “protectionist” way by enforcing strict immigration laws and fostering nationalism.

Several enacted statutes and policies harm migrants and thus threaten their rights. Kritzinger and Mande (2016:3) argue that by law, immigrants should have access to all public services, including health care and police protection. However, in practice, they often experience a variety of abuses, ranging from physical and psychological abuse, removal of identity and travel documents, work discrimination and labour laws that favour the local people (Brunsdon *et al.*, 2020:41). Hence, Platt (2017:189-190) rejects the idea that Christians should be divided along cultural lines, emulate

wrongdoing, or maltreat others, even though the state mistreats immigrants. Often, South Africans express that migrants take their jobs because they are willing to work for less money (Chaskalson, 2017:1). Kalitanyi and Visser (2010:382) argued that refugees are not taking jobs meant for South Africans. On the contrary, some refugees create jobs by starting small businesses and employing locals more directly.

In fact, studies have also proven this accusation as false; migrants contribute to South Africa's economic growth partly through creating jobs (World Bank, 2018:1; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and International Labour Organisation, 2018:120). Due to generally negative attitudes toward foreigners, law enforcement officials, army and Home Affairs officers abuse people suspected of being illegal immigrants and non-South Africans who reside in the country legally. When someone is a victim of a crime such as a violent assault or theft, police officers provide little to no aid (Human Rights Watch, 2020:1).

Therefore, when necessary and applicable, Christians should criticise and strive to explain discriminatory regulations against migrants, such as the new law requiring displaced Zimbabweans to return (Department of Home Affairs, 2021:1). As Klaasen (2020:1) critiques, Christians must use the stories of the church to explain their experiences and give context to their behaviour and deeds. Pillay similarly suggests that Christians should imitate what Jesus did. In Matthew 23:25-33, Jesus criticises the Pharisees and Sadducees for their selfishness and greed by siding with the vulnerable (2017b:2). The church community should create initiatives and build the capacity to critically contest the false significance of identities. Migrants do not threaten the identities of people or communities (Klaasen, 2020:5).

Platt encourages Christians to overcome harmful behaviour and pride in their lives because the gospel demands it. According to Platt (2017:190), Christians must work to uphold immigration laws in our nation as responsible citizens while applying God's wisdom and loving immigrant souls in our society as compassionate Christians. The Bible's teachings are straightforward and ageless. The Bible is clear on this matter: it is wrong and sinful to mistreat and despise others based on their cultural differences (Ex 22:21). In the book of James (2:1-13), Christ teaches Christians the severity of mistreating or disrespectfully others because of their physical appearance, race, mental health, or socioeconomic status. Cultural diversity is a concrete reality, a social

and human phenomenon injected into history. However, the church is uniquely qualified for and ought not to reject the call of the Bible to reconcile the Christian community broken apart by strife (Kgatla & Gbotoe, 2017:7).

3.3.1 What happens if Christian identity is not maintained?

The body of Christ (church) is a unit formed by diverse members with diverse gifts that ideally cooperate in performing a common task. Angrosino (2001:2) compares the church to different body parts that cooperate for the greater good while maintaining their identities and specific functions, in line with what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:12. In collaboration with Angrosino's argument, Rheeder (2017:3) claims that a person's identity also contains biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual components. Therefore, to recognise and accept cultural diversity as a heritage of humanity, a congregation must acknowledge that each member has a Christian basis that supports members' structure and maintenance of humanity (Rheeder, 2017:3-4).

This foundation underlies each culture's beliefs, attitudes and values. Recognising others in their diversity necessitates altering one's intentions to avoid excluding them from having fellowship with one another, as some churches did in the past (Grove, 2021:2). Churches were once compelled to follow a culture that combined religion and politics, which is why this happened. Because of this, every Christian should assess their behaviour to see if they are sincere, obedient followers of Christ who respect the dignity of others while also being open to developing genuine relationships with them. On the contrary, it appears that members are living their lives on autopilot, migrating from congregation to congregation, accustomed to this behaviour of attending worship on Sundays as a ritual without real experience of personal faith (Bredenkamp & Schoeman, 2015:126).

Church conflicts sometimes have a long history of misunderstandings and a refusal to listen to the other side's arguments. There were radicalisation and absolutisation of some aspects of the Christian faith at the expense of others, and these misunderstandings sometimes led to disaster. Examples of such misunderstanding abound in the Bible. For instance, the passing of the Ammonites' king Nahash serves as a prime illustration. David sent comforting messages to his son Hanun, who had seized the throne. Regrettably, Hanun humiliated the messengers and declared war

on Israel because the Ammonites believed the delegation was sent to spy on their territory. At least 47,000 people died as a result, all due to David's good intentions being misinterpreted (1 Chron 19:1-19).

Another misunderstanding handled differently with a positive outcome was the one at the banks of the Jordan River. The Reuben, Gad and Manasseh half-tribe built a large altar at the banks of the Jordan River. The remaining Israel viewed this as a betrayal and rebellion against their God and started fighting one another. However, before taking extreme measures, they sent a delegation to express their displeasure at such infidelity. It can be said that their deed was good because the people who built the altar said they had no intention of deviating from pure worship; building the altar was to remind them of their devotion to Yahweh. Common sense prevented the potentially disastrous repercussions of this mistake, which could have resulted in bloodshed and loss of lives (Jos 22:10-34). These two views teach the lesson that, in some situations, defining the issue is the best course of action.

Hence, Magezi and Manthambwe (2022:6) urge churches to reconsider their societal place and understand the human culture to create relevant resolutions anchored in Christian traditions and viewpoints. Such understanding reduces conflict among the Christian community the church serves. Examining the two incidents above can make us understand that the context of accusations and animosity between opposing viewpoints as one that is challenging and did not always show contradiction. Therefore, Oppenshaw *et al.* (2018:9) urge believers to view conflict as a chance to improve understanding rather than a reason to quit the church. Conflict could also offer opportunities for enlarging one's knowledge of and applying the gospel.

Leading a church with diversity requires subtlety and skills (Shorter, 1991:81-82). An active and co-responsible church should be able to identify and value the richness of diversity that makes up the church and embrace all who are frequently forgotten or disregarded. The body of Christ is the church, made up of several significant charisms, dependent upon one another, and endowed with the same dignity. Therefore, understanding cultural diversity helps contextualise human behaviour and offers important insights into their acts' potential significance and meaning. By doing this, Christians avoid causing shame to the local community.

Antipathy toward the otherness of other people produces intolerant practices that target groups with diversity in their ethos. Therefore, different cultural identities must be open to universal logic, not despising positive characteristics but putting them in the service of humanity. Hence, Christians' memories hurt and requires healing. As a result, Vosloo (2017:ix) postulates that a person's memory must also be the recipient of grace to be redeemed and healed. In today's church communities, these wounds are still visible, challenging approximation and leading to fresh tensions and prejudices. Dialogue for mutual understanding requires healing memory, which involves many aspects. The church, which serves as God's tool for bringing about peace, should be aware that one of its responsibilities as an adaptive mechanism is to help and guide (2 Tim 3:16-17) the various community members to integrate socially (Shorter, 1991:81). Otherwise, many disagreements may result from failing to recognise the core reasons that drive conflict and division in multicultural churches (Ngaima, 2014:1-3). The following section briefly discusses the theological approach to preventing conflict in a church with diversity.

3.3.2 What is the theological manner to prevent conflict in a multicultural church?

Christian faith transforms society and the environment since it influences people's behaviour, allowing individuals to think about the nature and consequences of their actions - and this evaluation leads to rational decisions (Pillay, 2017b:1). The faith community has the potential to uncover and reinforce more complex stories about human identity, purpose, duty and responsibility (Ives *et al.*, 2023:886). Given Ives' argument above, Pillay (2017b:2) claims that Jesus and his disciples were active members of their culture and that their teachings profoundly impacted their era's social and political conditions. A fundamental requirement for healthy church life is a thorough and accurate grasp of biblical theology. The Word of God par excellence is rich in terms of coexistence in disagreements and differences in affection.

Conflicts are common in multicultural settings. Conflicts among Christians present significant challenges in churches. Knowing how to act and react in such scenarios requires grace, forgiveness, humility and strength. And everything comes from the Lord. If this occurs, a church involved in a multicultural ministry should not be alarmed. Instead of being ethnocentric or defensive, Christians must learn from the Bible the example set by the church in Jerusalem. Learning to love others and be generous by

teaching everyone to share their possessions with others and involving marginalised groups in the church's leadership (Acts 4:32-37) can avoid many misunderstandings. The ability to truly "see" the other, pay attention to their needs, and empathise with their suffering may be even more crucial.

Developing trust and understanding amongst people is one way a church can effectively show its relationship with others in Christ. Paul reasons that the church is a people called to holiness (2 Cor 1:1-2) and presents two portraits of the church: the church as God sees it (1:1-9) and the church as humankind sees it (1:10-31). In the first portrait, Paul describes what Christians are in Christ, positional sanctification and in the second portrait, Paul describes what Christians are in existential, progressive sanctification. According to Paul, what Christians practice daily must be evidence of what they are in Christ. That is why Paul says that the church is a people that awaits the second coming of Christ, and because of this expectation of Christ's coming, the church must sanctify itself while pending the life of Christ and preventing conflicts.

Jesus says: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10b), and the Church is the bearer of this message of life in its entirety. The Gospels present the fullness of this life and the Kingdom of God not as realities or separate areas but as intersecting dynamics. Making Christ visible to his followers should be the church's goal. Therefore, the church is a field whose target is diversity and unity, not discord. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul uses an agricultural metaphor for the church. Paul depicts the church as a field where God sows, and the church must provide a variety of fruits for God. Each of us is a branch of the actual vine, according to Jesus (John 15:1).

There are several problems involving Christians with antagonistic interests, and that could, in the light of the Bible, receive differentiated treatment to avoid or mitigate the effects of conflicts. Therefore, reporting and treating conflicts in advance or receiving counseling based on Christian ethics and morals can prevent several conflicts. Restoring relationships and advancing peace can be accomplished through the message of the Bible. Paul maintained that only when Christians are "with all the saints" can they fully comprehend Christ's love and experience the fullness of God (Eph 3:18-19).

To confront the issues that impact the globe, Christians must be motivated by Christ's compassion for migrants (2 Cor 5:14). The emergence of migration in social,

economic, political and religious life is currently a problem for many nations. This phenomenon is taking on a long-term and structural form. People's free choices motivated by economic, cultural, technical, and scientific goals frequently determine how things turn out. But therein lies a problem: religion should speak of absolute truths to the believer. For Christian whole truth is the basis of the Christian faith. However, disagreements can occur when the unchangeable truths of one belief system clash with those of another. Paul informs us in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the church is the foundation and support of the truth. The conviction of one's truth inevitably affects another person, and in fundamentalist ways, everyone thinks they and they alone are right, implying all the rest is wrong. Should Christians not start at our hermeneutics? Get it much more hermeneutical because believers know that all have only a few perspectives of the great Truth, Jesus Christ, and learn from each other. Religious diversity does not generate a few conflicts. On the contrary, recognising differences will always be the fine line between dialogue and denial, often creating conflicts.

Looking at biblical examples, the sad situation of the Corinthian church provides a picture of the divisive spirit that still permeates churches today. Despite a church that saw itself as spiritual (1 Cor 3:1) and geared towards pursuing charismatic gifts (1 Cor 12:31, 14:1, 14:12), the Corinthian church was on the verge of splitting into at least four chunks. Paul mentions four factions that threatened the community's unity in the letter to the Corinthians: those of Paul, those of Peter, and those of Apollos and Christ (1 Cor 1:11-12). Despite its supposed spirituality, the Corinthian church, with its fractious and divisive character, became known throughout history as a warning to Christian churches worldwide. But there are occasions when a division is essential, for example, when a denomination rejects the Scriptures as a standard of faith and practice.

Therefore, Scripture must remain the standard for fellowship and worship (Pendergraft, 2017:281). However, many churches' root causes of division are fundamentally Corinthian (immaturity, spiritual vanity and worldliness). It stands to reason that contemporary authorities could make Christians' lives challenging and disruptive. Paul exhorts Christians to pray for their governing officials. According to Paul's advice in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in the position of authority". Prayer and Bible meditation are inevitable to help Christians "lead a quiet

and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Tim 2:2). The subsequent section will discuss how Christians should conduct themselves when gathering in a multicultural setting.

3.3.3 What are positive responses when meeting cultural differences?

Christians should not treat others differently based on their culture or faith (Ex 20:12; Matt 15:4-6). Instead, they should avoid getting into disputes and religious debates, creating a scenario of fights but rather have wisdom in the Word of God and endeavour to instruct people calmly, patiently, and politely (2 Tim 2:24,25; 1 Pet 3:15). The Bible teaches us to show love and respect to everyone and to steer clear of arguments about doctrine or religion (Titus 3:2-3, 8-9). When meeting with others, our primary aim should be to show a good testimony of faith and draw others to the Lord by setting a good example of a character and a Christian life rather than primarily communicating with words (1 Pet 2:12,17).

The Bible instructs us to respect biblical plurality. As a result, Christians should engage everyone they encounter with an eye toward eternity (Rev 7:9-10). The purpose of Revelation 7 is evidently to warn the church to prepare for the final conflict. Therefore, the Christian hopes that a person in Christ may endure any trial and suffering and come out on the other side in glory despite it all. Consequently, the Christian church must be a congregation focused on the gospel rather than politics or criticising others. Christians must place more significance on people than on culture. Moreover, show everyone in the community God’s love. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone, as the salvation message of John 3:16 serves as a reminder.

There are significant difficulties for pastors and leaders to deal with cultural conflict that stands out in how members interact. Given contemporary society’s diversity, it is becoming more critical to understand cultural changes’ influence on constructing an individual’s identity. Worship conflicts have occurred over centuries in different areas. Conflicts have arisen because of numerous Christian worship practices. Many Christian brethren whose theological convictions did not fit our standards because of how they behaved.

Everything has repercussions for identifying events that promote intolerance, aiming at overcoming it and promoting tolerance. For instance, Naidoo (2017:1) has observed

that a concern in South Africa is the absence of a unified identity, exacerbated by a rising intolerance towards others. Respecting other people's convictions, even when disagreeing with them, is a form of religious tolerance because Christians' primary mission is to promote peace! (Matt 5:9; Rom 12:18). The country is rich in cultural diversity; however, there is a social problem when locals do not accept immigrants. Castles (2007:353) believes that the experience of migration is fascinating because it encompasses every aspect of human life.

Contemporary migrations pose a difficult challenge due to their connection with the economic, social, political, health, cultural, and security spheres. These challenges all Christians must accept; these difficulties are ones that all Christians must face, regardless of their charisma or kindness (Mpofo, 2022:54). Migration is an occasion for dialogue and communion. It favours common knowledge, possibly also for integration at various levels, as many civilisations have developed and enriched precisely with the contributions brought by migration. Consequently, the current reality also demands careful attention from pastoral representatives and host communities, the church in general, to people on the move and their need for solidarity and fraternity. Also, through internal migrations, the Spirit presents, with clarity and urgency, the call for a renewed and strong commitment to evangelisation and charity.

3.4 What conflictual skills do pastors and leaders need in multicultural congregation?

This section addresses the abilities that pastors and leaders need to possess in order to properly lead a multicultural church. With numerous social issues, many South African churches face challenges. According to Kessler (2015:1), Christian leaders must understand their role in the Church and society to effect real change and reform based on the African context. For example, in multicultural churches, pastors and leaders should seek to understand the logic when Jesus faced rich, powerful and famous people. Similarly, they must recognise God inspires them to live out their beliefs in various contexts. In addition, if necessary, efforts should be made to alter the sociocultural, political, and economic dynamics of those situations (Kessler, 2015:3). Therefore, the current Christian leadership practice must consider a variety of modern contexts and societies without letting them dictate how it operates.

As Brouwer (2017:1) rightly points out, multicultural church leadership must know the people they lead to have the most effective relationship. Jesus' favourite metaphor to portray his relationship with his people was the shepherd and sheep illustration. Here a basic idea is presented, which is also one of conflict. Jesus did not use this metaphor by accident since it was an obvious connection to the wounded shepherd and a familiar cultural picture that the listeners could not understand. The sheep are the pride and joy of a good shepherd (Phil 1:4). And when the sheep are scattered, the shepherd's heart is wounded because of his love for the sheep (Matt 9:36). Unfortunately, as a result of the shepherd's attack, sheep are often the targets of the enemy and hirelings (John 10:12-13).

Jesus knows and loves his sheep with tenderness. If there is predestination in the path to loving knowledge of Jesus (John 6:45-46), then the sheep know his voice (John 10:3c), and throughout his life, Jesus travels ahead and calls them by name. Jesus says, my sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27). The knowledge and skills verified here are not intellectual knowledge like the sound of the voice or physical appearance of the shepherd. However, a true union with the Divine, like that of the Father and the Son, is achieved via comprehending mutual immanence, manifesting in a joint commitment between the parties (Hoeck, 2015:20, 22). On the one hand, recognition of the shepherd's voice implies mutual trust and love, a primary ingredient of knowledge among members. On the other hand, this knowledge point to another aspect of this goodness: the mutual understanding between shepherd and sheep.

Similarly, a pastor/leader must acquire the ability to listen and lead under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Van Yperen, 2008:182). According to Van Yperen, the church, the Holy Spirit, and the Word work together to promote reconciliation among Christians. With this, pastors with cultural knowledge can truly guide, advise and interact better with their flock and become increasingly literate and knowledgeable about the benefits and harms of contemporary culture. Pastors updated with modern culture can dialogue with their community more objectively, showing them the dangerous paths of today's life in the various areas of culture.

Oppenshaw *et al.* (2018:8) argue that well-trained church leaders and members in conflict resolution are more likely to recognise the necessity and normality of conflict

in both societal and religious contexts. Eswine (2008:26) point out that pastors or leaders are like forest rangers who must be familiar with the environment and can guide people through it. Similarly, a preacher must become familiar with the landscape of reality about God, people, places, and one's conscience. The Bible is the only reliable guide to this terrain. Arguably, pastors must examine culture critically and with a Christian perspective, avoiding relying on just one source of information and reading various newspapers, books, films, and authors. Listening to actively challenging debates and reading conflict analyses from different cultures are very instructive. As Mporu (2022:56) argues, church leaders should not handle issues of cultural diversity or migration unless there is a clear understanding that the challenge affect people and Christians in their relationship with God or one another or can harm the mission.

Pastors and leaders must exercise caution and ensure the church is distinct from the world. They must uphold God's standards for holiness and make every effort to preserve the church doctrine and moral purity by exhibiting Nathan's courage before David (2 Sam 1-24). For Kraft (2010:25), author of the book "Leaders who last", pastors, as the church's core leader, must perform functions such as: "shepherding, developing, equipping and training its leaders". For Kraft, a person called to leadership ministry must be able and skilled in using with wisdom the right words to develop and empower while shepherding new leaders who demonstrate the capacity for learning and growth.

Pastors who aim to stay ahead of the leadership ministry of the church need to have their hearts wholly turned to the Word of God and be skilled. Based on the above, Pinckney and Stevens (2018:75) claim that the primary goal is to spread the gospel so that individuals can come to faith in Christ, be saved, and prepare to spend eternity in heaven. Therefore, they must be able to discern and pay attention to individuals who are reluctant to speak up frequently because they may feel excluded or are wary of censorship and exclusion. Whether dealing with marital, familial, or communal disputes, pastors and leaders must give each party equal consideration and time to prevent others from being prejudged (Pinckney & Stevens, 2018:77).

Dealing with conflict and emotional distress in others requires pastors to be aware of their vulnerabilities. They need to take care of themselves in addition to the ministry because pastors face inner wounding since they are also human (Nolte & Dreyer

2010:1). Hence, Paul reminded Timothy of the value of paying more attention to his health on two separate occasions. Initially, Paul instructed Timothy to “take care of yourself” (1 Tim 4:16, 1 Tim 5:23). What is the use of taking care of others and losing one’s own soul, that is, emotional and even physical health? Does God desire this? Unquestionably not. Therefore, when pastors feel exhausted due to conflict, they must ask for help when needed. They also need professional help to process self-knowledge and emotional maturity.

A trained and prepared leader or pastor must recognise their limitations, should not feel ashamed to seek assistance when necessary, and overcome prejudice, false information, and internal and external barriers. Because if they are hurting, pastors may struggle internally with how they see and experience themselves, which could negatively impact their ministry and people (Nolte & Dreyer 2010:1).

3.4.1 Ways and means to ease conflict in multicultural congregations

Conflict and division can destroy faith and damage Christian witness in the community. According to Tautges (2017:1), conflict management skills give insight into how committed believers are to the gospel. Being proactive is vital in handling conflicts constructively. In Tautges’s (2017:1) view, Christians inevitably neglect themselves if they put off settling their differences, which impedes their and other people’s spiritual development. Hence, a small but significant rejection of the gospel occurs when one refuses or neglects to resolve conflict, mainly when it involves another Christian and can interfere with our prayers. Hence, any indication that a church leader prefers to downplay or avoid any sign of conflict will unavoidably limit their capacity to act when some circumstances are still developing.

Therefore, the church must always be ready to be involved in reconciliation by building trust and relationships among members. When church members make challenging choices and navigate the consequences with a shared sense of agreement, their relationships become deeper and more mature, which fosters trust. Paul seems to recognise the relational challenges in the Christian community by urging the church in Ephesus to “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). Pastors must acknowledge the advantages of healthy disagreement. Multicultural congregations need to learn how to handle various conflict situations as

soon as possible and work toward reconciliation to be prepared to manage conflict (Oppenshaw, 2018:9) because the Bible commands us to settle disputes quickly (Rom 12:18). Leaders must proactively assess and resolve disputes swiftly according to the Scripture mandate (Matt 5).

3.4.2 Do it quickly

Jesus emphasises the importance of speedy resolution of conflicts. In Matthew 5, verses 23-24, Jesus implies settling the dispute is even more important than worship. If you are in the middle of a worship service and remember that your brother has something against you, you must leave the worship service, be reconciled to your brother, and then come back to worship. Could God not tolerate our worship until we made peace with our brethren? It is what the passage appears to be saying, and verses like 1 John 4:20 support it: "If anyone claims to love God while harbouring hatred for their brother, they are lying". Anyone who despises their brother is unable to God whom they cannot see. Therefore, resolve any issues with another devotee as soon as possible. How quick? Ephesians 4:26 advises against letting your rage fester until the sun sets. Thus, such an understanding will define the commitment of worship to member tolerance and peace.

3.4.3 Pastoral application

The Bible discusses conflicts and how Christians should handle them to find a biblical answer. The Bible says Christians should do their best to restore relationships wherever there is conflict (Rom 15:5-6; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:1-6). In other words, according to Matthew 18:21-35, believers must push forward in repentance and forgiveness and know that there is no cultural or social obstacle that the love of Christ cannot overcome. The Bible also explain that God is not a God of confusion but peace. When the Scriptures talk about disharmony, conspiracy, disorder and confusion, it also warns about the potential damage these practices cause in the lives of people and the church.

A multicultural church is not always easy to lead. People from various backgrounds interacting results in a diversity of expectations and societal norms. Thus, a pastor of a multicultural congregation needs to be aware of different cultural norms, particularly those significant to major life passages. Therefore, Magezi (2016:5) contemplates that

pastors and church leaders who give pastoral care employ various techniques to administer it practically. These approaches tend to be informed by denominational history and practices.

As posited by Mvududu (2019:17), Christians need cultural competence to be the stewards of the gospel. A vital element of humanity is diversity, and God delights in his creation of differences (Mvududu, 2019:3) and therefore unites us. Thus, Paul's experience shows that any problem loses its power before prayer and supplication, as evidenced by Philippians 4 verse 6: "Rather than worrying, let our requests be known to God in prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving". Therefore, personally or in the community, the first key should be to pray and trust God. Consequently, always persevere in seeking solutions together, based on constant discernment and perseverance. The righteousness of God made apparent in Jesus and the ability to trust in it defines the people regardless of the distinctions that now exist. There is no doubt that conflict in a church with diversity is complex. But pastors must rejoice in the reality that God's grace and wisdom are sufficient to sustain us.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter sought to understand why conflict occurs in a multicultural congregation. Given that such a church is characterised by complexity, it is evident that conflict management practices increasingly need to be prioritised because of the strong ethos of a multicultural church. However, it is apparent that in managing and resolving conflict effectively in a multicultural congregation, it is vital to have a broad understanding of biblical principles on conflict transformation before using various theories for conflict resolution. In the introduction to this chapter, to help readers comprehend what is going on, the author elaborated on causes of conflict in a multicultural congregation. This chapter presented four points of contention to address the main question.

The first point from the introduction explains why conflict occurs in multicultural churches. Multicultural churches are places where people from various cultures congregate. Therefore, conflict is perceived as a natural element of the Christian community's life rather than an accident. Diversity is a significant factor in all aspects and contexts of life. Therefore, Sande claim that the Bible teaches that conflicts are healthy and normal in such an environment. However, Blount contend that conflicts

arise due to cultures that promote negativity, and when such behaviour occur in a church, it harm the Christian community and the church's reputation worldwide. This research has made it apparent that cultural diversity play a role in the conflicts that occur in multicultural congregations. This implication imply that Christians must comprehend how culture and Christianity coexist because culture significantly impacts evangelisation and church activities.

Given this inference, it is necessary to promote diversity because culture significantly affects how conflicts are handled. Therefore, for salvation to be communicable, it has to locate, enter, and permeate the human culture. Hence, Groody affirms that the church's primary goal is to enable individuals to worship God according to their culture. That is why it would be essential for Christains to utilise religious or cultural allusions to introduce people to the gospel. Churches must wisely engage with different and contemporary cultures to fulfil the gospel function in God's ministry. Consequently, if the church shares the gospel in a way that primarily focuses only on Scripture and not on a culturally biased understanding of the gospel, it can prevent conflicts from arising. It is, therefore, necessary to consistently evaluate and assess all cultures according to Scripture.

The second point explored why attending a multicultural church is challenging. The article of Elrashdi provide insight into this argument. Africa is firmly rooted in multiculturalism and the cultures within the continent are markedly different. Therefore, meeting or living together is sometimes challenging because it takes time for people from different cultural backgrounds to get along and integrate into a united group. There are also differences in ecclesiology and expectations of how the church functions, leading to disputes. However, literature cited in this chapter stipulate that it is evident that functioning and expressing faith is feasible by reflecting in a profoundly ecclesial and Trinitarian spirit of "unity in diversity", marked by a spirit of communion, solidarity, and mission. However, Mvududu argues that Christians must get familiar with other cultural perspectives to improve their understanding of cultural understanding.

An equally important argument to add is that the principles and directives in God's word are appropriate for everyone, regardless of their background. And therefore, the gospel's goal is to present to us how God intends humanity to live and help evaluate

our behaviour and cultural norms in the context of the gospel. Thus, Schoeman believes that if the church works in harmony according to biblical principles, it can value diversity and overcome any problem sin puts in the way of people living in peace. However, in addition to the Scriptures, it is asserted that conflict resolution is essential in the context of a church.

As an integral part of the church's service and a healing ministry, conflict resolution is based on reconciliation theologically. Therefore, Christians are bound to promote social harmony, and the church should be ready to foster reconciliation actively. The church is called upon to mediate interpersonal and societal conflicts. Correspondingly, Church leaders must acquire the necessary skills to handle conflict effectively and primarily depend on the Holy Spirit for guidance. Therefore, Paul described reconciliation as a gift, and humanity's response to prayer entails reconciling to God.

Another essential notion in conjunction with reconciliation is harmony, which is vital in a multicultural church. It is clear from the Bible that God cares about the marginalised. For example, He instructed the Israelites to treat strangers respectfully and kindly. Christians must recognise others' uniqueness and dignity, be mindful of what they can contribute, and avoid trivialising their differences. There is no doubt that church unity overcomes ideological obstacles and differences. Therefore, all people from different cultural backgrounds must learn the importance of seeking the truth from a biblical perspective and a standpoint of fair confrontation, conversation, and mutual acceptance to serve God together as one body.

The third point analysed the consequences of disregarding cultural differences. Ignoring cultural differences is thought to have a significant impact on church life. Therefore, avoiding conflict of differences without trying to settle it delays an effective response and worsens the situation. As a result, unresolved issues gradually deteriorate and harm relationships among church members. Hence, Oppeneshaw objects to the idea and believes it is improper to attempt to resolve conflicts by praying them away or placing the blame on a lack of spirituality. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to address disputes in advance and report and seek counseling based on Christian ethics and beliefs. It is not appropriate to divide Christians along cultural lines. Notwithstanding, creating trust and understanding among people is a good way for the church to show its relationship with others.

In this sense, if Christians witness others being mistreated by the public or law enforcement, they ought to criticise and work to expose and challenge treatment and laws that are discriminatory especially against immigrants. In this undertaking, Christians would be fulfilling and imitating Jesus by holding themselves accountable to God's flocks. Furthermore, the church has the theological ability to develop the initiatives and skills necessary to challenge the false relevance of identity significantly. The body of Christ is an organisation made up of various people with various gifts who, in an ideal situation, work together to accomplish a common goal. Hence, from this perspective, accepting others for who they are in their diversity requires changing one's objectives to prevent excluding them from fellowship, as churches did in the past. Christians should not be trapped by cultural prejudice. The faith community has the potential to uncover and reinforce the teaching of Jesus by learning to love and be generous to those in need, and this can help them avoid many misunderstandings.

This type of teaching has great relevance for the contemporary church to maintain order and peace, which was severely lacking in the Corinthian church. During this time of enlightenment, division can occur. However, it seems necessary, especially when a denomination rejects the Scriptures as the foundation for its beliefs and practices. Despite that, the Bible must continue to be the standard for guidance when there is a misunderstanding among believers. Essentially many churches' primary sources of disunity, including immaturity, conceit and worldliness, are inherently Corinthian. Therefore, Christians must follow Paul's guidance to avoid this behaviour. Paul encourages "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings must be made for everyone frequently to lead a peaceable life in all godliness and dignity".

Hence, having an adequate biblical understanding helps Christians avoid discriminating against others based on their culture or faith. Respecting others' beliefs, even when disagreeing or having ideological differences, is religious tolerance and a positive response when meeting other cultures. Hence, the Bible instructs us to love, respect, and prevent dogmas or religious debates. Therefore, when meeting and interacting with others, the primary goal should be to demonstrate a good faith testimony, lead them to God, and advance harmony of the Word instead of communicating with words.

The fourth point discussed focused on conflict management abilities and their importance for pastors and leaders in multicultural congregations. Managing conflicts can reveal a believer's level of gospel commitment. Knowing something is liberating because respecting what is not unknown is difficult. Thus, leaders must understand members, be proactive and familiarise themselves with cultural norms since it is vital to handle conflicts constructively. Therefore, Pastors and leaders must learn to handle conflictual situations immediately and work toward reconciliation, for the Bible commands us to settle disputes quickly.

Even though cultural barriers, including preconceptions and communication, still exist in churches, the Scriptures warn against the potential harm that disharmony, chaos, and confusion can do to people's lives and the church. Therefore, to effectively steward the gospel, Christians must be culturally competent. Diversity is a crucial component of humanity, and God enjoys his creation. It unifies us. Therefore, Pastors and Christian leaders must always strive to look for solutions to conflicts in the Bible. Paul's life experience shows us that prayer and petition can overcome every issue, and leaders should be aware of and practice frequently.

Lastly, considering the reflections presented, what occurs in multicultural congregations make us aware of something new. South Africa's landscape has transformed, and the church no longer benefits from playing on its home field as it now ministers on a different territory. Churches are discovering that they must adapt to flourish. Therefore, the church has a significant opportunity to reevaluate its identity from a biblical perspective. The next chapter examine normative truth from Scripture and a Pentecostal theological framework regarding cross-cultural interactions.

CHAPTER 4

SCRIPTURES AND MULTICULTURAL INTERRELATIONSHIP

4.1 Introduction

For this new chapter, departing from the theological systematic framework adopted to this point and venturing into biblical terrain is imperative. Chapter 3 identified the essential interpretive elements of sociocultural paradigms. Given the significant multicultural church culture, rationalisation is becoming increasingly necessary for conflict resolution procedures. Therefore, the researcher's task was to provide information on the "Why is it happening?" question. The aim was to address the many conflicts anticipated in the contemporary congregation (Osmer, 2008:7).

Chapter 4 aims to determine the normative characteristics of cross-cultural relationships that can be understood from a theological and biblical perspective. Therefore, it attempt to find answers to "What should be happening?" involving the normative task to reach the goal of this chapter. The normative model is referred to as "prophetic discernment" by Osmer, which includes "interpreting specific episodes, situations and contexts through theological concept, developing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from best practices" (Osmer, 2008:4). Therefore, a normative task is applied according to the grammatical-historical exegetical of John 4:24 to help address this question. The exegesis is pertinent because it would help us understand the historical context and challenges of the Johannine community. This path allow us to reveal positive aspects, demonstrating how Scriptures can be the basis for guiding diversity in a place of worship because nothing is more central to Scripture than Jesus' Word (Dunn, 2003:383; Heb 1:2).

4.1.1 Why apply John 4 in a multicultural church and verse 24 specifically?

The researcher uses John 4 in the issue of diversity because this text has considerable relevance for a multicultural church. In addition to its historical context, this text reveals a traditional and societal conflict that Jesus breaks through the written plot patterns that apply to today's congregation (Løland, 2009:115). The church should learn and consider this in light of worship conflict and diversity. Jesus demonstrates that there is only one way, and anyone can find it, regardless of culture, because the worship Jesus

expects is spiritual and not limited to forms or places. Hence, Jesus' words about diversity imply that Jesus is the place of worship, the new temple alternative to Jerusalem and Gerizim (Thettayil, 2007:123). Accordingly, worship must be God-centered.

Consequently, in a diverse and sometimes divided world, Christians are invited to seek unity in their relationship with God and one another, which is the essence of true worship (John 4:24). This biblical passage has a spiritual meaning. The verse provides answers that validate that Jesus chooses anyone for prominent roles in spreading the gospel, regardless of gender, culture, colour, or social economic status, without distinction in God's kingdom. Therefore, the researcher expressly referred to this Scripture (John 4:24) because it relates to the research problem under investigation.

4.1.2 The existing Johannine diverse community as a model

This section briefly discusses the Johannine diverse community as an exemplary model of unity in a multicultural church. Accordingly, John 4 also evidences the Trinity as the foundation of ecclesial diversity, "carrying the significance of God's relationship by fellowshiping with others" (Resane, 2017:3). Christian communities coexist with diverse backgrounds and thoughts. Hence opposition is fundamental for a community because, without disagreement, there is an imposition, and the weaker voice is silenced. The existing diversity in Johannine communities built a paradigmatic ecclesiology where communion in fraternal love is the basis, as they say: God is love (1 John 4:16). Observing the diversity of Johannine communities and their proposal to live a life of fraternal communion indicates possible unity in a multicultural church formed by different groups, cultures, people, mentalities, and positions. Hence, Hardwick (2021:33) believes diversity and inclusion cannot materialise without the cross (Jesus).

The Johannine communities present themselves as one of the most plurals of early Christianity. This plurality is a visible sign that unity and diversity in the Church are both attainable and indispensable. A spirituality that embraces diversity through the Trinity paves the way for the redemption of cultures and the Pentecostal fraternity (Resane, 2017:14) in which the Spirit reconciles differences and makes charity real through acceptance of the different other person. Hence, the ecumenical efforts of the

Johannine communities stand out. A paradigmatic text that serves as a key to an ecumenical reading is John 10:16 where the author, the beloved disciple, presents Jesus metaphorically as the shepherd of several flocks. To speak of unity in the Johannine perspective is to speak of an ecumenical community. Johannine communities are highly open to dialogue with other cultures and visions of God. In this community, the desire for unity comes from the pastor, who is Triune. Likewise, Resane (2017:81) asserts, referring to John (14:20, 17:23, 17:26), that humankind can be in the triune God only if the Son is within, and if the Son is within, thus is the Father's love for his Son as well. From this, there is only one herd, independent of the sheepfolds and forms of viewpoint. The following chapter focuses on ministering to diversity in a multicultural church.

4.2 The importance of ministering to diverse cultures in a multicultural church

To effectively minister to people of diverse cultural backgrounds, pastors, leaders, or missionaries should first endeavour to understand the worldview (of different cultures) from the individual's perspective. Culture and language significantly influence how people communicate and perform particular tasks. Therefore, this can serve as a suitable means of communicating the biblical word. According to Kraft (1978:359), all other cultural symbols and words receive their meanings from their participation in the cultural context in which they live. Multiculturalism has many different meanings. Hence, Christians face a confusing variation of potential identities, according to Modood (1998:380). On that wise, it is crucial to know that “multiculturalism” refers to studies of diverse cultures, aiming to understand each culture’s importance in preventing social problems.

Christians must acquaint themselves with cultural processes and human diversity to successfully interact with most diverse people through friendship, understanding, solidarity, and respect for others’ differences to be able to carry out Jesus’ mandate, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). Therefore, the theme of “worship in spirit and truth” is based on the need for people to coexist with each other. Recognising the differences would help Christians strive and understand multiculturalism successively, learn how to work in harmony with various social groups,

and influence their members as future pastors, minimising prejudices and conflicts in the church and, consequently, in the social setting. The emphasis of the next section is on the value of contextualisation and when to contextualise.

4.3 What is the significance of contextualising the Bible in cross-cultural interactions?

The Bible, without a doubt, contains the fundamentals of the necessity for contextualisation. Christ is an example of contextualisation in the Bible (John 4:4-42). For example, when Christ shared the gospel with the Samaritan woman, Christ did it in a way that made his message significant to the woman. Jesus is a contextualisation model (Studebaker 1994:1), continually seeking humankind by embracing humanity's cultural context. The barriers of cultural norms, the wall of sin as well as humankind's weaknesses were all overcome by Jesus. Paul is also understandably another contextualisation model (1 Cor 9:20-22). Paul correctly recognised that to reach the interlocutor, Paul himself needed to become "equal" to him. Krause (1995:14) claims that Paul did this by adapting his behaviour to suit Jews and Gentiles to advance the gospel.

4.3.1 Meaning of contextualisation

In this section, contextualisation refers to how the gospel and the culture interact throughout time and location. Interpreting Neville's (1997:15) understanding of contextualisation in a multicultural church, contextualisation refers to preparing and using the gospel and liturgy to connect to local terms, images and biblical imagery to reenact the narrative of salvation. Alluding to the method of understanding and paying close attention to different cultures to communicate the gospel message, who Jesus Christ is, and what it means to be a fully committed follower of Jesus in a context other than the Bible. In Kloppers' (2020:3) view, contextualisation is the ongoing dialogue between faith and culture and the collaborative process that results from it, as well as the sharing of cultural expressions between different faith cultures. Therefore, Christians must epitomise Christ (Wyckoff, 2005:96). To understand biblical texts; they must understand their society and contemporary society, with its issues, pressing needs, mentalities, and peculiarities, just like Jesus did. Then and only then would Christians be able to distinguish between the culture's ephemeral character and the gospel's eternal, life-giving nature, and preaching it just as it is.

With many approaches to worship that differ from church to church, Christians must become an appraiser of worship. Hence, it is essential to be clear and understand how and where multicultural church worship should be. Once it is clear what pleases God in worship, that is the place where everyone needs to be and worshipping. Christians can worship in a manner appropriate to the situation and place. This point was proven during the Covid-19 lockdown, where church leaders had to find alternatives for their physical gatherings and worship services (Campbell, 2020:4). The environment or place impacts everything in the universe, including our actions. Therefore, believers must take others' context into account. Worship is similarly affected by its surroundings. As Duranti and Goodwin (1992:1) propose, context and environment are crucial concepts for many teaching subjects.

Leaders guided by the Holy Spirit should know that preaching the gospel to a different culture also requires contextualising their message apart from learning their language. Hence, Hiebert (1989:43) believes that Christian missionaries must comprehend the cultural context before attempting to change it. Though, as noted above (De Vries's 2016b:3), there exist numerous nuanced interpretations of contextualisation. The objective is to share the gospel with every group. The worldview of these people then serves as a basis for communication, its needs and concerns serve as a guide for the message's focus, and its cultural gifts serve as a vehicle for expression. However, it is important to continuously maintain an objective perspective for factors that contradict the biblical worldview. Having discussed the meaning of contextualisation, what follows is to know when to contextualise.

4.3.2 Know when to contextualise

Christians form congregations that acknowledge their apostolic nature and carry out the missionary commission Jesus gave them. Therefore, Christians must be cognisant that they are people of the gospel and should know that contextualisation must follow biblical parameters. As such, Christians cannot contextualise every part of their worship and must always consider adopting the stance that the gospel message is unnegotiable. It is essential to be aware of this. Even though De Vries (2016b:6) contends that all theology is contextual and expressed in and for a particular context, the Bible's words are divinely inspired since it explains its application and authority for all cultures and history (2 Tim 3:16).

The primary goal of contextualisation must be to present Jesus to the world in a way that makes the gospel message relevant to that particular time or cultural setting. The boundaries of the biblical text must be adhered to when contextualising worshipping. There are significant risks outside of it. It is common for contextualisation to discourage cultural elitism, create alienation, and restrict the gospel's reach. For this reason, it is vital to remember that contextualisation should only serve to make us act and behave as Christ redeemed us to be blameless and innocent, consequently lights in the world who hold firm to the word of life (Phil 2:15-16). Hence, Luzbetak (1988:79) believes that by using contextualisation, the Gospel message brings the Gospel into the local culture so that the message becomes an integral part of it.

To develop an understanding of the culture people are living in and have the ability to communicate the gospel's central message, pastors, leaders, missionaries and Christians in general need to become conscious and critical of their cultural practices (Nicholls, 2003:8). Hence, in a church, the language, illustrations, and applications can and should change according to the audience. Preachers are tasked with making the message accessible and penetrating to listeners. Contextualising the gospel enables individuals to view reality through their worldview's prism.

Therefore, historical truths and symbols, particularly religious ones, cannot be altered or modified. For example, the Lord's Supper and baptism are two symbols that Jesus left us because they are significant in the Bible and for God's people (Nicolaidis, 2010:3), that share in the body of Christ. Therefore, theological interpreters cannot arbitrarily change historical facts as they see fit, especially when such events are linked to the theme of redemption. Thus, Christians must be sensitive and know how, what, and when to contextualise.

4.4 What should be happening in multicultural churches?

This section briefly outlines what should occur in a multicultural church in light of the Scriptures. The mission's primary focus and goal is to glorify God. Worship is the one thing that God desires more than anything in his church. It must be the top priority for all of humanity, as Tozer articulates (2010:9). Humanity does not have any other purpose other than that. Without worship, humanity wanders in a spiritual confusion that keeps them from fulfilling their divinely intended purpose. Thus, regarding humankind, adoration is the highest form of respect. Hence, God seeks faithful

worshippers before looking for people to labour in his realm (John 4:23). Finding people and preparing them to worship God is the culmination of God's redemption and mission.

Worship and the diversity of the Church - The beauty of God's people is in their diversity: male and female, managers and entrepreneurs, educated and uneducated, young and old, believers with the most varied and different gifts, altogether acting with their individuality in service (one of the meanings of the term worship) and manifesting the manifold grace of God. All this is reflected in the diversity of music styles, expressions of praise, and the multiplicity and creativity of resources and means to lead people in worship. By selecting and commissioning 12 apostles, corresponding to the 12 tribes of Israel, and sending them with authority delegated by King Messiah to expand the kingdom of God, Jesus was gathering the faithful remnant of Israel (North and South) to prepare a new Israel (Church) to fulfil its mission in the world: to make disciples in all ethnic groups according to prophecy (Isa 49:6; Acts 1:6-8; Matt 28:18-20). Hence, Jesus also focused on ministering to the Samaritans, who were irreconcilable enemies of the Jews.

Jesus' harvest among the Samaritans marks the first indication of the reach of his saving mission. Jesus' mission map was in his ministry terrain as the gospel of John presents us: Jerusalem and Judea - Nicodemus (John 3), Samaria (John 4:1-42) and to the ends - Gentiles (John 4:46-54, 12:20-33) anticipating the post-Pentecost mission of the Early Church (Acts 1:6-8). In Christ, the Father is doing what many thought impossible: restoring the vanished tribes of the North to worship him, delivering them from the yoke of sin, the greatest of all oppressors, which separates humanity from his fellowship with God (worship) and from his communion with his neighbour (mission). With this historical-eschatological background in mind, it is considerably simpler to understand the context of the narrative of chapter 4, which deals with the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Where Jesus goes on to teach about true worship (4:24), presenting indispensable aspects for such worship to happen, namely: the divine nature as the origin and end of true worship and how to practice such worship, that is, in Spirit and truth, where it would be demonstrated that worship precedes and drives missionary engagement. The following section addresses Osmer's query about what should be happening in a multicultural church.

4 5 Historical- Cultural analysis

This verse of John 4:24 is significant to the theme of this chapter (true worship), “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth”. This verse (4:24) is one of the most famous but is misunderstood. There is no way to interpret this cardinal verse as evangelistic inanity. This section analyses John’s historical-cultural analysis to understand better this specific verse in the mission context.

4.5.1 Who wrote the text?

Researchers continue to be very interested in the fourth Gospel’s authorship issue. Whether the author is John, the son of Zebedee, has long been debated and referred to as the “Johannine question”, which is about the author’s identity (Tasmuth, 2007:33). This question has been called the authenticity debate for the past two centuries. The gospel of John, also called “the fourth gospel”, is a narrative. The authorship of this gospel is attributed to John the Apostle (Tasmuth, 2007:40-41). The narrator of this story (John 21:20-24) describes the author as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, and for both historical and internal reasons, everyone believes to be the apostle John, one of the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10, Moloney & Harrington 1998:2). Theologians throughout the ages also maintain that authorship of this gospel is ascribed to the Apostle John, son of Zebedee, brother of James called a “Son of Thunder”, one of Jesus’ twelve disciples (Barton *et al.*, 1997:1730, Lincoln, 2005:18) and consequently an eye-witness of the event narrated. The oldest testimony concerning the author of John’s gospel is that of Irenaeus of Lyon (Crehan, 1965:19) that points out that it was composed in Ephesus by the apostle John. Polycarp (155 C.E), the bishop of Smyrna and Irenaeus’ relationship, gives weight to their account, given that they knew John (Raymond Edward, 1997:368).

Interestingly, John’s name is not explicit in the gospel written by him, perhaps to maintain modesty, even though John does not cite his name as “John”. Still, John references himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23, 19:26). Therefore, based on these findings, the gospel that bore his name was written by John, the son of Zebedee, which has both internal and external evidence to support that conclusion (Köstenberger, 2013:7). To proceed with the historical and cultural analysis of John, the following part focus on the author’s general historical context.

4.5.2 What is the general historical milieu in which the author speaks?

The fourth Gospel is the outcome of a conflict in the first century between a group of Christian believers, some of whom would have been Jews, and their adversaries, referred to as “the Jews” in the Gospel narrative (Coloe, 1997:40). The author speaks during a period when the Johannine community deals with conflict and prosecutions (John 16:2-3). The Johannine Christians, who were persecuted, were a part of this group. Some of these Christians happened to be Jews expelled from their synagogues due to instances like; an increase in successful missionary work evolving effective missionary work of Christians among the Samaritans (Hendrickx,1990:1); and also due to the rise of high Christology that the Christians defended “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Consequently, stating that “Jesus was a heavenly Saviour who existed before becoming a human, having previously lived in heaven with God” (Thatcher, 2012:5; Brown, 1978:7). Based on De Boer’s (2020:367) understanding, the trauma must have been triggered by a “high” Christology rather than a “low” Christology. According to Brown, referring to John 4, new converts also recognised Jesus as the world’s Saviour. During this period, there were three significant threats to the survival and integrity of the Christian church when the author speaks.

The worst was the decline in devotion, but there were also persecutions and heresies, particularly Gnosticism, which denied the incarnation and promoted licentiousness (Rasimus, 2019:201). During this time, a unique characteristic had only begun to emerge in the context of the Christian church. Most of its members were Hellenistic and not of Jewish descent (Rasimus, 2019:212). Given the current situation, it was essential to re-formulate Christianity in light of these circumstances. Although John did not change the truth of Christianity, it was necessary to adapt the words and categories used to express it. Therefore, John recorded his testimony of the Savior amid this period of increased persecution of Christians, rising apostasy, and dispute on the identity of Jesus Christ (Rasimus, 2019:210-11). What follows is a brief analysis of when the author wrote the Gospel.

4.5.3 When was it written?

Conservative scholars agree that John penned this gospel from the city of Ephesus in Asia, which is backed by historical data (Köstenberger, 2013:7). In light of this, Thatcher and Williams (2013:8) claim that the fourth Gospel was composed in a significant cosmopolitan city with a diverse population. In this ideological melting pot, it was common practice for religious and philosophical ideas to interact. John spent considerable time in Ephesus, ruled the churches in Ephesus and across Asia Minor (Fer, 2019:356), oversaw the local churches, and passed away in his advanced years during the reign of Emperor Trajan. The writing of the gospel of John is estimated to take place between 85 and 95 CE (Carson 1991:83). Other writers also support this view that the book was reportedly composed between A.D 85 and A.D 90 (Barton *et al.*, 1997:1730).

McIntyre (1932:26) claims that the gospel was composed and published in Ephesus, with the appendix (chapter 21) added to testify that it came from the hand of the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20). It is most likely that John wrote after the temple’s destruction in Jerusalem (Köstenberger, 2013:8), before John’s exile to the island of Patmos. Therefore, a reference in John 21:24 that “This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down” is a true testimony added during his public presentation in Ephesus. In this section, the author believes discussing John's historical and cultural context is essential because it directly relates to the theme. Readers are guided toward understanding the central theme of the study through the background information. The study supports the assertion that comprehending worship in its context is crucial for understanding true worship. Neglecting historical facts and occurrences also means ignoring an essential part of the development of John 4. The following argument is to identify the audience to which the author of this Gospel is addressing.

4.5.4 For which audience and recipient was it written?

The original audience for John’s writing was the new Christian movement and non-Christians (Barton *et al.*, 1997:1730). Boomershine (2007,3), on the other hand, argues that John's audience was a group of Christian believers. However, Thatcher and Williams (2013:8-9), similarly to Barton *et al.*, see John’s gospel as an evangelistic book written for a large audience, mainly composed of pious and

thoughtful people with a Hellenistic perspective. Hence, John went out of his way to avoid anything offensive or ignorant to this ideal reader, making his account of Jesus understandable to equally intelligent pagan and Diaspora Jews. Another noteworthy characteristic of this gospel, according to Sichone (2021:4), is that it appeals to people from diverse spheres of life, backgrounds, and affiliation, which verifies the recipient - John writes to the world (John 3:16). The word “world” appears several times in the book. For instance, when John speaks, John has non-Jews in mind when speaking of “the feast of the Jews” (5:1, 6:4, 2:13, 18:28), explains the meaning of “Rabbi” and “Messiah” (1:38, 41), and talks about the opposition between Jews and Samaritans (4:9). All of this would be unnecessary if its addressees were explicitly Jews. Hence, John’s gospel is viewed as addressed to diverse individuals from various spheres of life, ethnic backgrounds, and connections rather than just for Christians.

Though John’s writings are universal, written for all Christians (Köstenberger, 2013:25), his message was also aimed at a more specific audience, “the gospel of John is a written account for the Saints; it is a gospel specifically for the church” (McConkie, 1985:65). Culpepper (2009:341) also gives the same sentiment that the church has read the gospel of John since its earliest decades. John himself states that the purpose of writing this book was to persuade others to “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing, they may have life in his name” (John 20:31). Contrarily, Hwang and Van der Watt (2007:688-689) contends that John's initial audience appears to have been primarily composed of Jews and proselytes living in the Diaspora. Sichone (2021:3) counters this claim by asserting that the Gospel is intended mainly to appeal to Christian people of Asia Minor, whether or not they are Jewish. Thus, the author’s goal is to remind readers of Jesus’ well-known life and mission while shedding light on the community’s pressing issues and encouraging them to continue believing in him as they did before. The following section elaborates on the author's intention to write this Gospel.

4.5.5 With what purpose was the gospel written

One of the excellent effects of this gospel, in contrast to the Synoptic authors, is that the author of the fourth Gospel included a description of his purpose. The author expresses this purpose in John 20:31. Hence, the goal was to persuade his readers- or anyone else they might have come in contact with- to have faith in Jesus and live as

a result. John's interest is that his readers know that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God. It is a call to "come and see" (1:39) and to certainty (7:17). This knowledge produces salvation and assures one of eternal life.

John is, therefore, not interested in portraying a "historical" Jesus from a contemporary perspective; instead, John wants to guide the reader to the source of events by using their eyes of faith. Comparing the living parables full of signs from the Synoptics with the profoundly theological discourses of Jesus in John's gospel, John dives into a reality seeking to reveal the most secret and divine truths (Sichone, 2021:1). The great revelation in the Johannine texts is Jesus, the rightful Son of God and God himself. In contrast, the Synoptics declare the kingdom of God or heaven. Thatcher and Williams (2013:8) also contend that the fourth Gospel is involved in Hellenistic society, alienated from Judaism, and unconcerned with the beliefs and practices of other Christians.

4.5.6 The structure of the gospel of John

There are four main parts in the gospel of John (Huntsman, 2019: 310), the prologue (1:1-51), the book of Signs (2:1-11:57), the book of Glory (12:1-20:31), and the epilogue (21:1-25). In the most common structure proposed, John's gospel consists of two major parts: the book of Signs that begins in the prologue (John 1:1-18) and the book of Glory that starts in chapter 13 and ends in Chapter 20:31 and an epilogue in chapter 21. Many authors view the structure division as a dynamic principle (Beutler, 2017:5) that displays a dialectic between the two major parts, the first preparing the second and the second revealing the meaning of the first. The following is the interpretation of Beutler: the activity of Jesus before the disciples occurs in John 1:19-12:36: Jesus' ascent from heaven in eight scenes with a first epilogue in John 13:37-50, followed by a three-scene sequence in John 13:1-20:29 with two epilogues in John 20:30 -31, an appendix in John 21:1-24 and a conclusion in John 21:25. A common method of summarising the gospel of John according to Everett (2022:59) is to base it on two critical periods known as Jesus' public career and his private ministry. His private ministry was required to prepare his disciples for his departure, while his public ministry focused on the people.

Many scholars (Moloney & Harrington, 1998: xii), however, agree with Beutler above in that the Johannine structure follows a logical pattern of factual and after the prologue

(11:1-18), focusing on the accounts of Jesus' public ministry (1:19-12:50), his final night with the disciples (13:1-17:26), and his death and resurrection (18:1-21:25). Therefore, Moloney and Harrington's premise of the construction of these Gospels is an effort to present a story that articulates a coherent theology, Christology, and ecclesiology. The way Peter (2019:82-83) summarises the prologue's structure is much easier to understand. In Peter's view 1:1-18, the prologue, readers are given an introduction to and a summary of the life of the incarnate Word. Part 1 of the Book of Signs extends from 1:19-12:50. The Word shows himself to the world and his people, but they reject him. The Word exposes his glory to those who embrace him by returning to the Father in death, resurrection, and ascension in part two of the Book of Glory (13:1-20:31). Jesus exudes the power of life while being wholly glorified. And 21:1-25 is the epilogue: where strings of theologically significant resurrection and appearances in Galilee.

The researcher also scrutinised other authors' interpretations of the gospel structure since it sheds light on alternative points of view based on the idea that there is not only one correct perspective from which to perceive the structure. Thus, having analysed the structure from different viewpoints enables us to examine the beliefs, experiences, and points of view of others and view things from other perspectives. Although Moloney, Harrington, and Beutler adopt a different viewpoint from other authors, the researcher's findings are consistent with their theories because of how their structure and content support the author's goals in that they tell a story that articulates a compelling theology of Christology and ecclesiology (Moloney & Harrington, 1998: xii). The following section demonstrates how our verse fits within the overall framework of the gospel authors' argument.

4.5.7 Where does your passage fit into the structure of the author's argument?

John 4:24 is part of the greater text of chapter 4, verses 19-26, which describes Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. This conversational passage is where Jesus first reveals himself as the Messiah and the only way to the Father, according to Dockery (1988:129). The passage has a distinct structure that draws from two of Jesus' most significant discourses. The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman comes after the introduction (4:1-6). The living water from Jesus (4:19-26) and the genuine worship the Father seeks is two separate topics in John

4:6-18. Jesus' conversation with the disciples (4:31-38) fits in between two passages (4:27-30) that describe the Samaritan woman's witness to the people of Sychar and (4:39-45) that describe the disciples' conversion (Dockery, 1988:129). Thettayil (2007:42) argues in favour of this finding by Dockery where they point out that this unit (4:19-26) contains the verses that are important to that which Christians ought to have their focus on-Worship in Spirit and truth (4:24). In the following section, the research elaborates on the immediate context of this text under examination.

4.5.8 What is the passage's direct text context?

The immediate context of John 4:24 shows a Samaritan woman perplexed about the nature of worship offered. In claiming that the proper place of worship was Mount Gerizim and not Jerusalem (4:20), the woman tried to draw Jesus into the geographic aspect of worship. However, Jesus responds by explaining that true worship is based not on outward adherence to tradition, as the woman sought, but rather on an inner being that is sincere, honest, and in line with God's nature, revelation, and actions. Through this conversation, Jesus affirms that the Father seeks true worshippers because "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth" (4:24).

Similarly, Welzen (2016:6) corresponds with the interpretation written above that the woman is carefully researching Jesus' identity to understand his position on the conflict of true worship. Hence, Jesus defies Jewish and Samaritan beliefs by asserting that God is worshipped in spirit and truth, not on Mount Gerizim or the Jerusalem Temple. Welzen views Samaria's dialogue as a missionary effort on the part of the church; the Samaritans came to accept Jesus as the world's Saviour after hearing the woman's testimony. John 1:19-4:54 contain a programmatic missionary activity, as Smuts noted (2019:6). Overall, one can agree that this Gospel's theological emphasis is crucial to understanding its mission theologically and that not only the verse in question (4:24) is a mission text. The next section looks at the historical and cultural backdrops that aid in our understanding of John 4:24.

4.5.9 Historical-cultural circumstances contributing to understanding the text 4:24

Historically, the Samaritans of Jesus' time, whom the Jews did not like because they disagreed on the location of God's people's place of worship, emerged from a mix of

Israelites who survived the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722-721 BC with Assyrian settlers (Brindle, 1984:55). People emerged ethnically, culturally, and religiously from this mixture. The northern kingdom, also known as Samaria, embraced the Canaanite religious practices after Israel was invaded in 930 BC (1 Kings 12). The northern kingdom and patriarchal times had important sacred places, which these people adopted (2 Kings 17:24-34). They also adopted some elements of the old Israelite religion (2 Kings 18:17-28).

The Samaritans attempted to form a bond with the Jews who had been brought back from exile in Babylon under Zerubbabel. Still, the Jews rejected the offer and saw the Samaritans as competitors and enemies (Ezek 4:2-3). As a result, the Jews avoided travelling through Samaritan territories because they believed it might render them unclean (Brodie, 1997:242). Many preferred travelling longer routes through the Transjordan, passing through most of the Gentile countries, when they had to journey to Galilee. It is evident from this that, despite the same Roman governor governing both regions, the Jews of Judea considered Samaritans to be more impure than Gentiles. It is remarkable that, in contrast to what a conventional Jewish teacher would have done, Jesus decided to travel to Galilee through Samaritan land. Based on the above, it is evident that Samaria was between the two Jewish population centers at the time of John's gospel, north of Judea and South of Galilee.

The political and religious environment that the communities of the first three gospels lived in was different from the Johannine community. This community was in crisis, and they faced new social and religious issues due to breaking from rabbinic Judaism (Collins, 1980:197, 200). The Roman government were suspicious of its liturgical gatherings, and it was a marginalised community that experienced harassment and persecution (Collins, 1980:199). To survive, this community needed to turn to the future and win over new converts to the faith in Jesus. They needed to reinterpret Jesus' miracles through the eyes of people living at the end of the first century inside a new cultural, political, and theological environment. The following section emphasises the Lord's words "worship in spirit and truth" to establish a theological framework for worship.

4.6 Context surrounding the Lord's words, "worship God in Spirit and truth"

The narrative of the Samaritan woman is intriguing and exciting because of the event's varied circumstances and effects. First, Jesus travelled through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem (John 4-5). Samaria was regarded as a foreign land by Jews because many Babylonians had settled there even after Nebuchadnezzar's invasion. As a result, there was a great deal of blending of their customs with those of the Jews who had lived there before the invasion (Brindle, 1984:52-53). The rivalry even made it risky for outside Jews to enter Samaria. However, Jesus showed no signs of fear or intimidation and decided to go there, undoubtedly because Jesus believed that the Samaritans deserved to hear the gospel of salvation. Notwithstanding, Wyckoff (2005:91) claim that Jesus the omniscient realised to fulfil the mission the Father had given him, as stated in John 4:34, Jesus had to labour among the Samaritans, and Judea or Galilee were out of the question due to long-standing hostilities. Thus, Jesus had to go through Samaria.

The Samaritans, who lived there then, were descendants of the kingdom of Israel. The kingdom had split into two by the time of King Solomon (10th century BC), with the southern kingdom containing the tribe of Judah and the northern monarchy comprising the ten tribes of Israel. The latter preserved the dynasty of King David (1 Kings 11:29-32). Rehoboam, a descendant of both David and Solomon, ruled the southern kingdom of Judah (1 Kings 11:43). In the meantime, Jeroboam, a representative of Solomon, rose to power as the ruler of Israel's northern kingdom (1 King 12:15-20). It is evident that God appointed Jeroboam to rule Israel and pledged to uphold his throne forever (1 Kings 11:31-38).

But Jeroboam wanted to please the people and was concerned that they would hate him. Rehoboam did not reign to worship the Eternal God, nor did he trust the Sovereign's word. Rehoboam developed his methods of worship (1 King 12:25-33), establishing a legacy of idolatry and sin in Israel with this separation of the kingdom, and, in this manner, the legacy was continued by successive future kings. From there, the Samaritans emerged.

The Assyrian policy that led to Samaria's destruction and conversion to an idolatrous city justifies the complex process in which the city currently finds itself. Samaria was

compelled to adapt to a new life when immigrants from the occupied lands and many other areas under Assyrian rule were settled (Meier, 2000:209). Based on Brindle (1984:49), the origin of the Samaritans can be traced to when the Assyrians conquered Israel's northern kingdom in 722 BC, bringing its people to Samaria. The king of Assyria then gathered people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, placing them in the city of Samaria in place of the children of Israel (2 Kings 17:24, Brindle, 1984:57); they established themselves in the cities. The remaining Israelites eventually mingled and intermarried with the foreigners, forming a race (Samaritan) that the Jews detested and regarded as impure. The above discussion reveals that the origins of the Samaritans are based on a purely religious reality because the passage from 2 Kings 17:23-41 does not intend to demonstrate a different basis on their origin and identity rather focuses on theological elements that are opposed to their northern syncretism, which is trying to develop its own identity gradually.

To date, there seem to exist a debate concerning the origin of Samaritans and scholars among others debate that it is between between the two regions. Some claim that the North is the race of Ephraim and Manasseh (Brindle, 1984:50), whilst some are of the view that it is the South and that individuals from the North are the product of fusion with foreigners. Although there exist clarity on their ethnic origins, the difference between them and other Israelites emerged when these new immigrants began to adopt the customs and worship traditions of the people of Israel while maintaining their religious practices. Similarly, the Bible mentions in 2 Kings 17:41 that these nations have served graven images for their generations and descendants. Such is the way they have done until today since their fathers did.

Radically, in construing Payne's (1981:105) discussion in his book *Kingdoms of the Lord*, it is conceivable to raise the hypothesis that this anarchy persisted for centuries; the disagreements between the two sources lead us to believe that Samaria has paid for its sins through its current way of life because the Assyrian king's policy of deporting a sizable number of Samaria's population and replacing them with foreigners led to the fusion of different peoples and the creation of the Samaritans. The term "Samaritan" has a dual ethnic and religious connotation rather than referring solely to people who live in the city or province of Samaria (Meier, 2000:204-205, Böhm, 2020:5). According to Scripture, this happened: The children of Israel continued to engage in all of Jeroboam's misdeeds and showed no signs of repentance. Finally, as

the Lord had promised through all of his prophetic servants, the LORD expelled Israel from his presence. Israel was consequently exiled from their native country and deported to Assyria, where they are still today (2 Kings 17:22-23). This was triggered by the Samaritans' lack of loyalty, who failed to honour the Covenant with Yahweh. Consequently, Assyria invaded them, enforcing exile and the consequent disappearance of some populations, recognising that these exiles would never return (Meier, 2000:2007). The Jews hated this hybrid population because in their view, it represented the end of one era and the beginning of another, which is why there was syncretism and a mix of races that the Jews rejected.

Despite this, the animosity between Jews and Samaritans grew until Jesus passed through when Jews and Samaritans, who were also Israelites, hardly interacted (John 4:9, 8:48). Samaritans were seen as uncleaned by Jews during Jesus' time. Thus, the Jews avoided all contact with them. However, Jesus engaged Samaritans in conversation and unbiasedly shared the gospel with most who believed in him (John 4:39-41). For example, Jesus informed the Samaritans that the location of God's temple was not crucial. According to John 4:21-24, worshipping God in spirit and truth was paramount, which means the spirit is connected with truth. As a result, Jesus clarified to the Samaritan that God is no longer to be worshipped in one of these two places (temple in Jerusalem and sanctuary in Mount Gerizim) but be worshipped in spirit and truth (Welzen, 2016:7). This indicate that Jesus meant that the gospel is open to all people, including Jews, Samaritans, and people of all cultural backgrounds.

4.7 An analysis of John 4:24

This section analyses John 4:24 to comprehend the meaning behind the text. What does the statement "God is spirit" by the apostle John mean? Is it connected to the physical or the nature of people? By looking at the relationship between "worship", "spirit", and "truth", this analysis address this question for clarity.

Narrative criticism and other literary methods of biblical study are applied to define the text of John 4:24. The rationale for using John 4:24 is motivated by research that illustrates how to reach out to believers from different cultures, races, social classes, and gender. This example is similar to how the Samaritan woman's action unites Jesus and the Samaritan woman's community in proximity (Okure, 420-403). This example is in Jesus' priestly prayer in John 17:20-21. The aim here is to find the true meaning

of worship in Spirit and truth without conflict in the context of mission in a multicultural congregation. The effect of culture on Christian interaction is examined within the context of missions. Hence, social disagreement among believers from different cultures can occur; however, these challenges can be improved by employing a transformative perspective.

This passage is narrative. It is part of John 4:4-42, which tells the story of Jesus' dialogue with a Samaritan woman. John utilises the most comprehensive metaphor in this passage – “spirit” – to depict the most fundamental aspect of the Divine existence. God is a Spirit; the Israelites were not to make idols, that is, “no image of anything”, as the surrounding nations did (Ex 20:4). Because the Lord is Spirit, God wanted it to be clear that proper worship of his person is not a matter of location but of spirit. In this, Jesus wished to emphasise that because the Lord is Spirit, true worship of Him must also be conducted in the spirit and not in a specific place.

The genre of John's gospel and the other 3 Gospels is “gospel”. The Greek translation for gospel is *euangelion*, meaning “good news”, referring to the message of salvation (Stibbe & Stibbe, 1994:55). According to Köstenberger (2015:105), the gospel of John contains “common characteristics in content, form, and general purpose” with the other three Gospels, emphasising the life and work of Jesus on earth. Therefore, this is evidence of a narrative of the good news of Jesus. John made use of many figures from Hebrew poetry, with an emphasis on parallelism. John's gospel does not contain parables, like the other three gospels, but features many allegories used by Jesus in his teaching ministry (John 10,15).

Given John tells a narrative of Jesus' life and spreads the good news of Jesus and salvation, the gospel of John falls within the umbrella of the literary genre known as “gospel”. Scholars (Estes & Sheridan, 2016:14) often suggest that John's gospel falls within the narrative-dramatic category. In other words, a hybrid of drama and narrative, with some chapters (4, 9, 11, 13-14) acting as mini-reenactments and the entire story building to a dramatic conclusion. There are engaging conversations, hints of time and place, and scene changes. The dramatic nature of the fourth gospel version of a historical biography is a significant component. According to Estes and Sheridan (2016:14), it serves the same purpose as a Greek drama's “hypothesis” in letting the audience know what to expect.

When looking at the literary characteristics of this gospel, John's style is simple. Most of the terms used are common words, as the structure is primarily asymptotic (very similar), with many repetitions. John uses various literary characteristics such as; long discourse (4:4-42), puns and misunderstandings (1:5, 2:19) and irony as a vehicle of truth (4:12). However, the entire Gospel exudes calm and even goes so far as to convert scepticism into a confession of faith (4:19-25). The following section provides the structure outline of verse 24 while referring to its dynamic structure to comprehend the dialogue more nuancedly.

4.7.1 Structure of verse 24

The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well is found in greater detail in John 4:19-26, which also contains the structure and development of the theme in verse 24. Dockery (1988:129) views this part of the dialogue as the point that includes Jesus's initial revelation as the Messiah and the only way to the Father.

- a. God is spirit,
 - b. and his worshipers,
 - b¹. must worship
- a¹. in Spirit and truth.

The text emphasises not the Spirit (a, a¹) but the need for true worship (b, b¹). Not only that, concerning verse 23, there is another need; to seek true worshipers of the Father. In this verse, John describes the Father as pursuing worshipers, which is a theme present throughout the whole gospel (3:16, 6:44, 15:16, and 1 John 4:10). According to Reinhartz (1999:11), "Father" or πατερ is a more prominent metaphor for God in John than in any other New Testament writing and occurs three times in John 4:21-24. John 4:24 comprises two sentences, three definite verbs and one unspoken. In the first sentence, there is an adjective with a predicative function of the subject of the sentence, namely, "ὁ θεός" (God is). Although the verb "is" not in Greek, it appears due to the predicative function it fulfils for the adjective.

There are two parts in the second sentence. The worshiper's identity and the object of their worship are described in the first section. This pronoun is referring to the subject of the first sentence, namely "ὁ θεός". Therefore, the act of worship is directed to God.

In the second part, the issue is no longer “ὁ θεός” but the accusative article “τοῦς” (His). Here, the discussion is no longer “who they worship” in this context; instead, the argument is the manner and methodology. To specify how John used the nouns πνεύματι (spirit) and ἀληθεία (truth). Therefore, both nouns, being in dative, indirectly fulfil the object’s function, pointing out the how of worship. The notion that “worship is defined not in terms of the place of worship, but in terms of the object and manner of worship” is also supported by Kanagaraj (1998:17). In “b”, from the moment that “δεῖ προσκυνεῖν” (must worship) is written, John made it known, apart from inviting true worship, at that time many were not worshipping in the right way. At this, two verbs mark the true meaning of the entire verse. Both actions are directed to the pronoun “αὐτὸν” (Him), emphasising that the need of worshipers is ὁ θεός. Likewise, Davidson (2005:10) highlighted the verb “δεῖ” (it is necessary), which appears three times in the same chapter (verses 4, 20, 24), being a keyword in the narrative. It is evident from the four gospels that this verb is closely related to Jesus’ mission. As part of that mission, Jesus was encouraging them to be genuine worshipers (3:14, 16:12-14, 29:9). The following section help us understand what matters to God about the discussion of those who worship Him worship Him both “in spirit” and “in truth” (John 4:24). Hence if humanity seek to worship God in only one way, it is incorrect worship.

4.7.2 Word study

Worship: Fowler (1964:1508) defines worship as reverent homage or service paid to God in the concise Oxford dictionary. Chan (2006:13) describes worship as “a creative response to God’s self-revelations”. The Hebrew lexicon in paragraph 7812, defines worship (*Shachah*) in the Old Testament, as kneeling, prostrating (particularly reflexive, in homage to royalty or God), falling flat down, humbly beseech as in Exodus 20:5. In the Word, Strong’s Greek lexicon in paragraph 4352 worship (*proskuneo*) is defined in the New Testament as to kiss someone (like a dog licking his master’s hand), to show reverence; kneel or prostrate, to submit, respect or supplication as in the Bible (Matt 4:10, John 4:24). Worship thus is an act of extreme reverend that expresses a profound attitude of respect for everything, especially the Almighty God. The status quo of the word is exchanged for acceptance of and faith in God’s plan and justice in our lives, in practice rather than only “by mouth” (Jam 2:17; 1 John 3:18).

Spirit (πνεύμα): The Greek word offers intriguing interpretational options, and the text's meaning and the passage's context can have an impact on its specific meaning. In the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew word spirit רוּחַ (*ruach*), literally also mean "wind" or "breath, implying also life" (Kittel, 1985:879). Some translations might make sense in verses 23 and 24 that it allude to a spiritual action apart from the carnal volition (sinful human nature), such as: "rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks; a spirit, i.e., simple essence, devoid of everything or at least every material element, and possessed of the power of knowledge" (Strong, 2012). In the biblical context, the word spirit carries the meaning of "life-giving spirit", that is, of the essence of life, of a unique element that can animate the flesh, bringing life. Thus, the interpretation of "worshipping in spirit" refers to a transformation caused by the action of the spirit, overlapping human reason. Something intense, since it is undertaken by all the breath of life, and continuous, not limited to a place (temple, city), a form (ritual, Law), or a cultural group.

Truth: "αλήθεια" in Strong's Greek Lexicon paragraph 225, the word means: true, truly, truth, verity. However, Strong's Hebrew lexicon, paragraph 571, refers to *emeth*: stability, truth, trustworthiness, assuredly, establishment, faithful, verity. By splitting the word αλήθεια, the phrase divine wandering in the cosmos is what it means when the word "divide" is split in half. Hence, Θεία (Theia) means divine and ἀλή (ali) means wandering. John urges the audience to believe in the truth, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). The significance is that the truth will save us (Eph 1:13-14). Therefore, Hakola (2005:108) believes that Jesus is connected fundamentally to the reality of John's narrative. The truth of God's revelation is found in Jesus (1:14, 14:6). As Jesus exposes Himself as the truth, permitting access to the Father and guiding potential followers to experience his redemptive assurance, the word "truth" has a profound Christological significance. Jesus is the true witness of the Father's veracity and is God's incarnate.

So, to worship God in spirit and truth, one must love him with all of one's being-heart, soul, mind, and strength. True worship requires participation that is "in spirit" or sincere. There cannot be true worship in the spirit without a genuine passion for God. Worship must also be "in truth" or well-informed. Christians cannot worship God truthfully unless they know whom they serve. The spirit without truth produces an

emotional experience similar to being high on drugs: superficial and overly sentimental. A dry and passionless contact with spiritless truth might easily evolve into a sort of legalism devoid of delight. A joyful appreciation of God well-grounded in the Scriptures arises from the optimal integration of the two components of worship (Old, 2002:3). Next section elaborate on whether the passage in question is descriptive or prescriptive and propose why.

4.7.3 Is the passage descriptive or prescriptive?

The passage of John (4:24) is prescriptive because the word the author uses, “must”, specifically teaches what should happen. Therefore, it can only be true worship described in this verse, and only such worship can be conceived. The verse does not say what humanity must or ought to do but describes the nature of God, not God’s personality. John explicitly teaches and encourages believers (body of Christ) and all individuals to worship God in Spirit and truth, which suits his nature and agreeably to his will. Hence, one objective of chapter 4 may be to describe Jesus Christ’s identity and salvific mission. Still, in the context of worship and exploring the Holy Spirit’s work (Kanagaraj, 1998:31). Therefore, when reading descriptive literature, Van der Merwe (2019:7) suggest that the reader’s mind would conjure up images of the text. These images emerge and grow concerning what previously was read and what still needs to be read (2019:7). Therefore, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the goal of the fourth gospel is to give readers a description of a timeline of the actual events while also inspiring them to “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that through believing” they may experience life in the name of Jesus (John 20:31). The subsequent text illustrate the integration of the biblical text to our message.

4.7.4 Applying the biblical message to the text

In applying the biblical narrative to this text, “God is Spirit”, those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. This statement is descriptive. The author of John warns that worshipers must worship in spirit and truth because God is Spirit and truth. As a result, believers “must worship in Spirit and truth”. This directive emanates from the principle of “truth” (God). True worship defines worship performed “in truth”. The word truth here refers to Jesus himself when referring to John 14:6. Therefore, true worship of God can only be presented via the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus. The connection between “Spirit” and “truth” in this passage may be because Jesus is the

source of truth (14:6, 1:14, 8:32). Hence, Hasibuan (2021:14) emphasises that the relationship highlights the significance of divine inspiration in religious endeavours, with its base in the person of Jesus.

Therefore, all believers should know the universal and cross-cultural idea that underlies the command. Culture also influences this principle; John's example would have been significant to many Samaritan converts who had entered an idolatry-based way of life. These pagan impersonations would be left behind by new Christians, who would instead dress in Christ with the spirit of truth (Eph 4:17). At the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, far from the beauty of the temple and the great schools of theology of his day, Jesus brought the purest view of God on worship. Jesus came to reveal God as the Father (John 17), and his teachings unveiled a vision of worship based on place, system, and ordinances for what is, in fact, true worship the Father is seeking.

Theologically, according to John 4:19-24, God is the object of worship. Worship does not include cultivating a specific location or geographical area. Jews believed the Temple in Jerusalem was more sacred and holy than any other place. The Samaritans also believed that Mount Gerizim was a sacred hill. They developed an extremely intolerant mindset that despised different cultures due to these cults (Hasibuan, 2021:14). God wants us to worship and be faithful only to Him. Believers should only offer unique, exclusive, truthful worship. Therefore, Christians must follow the Scripture's directive, "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind and must not bow down to them or worship them" (20:3-5). The following section examine what this passage says about God.

4.7.5 What this passage says about God

This passage describes God as the Father (Løland, 2009:117). God is not material or corporeal (i.e., God has no physical body). Two significant implications of this truth are: first, God is not confined to any physical constraints common to humankind, and second, God is not visible and, therefore, must never be substantially degraded to artificial images. God desires closer relationships with people who fear Him (Ps 25:14), "The intimacy of the Lord is with those who fear Him, to whom He will make known His covenant". The Creator is not looking for "worship" but "worshippers" - people committed, consecrated and dedicated to worshipping him. Worship comes as a

consequence of our communion with Him. Therefore, Christians must seek God with all their hearts: God promised that if believers pray and search for Him with all their hearts, they will find Him (Jer 29:12-13). Insightful King David, who profoundly understood this truth, recorded it in his lovely Psalms: "Hallelujah! In the assembly and the midst of the upright, I will give the Lord my sincere thanks" (111:1). All the subsections discussed in this section in addition to the topic on "what the passage says about God", help scrutinise elements essential for elucidating our theme. Therefore, from the researcher's organisational view, it is imperative to brief and summarise these topics to make it possible to achieve the goal of the study.

4.7.6 Understanding of this passage

This section brief the understanding of this passage in query. A paradigm-shifting story, John 4 highlights the nature of true worship, unveils the identity of the Messiah, and underlines the pressing need for spiritual harvest (Koester, 1990:668). It also breaks down social barriers. Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman teaches us valuable lessons, as postulated by Lawler (2020:1) Jesus transcends societal boundaries about gender, race, and religion in his conversation with the Samaritan woman. Bradford (2018:1) presents the following hypothesis to corroborate Lawler's claim: first, Jesus crossed the racial barrier. The Samaritan woman first responded to this barrier by saying, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman" how can you ask me for a drink? (John 4:19). Then Jesus crossed the religious division. When the disciples returned from their trip, they were shocked to learn that Jesus had also broken through the gender barrier.

Based on John 4:27 they were "surprised to find him talking with a woman". The Jews saw Samaritans as little more than religious outcasts since their faith was a perverted blend of paganism and Judaism. At last, Jesus overcame the ethical hurdle, "The man you currently have is not your husband; the fact is that you have had five husbands" (John 4:18). Bradford claims that in this instance, Jesus did not allow the Samaritan woman's way of life to stand in the way of his living water.

Even though, in this text (John 4:24), the conversation between the Samaritan woman and Jesus illuminates more about God the Spirit and the idea that worship must be spiritual and unrelated to any specific location (Eyo, 2018:7), one of the feminism

scholar (Natar, 2019:121), however, augments that the woman's theological background, interests, and impromptu efforts to stand as witnesses in the city are all significant. The Samaritan woman dedicates herself to spreading the gospel of Christ without getting approval from anyone, least of all her people. The extent to which the Samaritan woman was able to hold a meaningful theological discussion with Jesus, Natar claims, indicates that the woman was the first person mentioned in the Gospels to do so. The woman also demonstrated great intelligence regarding religion and theology (Eyo, 2018:6). Cornelius (2008:79) contends that the Samaritan woman is portrayed in John's account as courageous and wise, challenging Jesus from the beginning without holding back. The woman immediately highlights the distinctions between herself and Jesus and is not scared to face the problem. Throughout their talk, the woman demonstrates astute general and historical knowledge.

Despite being depicted as "a moral drifter" having multiple husbands in the past and is considered the "archetypal outcast" for visiting the well by herself at noon, the Samaritan woman transforms into a blessed, pardoned, empowered, freedwoman with a purpose in life after speaking with Jesus (Cornelius, 2008:79). Its timeless truths still ring loud and clear in today's environment, motivating us to live our faith in meaningful and transforming ways. For instance, the Samaritan woman's transformation motivates us today. It gives us hope that, despite our past, Christians must trust Christ to transform our lives and those of our loved ones.

This passage (4:24) calls us to a more profound form of worship anchored in spirit and truth and reminds us that the gospel is for everyone. It exhorts us to cherish our close interactions with Jesus and to benefit from the transformation that results from partaking in the living water Jesus provides. Christians must understand that Jesus can save lives and rule the world, just as the Samaritan woman recognised when seeing Jesus going beyond national borders and having worldwide significance (Koester, 1990:669). The next section elaborates on worship fundamentals and challenges in a multicultural setting.

4.7.7 Worship fundamentals and difficulties in a multicultural environment

The fourth gospel and the Synoptics are the end product of many years of practising the faith. The life of faith involves challenges, opposition, conquests, and successes.

Answers to the problems must come from Jesus' identity and the resurrection mystery. Hence the community that produced the gospels found it difficult, but not impossible, to solve these problems (Ehrman, 2015:1). Therefore, the fourth gospel aimed to unite the Johannine community's culture and way of life. It is apparent from John verse 24 that the new messianic community has a transnational nature.

The community is now inclusive rather than just an ethnic community. The ancient rivalries and animosities between the ethnically, culturally, and ritually pure and impure are invalidated. Christ, in his humanity, the Messiah, destroys and nullifies distinctions (Williamson, 2001:4-5). Second, the messianic era represents a new interpretation of the traditions that have been passed down from the past (Kanagaraj, 1998:22). The Samaritan woman and the disciples needed to understand that their religion encompassed a new way of thinking and doing that is not restricted to the interpretations taught at the temple. The historically isolated and marginalised subject, the woman, emerges from seclusion and spreads the revelation of the messianic age. Jesus, who is aware of the woman's background and reinterprets it rather than condemning it, transforms the woman into a missionary and improves the woman's life. The Samaritan woman demonstrates to the neighbourhood that the messianic era has arrived by acting as a historical figure who has undergone this transformation (verse 23).

Christians must imitate God in making the gospel message accessible to the people at any given time and community in a way consistent with their culture, just as Jesus did. Jesus specifically instructed his apostles to share the Good News with Samaritans to dispel Jewish biases against them and other groups (Munson, 2020:44). Christ came for Jews and non-Jews; the attitude of Jesus proves this. Jesus' attitude is one of acceptance and understanding. Jesus is concerned with ending all types of discrimination and marginalisation. The cultural barriers that separated people due to human activity were destroyed by Jesus' cross-border and multicultural contacts (Seonwoo, 2022:4), especially with the marginalised, weak and outcasts. Jesus embraced everyone with God's love to establish a welcoming community of believers.

Therefore, believers must emulate Christ's attitude towards people of other cultures worshipping with them (Wyckoff, 2005:96). In the world, Christians must intend to communicate God's redeeming work through their faith community. Every Christian

must feel sent by Jesus as a disciple of Christ, just as the Father sent Jesus (John 13:20, 20:21). The world requires this groundbreaking stance. Many individuals, situations, and realities beg for this Christian testimony, even if they do it in silence. It is vital to take on the attribute of God to embrace the rejected, assist the needy and serve as the voice of Jesus to the lost (Holman, 2009, 19-20). Christian life and witness demonstrate their distinction and significance through actual attitudes.

The more Christians strive to align their mystique with that of Christ, the more enlightened and devoted their followers become. Jesus' attitude towards the Samaritan makes it very apparent that Jesus wants every Christian in a multicultural congregation to establish a bridge between people of different cultures to close the gap between them when worshipping. Consequently, this can be achieved, as pointed out by (Sellers, 2017:40-42), by reaching out to the underprivileged, sharing the gospel with those who think differently, being open to working together to bring about peace, just as Jesus gave his disciples purpose, and, among other things, being willing to forgive and support others even when going through hardship.

Some contemporary issues suggest that the process of Christianisation did not always respect cultural concerns (Abdulla, 2018:103), mainly when evangelists joined another mission: expanding the empire. Many people believed adopting Western culture meant giving up their own and becoming Christians. Only a few cultural customs that favoured keeping the people obedient were used by religious settlers.

The disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35-42), Greek Hellenists (John 7:35, 12:20-21), Samaritans (John 4:39-42), Jews expelled from synagogues (John 9:22-23), and those marginalised by the political system are just a few examples of people from other cultures, religious beliefs, and organisations expelled by the Johannine traditional community (Hendrickx, 1990:1). Living with diversity and expressing this differentiated richness in harmony was difficult. The Samaritan woman learned about God's gift while continuing to follow the Samaritan traditions and history. The Samaritan woman subsequently had to give up their long-held religious beliefs and security. In this way, the woman participates actively as one of the inculturation process actors. Therefore, it is essential to effectively address inculturation to evangelise individuals (Nche *et al.*, 2016:6). It is a cornerstone of pastoral care. The phrase "Stay with us" conveys the people's yearning for the Messiah to stay with them (John 4:40), preparing it as an

invitation. Jesus' followers adopt him as their leader without losing their cultural identity.

Not all cultural practices are authentically human. All human beings are God's creation and likeness. In light of this, Rhodes (2013:21) argues that God's original plan for creation was always multicultural (Gen 11:1-4). Where and how Christians gather for worship are often focal points for tensions in multicultural churches. But in a multicultural setting, what counts is "how" Christians worship in spirit and truth, not "where" they do it. God did not dwell in the temple or Mount Gerizim, which was formerly a temple and is revered by Samaritans, because God was a Spirit (John 4:20). In contrast to the false worship of the Samaritans (4:22), God seeks people who worship Him with an appropriate inner attitude and following the truth God revealed to the Jews. It is clear as the Scriptures emphasise that to worship in spirit and truth, one must be sincere in heart, humble, have a broken spirit, be holy, and rejoice in the presence of God. And this involves the pursuit of edification and acknowledging that the Triune God is the object of worship. The subsequent section explores how to minister to diverse cultures using John 4:24 as a foundation.

4.7.8 How to minister to people from different cultures based on John 4:24

The Gospel's ability to cross boundaries is one of its many exceptional aspects. No matter a person's race, culture, or socioeconomic standing, it affects every aspect of their life. As a result, when sharing the gospel, Christians should aim to honour God's presence in a multicultural church rather than trying to eradicate cultural differences (Rah, 2010:29). The fourth chapter of John brilliantly captures the Gospel's ability to be accessible to everyone. In this complex and nuanced story, Jesus converses with a Samaritan woman, bridging social and theological barriers in a remarkable encounter. This encounter is a story of revelation and transformation, a testimony to Christ's redemptive and unifying power (Welzen, 2016:7). This narrative finds timeless spiritual truths applicable to our modern walk of faith. Hence, according to John's teaching, the "Spirit, like the wind, blows wherever it wants" (John 3:8), persuading everyone to hear the gospel in their language, culture, and environment throughout history. According to the Scriptures (Matt 28:18-20), God's primary goal is to save all people. Therefore, a church with a missional focus recognises this divine commandment and makes it the basis for its existence.

The principle from John 4:24 encourages us that true worship may foster reconciliation, sharing leadership, and allowing all God's people to worship despite our various backgrounds. Therefore, it is essential to remember this when ministering to individuals from diverse cultures. In addition, Nieman (2012:135) also believes that congregational studies must be conducted with ever-increasing sensitivity when analysing how different religious traditions organise their communal activities to worship together in Spirit and truth. Thus, understanding the changes and complexities in how religious gatherings function, mainly how members are active in them, is a significant problem for congregational studies.

This most essential yet basic idea for ministering to persons from diverse cultures is presented in our research. True worship must be focused on the correct object, according to the tenet of John 4:24. The significance of this notion is found in the word worship's basic etymology. Hence, sincerity without knowledge is an improper form of worship, according to verse 24. When the Lord told the Samaritan woman, "You worship what you do not know", Jesus used stern but essential words. Worship assumes a suitable response to divine revelation; it is more than merely having good intentions.

Subsequently, the type of worship believers practices must determine the nature of worship. Hence, the object of worship determines its condition. God, who created man in his likeness and image, anticipates that man would worship Him following the attributes of God as described in the Scriptures. The spiritual significance of true worship must be consistent with the sense of the object of worship and vice versa (Brodie, 1997:264). Humankind must not worship God according to their likeness, attitude, or interests.

Hence, Jesus emphasises to the Samaritan woman that true worship is not limited to a specific place or practised by a particular community. Instead, it is a matter of the heart, carried out in spirit and truth. The lesson of Jesus teaches us that our worship must be sincere, led by the Holy Spirit, and founded in God's truth. This example is a helpful reminder of the diversity of worship practices and traditions in today's religious landscape. Believers are encouraged to emphasise the core of worship-spirit-led, truth-centred worshipping of God-rather than its outward rituals.

The Bible makes it quite clear how to worship God. Christians should not worship God in any way they feel is suitable. In these lines (Rev 22:18-19), God forewarns his people not to add instructions or subtract from them. In this context, it is clear that John is discussing incorporating heathen traditions into our worship of God. Hence, Jesus reserves his harshest criticism for people who engage in external acts of worship and are uninspired by an inward spring of love and joy for God (Matt 23:27). For Brodie (1997:265), this implies that worship is never an external or public display. Worship comes out of the heart's spiritual source of salvation.

The discussion on ministering to people of diverse cultures, guided by the example of verse 24, points to the importance of inculturation in evangelisation. In light of Jesus' attitude, the Church needs to stop beside the various wells in the world that are thirsty for this spiritual water that Jesus, through the Church, continues to offer. The history of the Church's path is always challenging, as was the life of Jesus' ministry, which continues to nourish the church's life (Goheen, 2010:76, 81). The Johannine community had difficulties as a result of its cultural environment. Even though cultures can frequently reveal inevitable conflicts, the church can offer assistance and use its resources in evangelisation; besides, the church should not ignore the new cultural reality just because it is unique. The gospel of John teaches believers to minister and deal with conflict in a congregation with cultural differences, just as Jesus did with the Jews and Samaritans. The core purpose was to worship God in Spirit and truth (4:24), and true worship brings reconciliation. Hence, one cannot imagine a church that is unconcerned with the context in which it exists. The church is in the world - although it does not belong to this world (John 17:14) - the church must still, in the face of all the conditions of life like conflicts, show that in this historical reality, it must build the Kingdom of God which transcends its story.

Through the context of John 4, it is experiential the rapprochement between Jews and Samaritans. Despite many cultural and religious differences, both have the same need: spiritual thirst, although in different dimensions (in Jerusalem or Gerizim). Hence, Jesus removes boundaries based on religious convictions and demonstrates to the Samaritan that regardless of creed, worshipers must worship God in spirit and truth and not engage in prejudice or foster discord (Wyckoff, 2005:96). Therefore, Christians must meet for dialogue at their point of need (just like the Samaritan women at the well) for this meeting to bear fruit with proximity and agreement, despite the

difference in conceptions. Even if it is a long experience, so it was with Jesus, it must also be so with the Church. Having something fundamental to offer different cultures, it needs to meet them. The world is thirsty for the water of Jesus Christ through the source of the Church.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter sought to ascertain the articular normative characteristics of cross-cultural interactions that can be drawn from the Bible and the Christian theological worldview. Many Christians desire to fulfil the “Great Commission” mandate more effectively to spread the gospel to every nation, race, tribe, and language. However, in this chapter, understandably, it is challenging to interact easily without knowing the people’s worldview without a biblical perspective. In strengthening this inference, John 4, as a critical example, specifically verse 24, guides Christians on worship and diversity, as the Johannine diverse community had the same experience.

Consequently, there exist substantial evidence that the Johannine community appeared to build its ecclesiology on the foundation of fraternal love. The community was very receptive to interaction with different cultures and the divine vision. As a result, acknowledging differences in this society and advocating for a life of fraternal communion suggests the possibility of unity in a multicultural church of various groups, cultures, individuals, mentalities, and viewpoints. This biblical passage has a spiritual significance. It demonstrates the Trinity as the underlying principle of ecclesial diversity, emphasising God’s relationship through fellowship with others.

This text reveals a conventional and cultural problem that Jesus resolves by severing through the written story patterns that apply to today’s congregation. Therefore, it is commended that the church discovers and considers this in light of disagreements over worship and diversity. Pastors, leaders, and missionaries are encouraged first to comprehend the worldview from the people’s perspective to successfully preach to those from various cultural backgrounds and fulfil Jesus’ command. To better integrate into their society and spread their faith with others, they will be entering.

Hence, it is expostulated that it is essential to contextualise the Bible in cross-cultural interaction because contextualisation helps Christians understand how the gospel and the culture interact throughout time and location. Therefore, it is evident that Christians

can find the basics of contextualisation throughout the Bible, and Christ is a prime example of contextualisation (John 4). However, contextualisation cannot conform to the pattern of this world; therefore, it is crucial to recognise when to contextualise. Subsequently, some aspects of our worship cannot contextualise. Thus, to be culturally relevant, a church must become aware of the culture of the people it wants to reach. Contextualising is necessary to help individuals perceive reality through the lens of their worldview based on their lifestyle. Christians must consequently exercise tact and be knowledgeable about contextualisation. Christians must learn to comprehend both their own and the core beliefs of others to successfully share the gospel with people who do not share the biblical worldview.

Furthermore, it was considered that the function of a multicultural church, founded on Bible principles, aims to worship God, fulfilling God's mission. Accordingly, God's church should prioritise worship above all things. For all of humanity, it must be the highest priority. Without worship, humankind is lost in a spiritual muddle that prevents them from serving God's intended purpose. A brief exegesis of John's background followed, and particular emphasis was placed on the exegetical account of John 4:24 to help comprehend the theme of "worship in Spirit and truth". Hence the notion of John 4:24 could not make more sense unless understood from biblical interpretation.

In part of our investigation of John 4:24, it was evident that believers are encouraged to follow the Paraclete's lead to worship "in Spirit and truth" as a Christian, whether in a multicultural congregation or anywhere else. Hence, true worship is not a matter of place (in a church), posture (kneeling or standing), or observing a specific liturgy or ritual (Matt 6:5-13). According to the Bible, it is a matter of the heart and Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides believers to comprehend the truth and practice authentic worship. A sincere worshiper cannot be someone who rejects the truth. Whoever worships God must adhere to his commands. Christologically, worship ought to be done in spirit and truth everywhere, that is, ceaseless worship.

This passage demonstrates that God is not material or corporeal, meaning God is not bound to any physical constraints common to humankind. God desires a close relationship with his worshiper. To find God, worshipers must pray and search for him, as God promised. John 4:24 unveils the identity of the Messiah. It underlines the pressing need for spiritual harvest, calling us to a more profound form of worship

anchored in spirit and truth and reminds us that the gospel is for everyone. Although faith involves challenges, the answer to all difficulties comes from Jesus' identity and the resurrection mystery. Hence the community that produced the gospels found it difficult, but not impossible, to solve these problems.

The chapter concluded with an analysis of how to minister to multicultural people, based on John 4:24. The ministry of Jesus to various cultures is an example. Despite the Samaritan woman's history, Jesus teaches that genuine worship guided by the Holy Spirit and grounded on God's truth is the only acceptable form of worship. Despite where you do it, Jesus says there is only one way to worship. The focus must be on inner truth-centred worship of God rather than its outward rites, and believers are encouraged to do so. Jesus clarifies in his ministry that true worship is found within the heart's spiritual source rather than in an external or public manifestation. As a result, John chapter 4's description of Jesus' ministry to people from various cultural backgrounds is clear. Jesus dismantles boundaries based on belief systems and demonstrates to the Samaritan that worshipers must worship God in spirit and truth, irrespective of belief, and not engage in intolerance or sow division, as has been the case in contemporary churches. God is present in all cultures and values. The next chapter address the paradigmatic principles that can assist a pastor in dealing with conflict in a multicultural church.

CHAPTER 5

GUIDELINES ASSISTING THE PASTOR WITH CONFLICT IN A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

5.1 Introduction

The goal of Chapter 4 was to identify the normative aspects of cross-cultural interactions that are coherent from a biblical and theological stance. This chapter employ Osmer's (2008:4) normative task, which seek to demonstrate how Scriptures can serve as a foundation for fostering diversity in a place of worship. Chapter 5 addresses how pastors can better understand how to handle conflict in a multicultural church especially through joint worship. The pragmatic task is applied in this chapter, aiming to present congregational leaders with "action plans that impact outcomes in meaningful ways" (Osmer, 2008:176). The purpose of this task is to encourage believers to make a change that can benefit their physical and spiritual health. Therefore, the question that needs a response related to this task is: "How are we going to respond" to conflict in a diverse church?

5.1.1 What social requirements are needed for a multicultural church pastor?

The gospel transcends cultural boundaries, the person, and teachings of Jesus provide pastors with the spiritual resources they need to deal with the difficulties of interpersonal disputes and misunderstanding that develop when groups and followers adopt opposing worldviews (Lingenfelter, 2008:16). Therefore, the goal of a congregation and its pastors and leaders must be to identify, challenge and repent of behaviour and thought habits that are immoral and, as a result, personally and socially unhealthy. The church is to be a community of repentant godliness. Hence, Paul believes that a godly leader must be tried and suited for his work (1 Tim 3:2). The apostle was well aware of the battles in people's souls, thus creating standards with the help of the Holy Spirit because regeneration by the Holy Spirit aims to transform people and make them willing to do good (Weerakoon, 2015:7).

Consequently, when thinking about pastoral credentials, the first three letters of Timothy and the epistle to Titus from Paul appear to be helpful. It is both fascinating and challenging to study the qualifications provided by the author item by item. Paul

undoubtedly set a standard of excellence for each item, as evidenced by a text like 1 Timothy 4:16 (see also Rom 7:23; 1 Cor 9:27). Thus, these pastoral letters can serve as a model for the ideal of a multicultural “godly leader” against which one must periodically evaluate one’s vocation. The researcher does not assess these letters extensively but refer to them along the way.

Additionally, Adams (2016:18) argues that the Bible is not an anti-intellectual book; therefore, as the role of a pastor or church minister necessitates instruction, prudent application of God’s truth, and the capacity to communicate that truth, the academic and intellectual component of ministerial training is typically crucial for pastors. Christians must be careful to avoid denominational disagreements and the wrong doctrine that believers do not need to study theology. Adams exhorts pastors to be wise and mindful that God does not discourage intellectual preparation as long as such endeavours are devoted in a submissive passion to him. God loves to utilise the weak in a strong manner to demonstrate that the power is of him, but weakness refers to dependence on God rather than one’s own ability.

In the setting of a multicultural church, cultural diversity can lead to conflict due to differences in how biblical principles are interpreted and applied in various cultures (Bowman, 2008:75). Pastors need to be skilled spiritually to handle worship conflict. But even more crucially, disagreement is something that leaders need to be aware of. Even more vital, for church leaders to edify the body of Christ, conflict is a problem that they must be ready to manage proficiently. According to Grace (2012:89), disagreements about doctrine, goals or resources can lead to conflict inside the church. Misunderstandings can also arise from competition for scarce resources. Grace cites James 4:1-3 to support this claim that unmet sinful desires cause humankind’s propensity to fight, kill, and flee.

Therefore, a pastor’s lack of competence, comprehension, and interpersonal interaction in a diverse church frequently impedes interpersonal efficiency and worship of God in unity. In the opinion of Jalal (2017:1), cultural differences already breed scepticism and lack of conviction, especially if they go unaddressed; as a result, a pastor in a multicultural church must try to fully comprehend each member by adopting the proper mindset, learning the appropriate information and accurately picking up specific abilities. This, in turn, can avoid trivial conflict. Understanding others is the

capacity to experience what others believe and feel without being personally involved in those emotions, which is one of the most crucial parts of human relationships. Pastors of the cross-cultural church have primary responsibility to help believers from different cultural backgrounds develop a shared understanding of the gospel and strengthen interpersonal trust (Jalal, 2017:4).

5.1.2 Is there ever a church without conflict?

This section addresses the question of whether there are conflict-free worship communities. Addressing the question would help Christians understand how pastors can respond to conflict in a diverse church. Many believe there might have been a church without conflict because of what they heard of the early church. The early church's narrative paints a picture of a group of people who, despite persecution, lived in a nearly perfect setting. In light of this, Dreyer (2012:1) portrays the early church as an open but organised movement with established social limits and a core of teaching. The Holy Spirit was very much present and shown strongly in the early church; however, the early church was not without flaws. A simple examination of the New Testament, according to Lathrop (2015:185), reveal that the early church endured various types of conflicts among its members.

By glancing at the book of Acts, there are several examples of issues in the early church: The deceitful scheme of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 involves the secret value of the sale of the land that was partially donated to the church. The failure of the daily handout to some widows (verse 6), Simon's guilt (8:9-13, 18-24) when professing faith in Christ, and the believers' mistrust and terror that made it hard to accept and welcome Saul of Tarsus, particularly soon after becoming a Christian, because of his horrendous history as a church persecutor in Acts 9:26-27, are such examples. Peter visiting Cornelius' uncircumcised home and sharing a meal with them (11:2-18) and the criticism he received by proponents of circumcision in Acts 11:1-18 is another example; the erroneous claim by legalists that circumcision is necessary for salvation (15:1-35); as well as Paul and Barnabas' argument about sending John Mark on the second missionary journey (15:36-40) are other examples. Therefore, not even the people who made up the first church were flawless, implying that there can hardly be an immaculate local church. As a result, all church leaders have to handle internal and external conflicts and need to be trained to do it properly.

Before exploring principles for pastors to handle conflict in a diverse church, it is crucial to briefly reflect on what it means to be a church, so as to understand this section better. The church comprises “humankind”. If the church is suffering, it is because everyone is suffering. The church can be compared to a rose that shuts. As was done by members and/or leaders of the early church, today’s believers can either continue to close over time or open up more and more in the face of conflict, displaying their beauty and perfume until it crumbles and spreads wherever the wind blows. The beauty of the early church narrative demonstrates that they completely surrendered like a rose about to bloom. According to Dreyer (2012:3), they spread moral principles like altruism and mutual aid, attracting people to Christianity and demonstrating how ordinary Christians could show Christian love concretely. Therefore, Van de Beek (2020:527) claims that the early Christians saw themselves as members of a community that had found eternal life in Christ. By being baptised, they became part of Jesus and the church as his body on earth. Heaven determines their identity because Christ is in heaven, referring to Paul’s statement that our citizenship is in heavenly places (Phil 3:20), and their life is his life.

From the Bible's understanding of the church, the church is the group called to show the world the message and person of Christ. Dever (2018:35), argues that the church is the grand stage where the perfections of God are displayed to the world, the church is “the mirror that reflects the fullness of divine character”. Therefore, the church is a gathering of people who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour and continue to worship God, not a building made of blocks or an institution, but people serving as living blocks, as evidenced by Acts 17:24, “The God who created the world and everything in it does not reside in temples constructed by human hands”.

Therefore, every believer who believes in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is a member and part of this body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23). This living body has living features. The church can pray (Acts 12:5), feel fear (Acts 5:11) and speak (Matt 18:17) because it is a living entity. The Holy Spirit welcomes everybody who has been born again in Christ into this spiritual body. This organism (the church), not a company, is where every believer belongs. Hence, every believer uses their spiritual abilities to serve the body of Christ without distinction (Rom 12:3-5; Eph 5:11-13). Similar to the church, which has a variety of ministries and gifts inspired by the Spirit, use it for the

different functions of the church activities (DeVries, 2016a:4). The human body, which has several members that are all unique from one another, is used as an illustration. Each member cooperates to ensure the entire body's seamless operation (1 Cor 12).

As a result, this is how the body of Christ ought to function: a diverse group of individuals, each with unique skills, abilities, and personalities, ought to cooperate for the sake of the common good, which is to perfect the saints and exalt our God. No member of this body should pursue his interests above those of others. Diversity, not consistency, is the distinguishing feature of God's creation since the beginning (Woodley, 2010:21). It is the same with nature and grace everywhere, especially in Christian society and the church. Diversity enables Christians to address the needs of many different people, according to Mvududu (2019:3), who argues that Christ urges his followers to celebrate diversity and pluralism. Thus, because of this diversity, everyone can cooperate to benefit the (body) church. The following section discusses why the ability to resolve conflicts is a must for multicultural church pastors.

5.1.3 Why interpersonal skills are vital for multicultural church pastors?

Pastors work in a socially and culturally diverged society and they have an impact on their and the lives of the people in their congregations (Chege, 2021:29). A diverse church comprises people from different backgrounds, including members of all ages, cultures, maturity levels, educational backgrounds and religious beliefs. Therefore, pastors must never overlook that the enemy sows weeds and they appear along with the wheat and coexist with it (Matt 13:25-32). This range of traits can lead to disagreements, but if handled with humility and optimism, they can also help people learn and grow in their capacity for forgiveness and patience. Conflicts in the modern church typically occur for various reasons, as discussed in Chapter 3. Therefore, when there are disagreements in the church, members are also affected (Le Roux, 2019:6) because of the shame and defamation of the name of Christ; even those who are not directly involved are affected. Therefore, building solid relationships is essential to the church's mission and growth (White, 2015:4). If not, the church and its reputation can suffer significantly when there are disputes.

Thus, Pali (2018:3) claims that one of the significant issues the church is currently confronting is resolving disputes concerning biblical teachings and the church needs

to defend the spiritual maturity and progress of believers. Resolving conflicts Scripturally is a crucial aptitude for pastors to develop; conflict does not skip church leadership but forms an essential part of it (Kurtz, 1982:111). Accordingly, relationships within the community and ministries can suffer from the lack of effective dispute resolution or management techniques.

The cost of unsolved disputes in the church is typically very significant. They weaken the spiritual vigour of those involved, shift the emphasis away from the church's mission, obstruct communication, provoke unilateral decisions that result in alienation and distrust, replace unity with factions, and turn friends into adversaries. Moreover, it damages the church testimony, causes unfaithfulness in tithes and offerings, causes some to renounce the faith, increases stress on those who remain, reduces or obliterates vital ministries, and harms the church's reputation in the community. Historically, pastors have not always handled church disagreements well, according to Kurtz (1982:111). Due to the church's increased susceptibility to conflict today, Kurtz contends that currently, it is essential rather than an option to handle controversies creatively.

Therefore, it is necessary for church leaders to possess leadership problem-solving skills so as to be able to solve problems in a multicultural church. It does not imply that pastors know all the solutions, but they must take charge and steer the process of finding solutions. In the early church, it is clear that the leadership made decisions in some circumstances, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), while in others, the entire church was called to participate, as in Acts 15. Although the Bible does not provide rigid guidelines for management that should rule over Christians, pastors must note how the early church operated to emulate it. According to Van de Beek (2020:526), studying the early church can help gain a fresh perspective on Christian theology and reposition church leadership. Even though Christians were a minority in a multicultural society then, Van de Beek (2020:526) urges leaders to learn the principles of early church Christianity for handling conflict.

5.2 How are we going to respond to what is happening in a diverse community?

This section discusses how pastors should counter challenges in multicultural churches. The suggestion to build upon what is considered distinctive in the South African church environment - the sense of connectivity, human dignity, respect and appreciation of difference - is an excellent place for multicultural pastors to start (Ngcobo & Edwards, 2008:652). Our nation is currently experiencing a critical leadership crisis at all levels (Van der Walt, 2019:129, 137). Many aspire to be in positions of power, impose their will and oppress and dominate while robbing the poor to enrich themselves. Being a leader means having accountability; it involves guiding, instructing, and assisting others. But no one can be a model leader without being led by the supreme leader of all time, Jesus of Nazareth, the selfless leader (Nsiah, 2013:103).

Furthermore, being good is not enough to be a church leader; what matters most is exercising leadership responsibly with quality and excellence, in addition to being distinct from the world (McDowell, 2012:2). This does not mean that the church should stop embracing love and continue to make disciple in all communities. It cannot be different for Christians if it is necessary to do things right in the secular world. To serve in God's kingdom, God chooses people who are open-hearted and available to assist. Therefore, a quality that the Lord looks for in a pastor is the ability to fulfil one's obligations in commitment to God and the church (Chege, 2021:38). In God's job, one cannot simply do the right thing occasionally but one must be faithful, fruitful, and competent in one's ministry (Keller, 2012:13). An exceptional pastor always does the right thing. A great minister never looks for an excuse to delay or fail to complete a task; instead, they always seek to do what is right. The primary driving force behind a pastor should always be zealous and timely execution of all tasks, including handling conflict timeously.

That said, God's mission is to bring about reconciliation for humanity (Wenk, 2010:44). In support of this claim, Mcneil (2020:12) contends that reconciliation is a continuing spiritual process. Thus, for a pastor to effectively address worship-related conflict within a multicultural church, it is imperative to recognise that this process resolves on the person of Jesus Christ, his gospel and his proposed interaction with humankind

and their environment. Naidoo (2017:2) thus believes that the gospel message of Christ is the foundation for the local church's unity. Therefore, harmony and unity among the members are essential to resolve conflicts in the church effectively. Pastors and leadership play a vital role in this process, guiding the church to peacefully resolve disputes by promoting reconciliation among members. The following section address pastoral care as a strategy for promoting peace in multicultural communities.

5.2.1 Pastoral care as a means of fostering peace

These days, movements in Africa have grown to previously unheard-of sizes, manifesting as mass movements involving enormous numbers of individuals (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2023:1). Naturally occurring calamities, unstable economic conditions, political as well as ethnic and social conflicts are the reasons behind people's expulsion or flight into macro churches. Despite their diversity, these migrations raise important issues for faith communities concerning pastoral concerns like evangelisation and interfaith communication. However, the church is probably not well enough prepared to handle the changes that have occurred in the world due to successive waves of globalisation, digitisation, and disruption (Sendjaya, 2022:2).

Therefore, a growing number of factors necessitate a profound integration of other believers' needs into the pastoral care of churches, with the pastor serving as the primary contact point and caregiver (Hall, 1997:240). To avoid the risk of homogeneity and to keep the physical aspect of soul healing distinct from that of linguistic, cultural and traditional affiliation, this integration must happen with the utmost respect for the uniqueness of the churches and their spiritual and cultural legacy. According to Chimoga (2019:12), pastors have a tremendous deal of duty because they must understand that the closer members are to the "High Shepherd", Jesus Christ, the stronger and more tangible the church's unity would be.

The pastoral ministry carries with it several responsibilities, attributions, and functions (Magezi, 2019:3). Beyond a simple profession or trade, the pastorate is a vocation designated by God; therefore, it has gigantic challenges and great treasures (Chege, 2021:28). Pastoring is one of the five ministries Jesus left and gave to his children. Those with this ministry gift are given the role of caring for the people the evangelists bring into the church. They are also responsible for administering the church and

helping the brethren with their spiritual needs, leading them to the stature of Jesus. Like a shepherd - who leads, protects and feeds his flock - pastors are the leaders of their memberships (Adams, 2016:24), empowered to teach, advise and guide the services of the body of Christ in the church to reconcile with God and others. Hence, people who want to follow Christ must learn that forgiveness, justice and repentance have to occur to realise reconciliation among people (McNeil, 2022:25).

5.2.2 Pastoral care for the flocks is necessary for harmonisation

Pastors carry out their tasks within the context of some intricate acts needed to enable their flock to live and multiply. This viewpoint depicts a shepherd leading his flock to the pastures and searching for sustenance. Pastors are a path in life. They walk ahead of the sheep to find that which ensure their survival: water, grass, and protection (Resane, 2020b:3, Ps 23:1). A collection of components creates the idea of providence by elevating this pastoral role to a theological level. According to Bosetti (1986:32-34), the godlike pastor is deeply invested in his sheep's existence, cares deeply about their well-being and reassures them of what is essential for time and eternity.

Many pastors are well-versed in theology but they must learn to be sensitive when dealing with people of different backgrounds to inspire them and maintain a healthy horizontal relationship. One of the traits of a servant leader is the ability to influence followers through the application of spiritual understanding, as demonstrated in Christ's life story, which is centred on serving others out of love for them and bringing out the best of their character (Zohar, 2002:120). Therefore, love lived and demonstrated through practical actions can inspire others through the model to be copied. The virtue-driven approach can lead to a servant leadership style prioritising empowerment, authenticity, stewardship and direction for pastors (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015:119).

A desire to change the world lies at the heart of a servant leader's motivation. The goals of church leaders must be the desire for the common good and the sense of duty being accomplished in connection to the tactics assigned by the leader and the ones they are leading (Du Plessis & Nel, 2015:2). Therefore, pastors should share the same goals of encouraging service and instilling spiritual values in churchgoers. For instance, South Africa is a rainbow nation with many challenges, especially that associated with political leadership, that affect its citizens and non-citizens from top to

grassroots; therefore, a servant leader is vital in pastoral ministry and the Christian community (Kgatle, 2018:1).

5.2.3 Diverse community need exemplary servant and broad-minded pastors

Taking care of conflict management within the church is essential. Exemplary leadership is critical to attaining long-term organisational success. Still, even more so, pastors play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy church environment and supporting members' ongoing development (Joo *et al.*, 2018:1). Pastors and church leaders play a pivotal role. They must be able to resolve most issues related to church misunderstanding. Servant leadership defines how everything progresses (Carnes, 2007:9).

Pastors in multicultural communities must specifically emphasise spiritual principles and serving others by setting an example, encouraging self-awareness, and encouraging actions that benefit the church and larger communities (Joo *et al.*, 2018:2). Therefore, Harianto *et al.* (2023:7) backs up the premise above by asserting that a spiritual leader's responsibility is to live a spiritually-focused life and set an example for others to follow.

Thus, authentic servant leadership is demonstrated by example, wisdom and generosity rather than words. Jesus always exhibited an excellent character that supported his activities and he encouraged his disciples through sermons and parables. Jesus' example and leadership ability to lead were evident in his concern for the people he was in charge of rather than the task or the mission. His followers needed to be shepherded rather than directed since they were his partners in carrying out the mission. The Scripture is filled with exhortations to follow Jesus led and served as a role model. In John 14:12 and Matthew 20:26-28, Jesus made it clear that his followers were to follow in his footsteps and carry out his instructions. According to John, Christians should love others as Jesus loved them (1 John 4:10-11) and walk in his footsteps (1 John 2:6). Paul also advises Christians to adopt Jesus' mentality (Phil 2:5).

Therefore, the motivation of the servant leader must not come from their selfish desire to demonstrate their ambition or knowledge but from their true and holy love for their model leader and master, Jesus, as well as their love for others. The first humans

experienced an archetypal first instance when they behaved out of their desire for autonomy and knowledge while mistrusting God. They became internally divided due to their separation from God, developing a different conscience and becoming far from one another (Gen 3). Since then, throughout the ages, humanity has worked to modernise the psychic polarity that defines them and distinguishes all societies—the dialectic of love and hatred.

The fall of Adam and Eve proves that continuing self-denial is necessary for perseverance in God's purpose (Ming, 2022:297). Given that the comforts and amenities of the modern world have ensnared everyday humankind life, spiritual leaders must be watchful and courageous. Various ideas and ideals from the outside world are dominating the young generation while the majority of people in today's society, including the youth, are subject to materialism, consumerism and hedonism. Therefore, Ming urges pastors to exercise vigilance to escape these constraints and refrain from adopting unthinkingly a modern lifestyle.

Leaders and members must be exemplary by exercising caution and balancing their behaviours, actions and opinions in everything they do. In addition, pastors and members must utilise social media in a thoughtful, prudent, and balanced manner that displays love. The number of individuals using social media daily is growing; a significant portion of this population is young. Therefore, it is understandable that conflicts among church members have escalated due to people's increased use of social media and the digital world to the point that any publication can ignite a raging argument, especially among Christians (Badmos, 2014:5-6). By using social media, believers risk being criticised or communicated unpleasantly by others (Badmos, 2015:7).

Therefore, church members should have the same interests as the church. Pastors must impart a behavioural pattern as well as a godly character and habit through biblical teaching. Faith has an impact on how church members act. The researcher is not discussing social media; however, it is essential to mention it here. After all, leaders need to be open-minded to know about social media communication because so much revolves today around technology. However, Christians must use the online universe with great prudence and discernment; as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:23, although "everything is permissible, not everything is beneficial or edifying". The following

section focuses on how pastors must embrace diversity while maintaining their commitment to the gospel.

5.2.4 How can pastors foster unity in diverse places of worship?

A pastor ought to be a reassuring presence during life's storms (Jibiliza, 2021:11). Many Christians, due to negative experiences, hold the misconception that people in the church act differently towards other people going through different and sinful situations. However, Jesus commands his followers to be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50), implying that believers may also experience conflicts, like people acting in other non-Christian groups. In reality, the church should never be a place devoid of any indications of conflict, hostility to ideas and challenges to authority. Paul thus repeats the directive to Christians to "live in harmony with one another" (Rom 12:16). Although the description above of the church reflects a biblical ideal of what the body of Christ ought to be, anyone who has experienced a local community of faith would realise that Christians have fallen short of the biblical standard that the church ought to be a place of forgiveness and a place where love reigns. Unfortunately, sin and brokenness still affect them; it is clear that disputes within the church are unavoidable, even from a brief look at life in the New Testament (Luke 22; Acts 6; Gal 2). When the gospel's tenets and truth are in jeopardy, Spijker (1995:1) believes that conflict is unavoidable.

Division and conflict undermine Christian testimony in the community and our faith. Thus, conflict resolution is essential to the church's peace since it upholds the just existence of the church members. Therefore, pastors must be ready to participate in reconciliation actively. How the pastor, as mediator, acts during the processes leading up to a resolution determines how well conflict management works in the church. From this perspective, the mediator encourages dialogue between conflicting members, intervening spiritually when necessary and, thus, seeking to reach an agreement or conciliation. Therefore, what is needed is that multicultural church pastors:

- should address conflict while strongly emphasising Scripture, prayer and meditation (Garred & Abu-Nimer, 2018:9);
- encourage narratives to build love and mould Christians into peacemakers (Tamawiwy, 2021:62);

- always promote dialogue as the best option to resolve disagreements and bring harmony to the church because, through dialogue, they have the responsibility to establish, promote, foster and sustain peace and harmony within and between various religious communities (Umaru, 2019:69). However, discussions need to be systematic and ongoing, not limited to times of conflict; hence, effective communication (good offices) is essential to avoid and resolve misunderstandings (Musyoki, 2020:27).

The church must oppose behaviour that jeopardises member harmony and promotes unity. What are the bonds of unity? Above all, charity is the bond of perfection (Col 3:14). To engage in worship, they must reach out to and connect with various cultures simultaneously; combining different people during a worship service creates unity amidst this diversity (Whitesel, 2014:24).

Unity brings peace; according to John 17, Jesus desired unity among his followers to accomplish his and their mission. Nicholas (2019:58) asserts that Jesus Christ exemplified how unity is essential to fulfilling the church's mission. The sense of unity that comes from God is incredible, with God as the Trinity always acting in unison and collaborating on projects without conflict as one. The bond between Christians should essentially be seamless in the same manner. As such, our redemption experience via the cross of Christ is one of oneness and commonality (Zgambo, 2017:611). Jesus overcame every obstacle that separated believers and united them. Amid cultural diversity and plurality, the Christian faith fosters unity. But unity is not uniformity nor does it imply that people must have similar preferences and tastes. For that reason, unity in the church implies reconciled diversity (Pillay, 2017a:14). Unity is achieved among all because all are one in Christ. By drawing a comparison between the human body and the church, Paul demonstrates the significance of each component for the unity of the whole body (Cor 12:12-27).

Living in unity with God and other Christians is one of believers' greatest joys. God wants his church to follow his will and guidelines and it includes the realisation of Psalm 133: "Oh! how wonderful it is for brethren to live in harmony; it is comparable to the priceless oil". Thus, God revealed his intensity for the unification of his people. This harmony was not only a symbol of "unity" but a merger of goals and mission purpose that can only come from focusing on God's plan. Hence, Zgambo (2017:623) believes that unity in diversity and diversity within unity characterises the modern church.

Unity is understanding that Christ's work on behalf of the church overcomes all ethnic, social, cultural, and ideological barriers. Thus, Christians must emulate Christ by effectively sharing the gospel and working for unity and justice (Pillay, 2017a:2). The gospel is the power that unites those different around the purpose for which believers exist: the glory of God. Therefore, the goal of unity in a multicultural church is "for everyone to be one, just as the Father and the Son are one, and for the world to believe" (John 17:21). Unity is meant to demonstrate, affirm and declare that Jesus is the Messiah whom God sent into the world. Pursuing unity and extending God's love to others are hallmarks of the Christian faith; love for one another must be the foundation of a fraternal partnership. Christians cannot coexist in unity without love and renunciation. Our union depends on our love for God. The church should help and inspire one another to act out of love so everything can be perfect. What binds the church together is love. As a result, pastors are in a better position to encourage Christians to love and reconcile with one another. They must do so as a prophetic voice to carry out Christ's mission of bringing world peace (Resane, 2020a:5).

5.2.5 Why should multicultural church pastors have pacifist traits?

In this section, the study aims to highlight several traits of the peacemaker pastor and assess the implications of their responsibility. The pastoral community has encountered many difficulties that make worship together challenging, particularly in these modern times. However, Jesus commands his church to live in harmony and to strive to reconcile people who are hostile to one another and experience conflict (Viljoen, 2021:3). Christian responsibility to promote peace is essential in a world where conflict is prevalent. Conflicts will always arise when more than two people are in one place; however, the fundamentals of Christian love-preferring the other, selflessness and loving deeds-contribute significantly to effectiveness and peace (Resane, 2020a:5).

Jesus came to preach peace to humanity (Eph 2:17). Thus, pastors' duties include to impart peace among their members and community. For that reason, God calls pastors "peacemakers"; hence, Swartley (2013:9) claims peacemaking is part of God's moral character. According to Matthew 5:9, Christians are supposed to be peacemakers in their communities. Therefore, Viljoen (2021:3), quoting Matthew 5:3-12, states that the beatitude also depicts peacemaking as a trait of God's children. As

Christ's ambassadors, Christians are supposed to bring people to God through the gospel of love and peace; as a result, they will find peace with God's covenant people (2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 6:15).

Peacemaking is not an option for the Christian church. Making peace is a church virtue in which peace is a fundamental aspect of the church (Hauerwas, 1985:606). God desires that Christians diligently and continuously maintain peaceful relationships to enjoy the peace God grants those who obey him. In a multicultural place of worship, being a peacemaker is not a simple task for pastoral carer to fulfil since its membership and character represent a variety of cultural backgrounds (Resane, 2020a:2). Establishing peace requires a considerable commitment from pastors to mend various strenuous relationships. Hence, multicultural church pastors should be pacifists.

Peacemaker traits exemplify the greater virtue that Jesus demands of his disciples (Viljoen, 2021:4) because of the many obstacles and resistance they meet along the road in following Christ. At times, the activities and responsibilities of a peacemaker require risk-taking. However, peacemakers are blessed because they triumph over the battlefields of conflict without striking back at those who employ violence. Therefore, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matt 5:9). In this sense, people who foster God's peace are called peacemakers. The word "*shalom*", peace, an attribute of God in Hebrew, refers to total or complete well-being, integrity, abundant life and salvation (Franklin, 2020:2-3). Thus, in this remark, one can comprehend Jesus explaining that those who actively seek peace and put their confidence in him will be rewarded eternally with the title of children of God because they emulate the harmony and oneness of their God. God refer to individuals who strive to establish peace for others as his children (Buttry, 1995: xi) because they reflect the essence of the one known as the God of peace. Sande (2004:25) opines that the response of a peacemaker is mandated by God, strengthened by the gospel, and focused on resolving disputes in a fair and mutually beneficial way. Thus, a pastor must have essential traits such as humility, forgiveness, patience, and readiness to work toward reconciliation. Swartley (2013:12) states that pastors are instructed by the "God of peace" to be peacemakers, witness the gospel through suffering and model Jesus's peace-making behaviour.

According to Viljoen, quoting Matthew 5:3-13, pastors must understand how to live a life that promotes peace more fully as spiritual leaders. Pastors and religious leaders must work to promote peace in the face of ideological diversity. The peacemaker pastor diffuses tension among members, advances understanding and fosters repentance and reconciliation deliberately rather than avoiding conflict or viewing it as a barrier (Oppenshaw *et al.*, 2018:4). Thus, the most appropriate way to reconcile disagreements is through peacemaking, a biblical principle and a gospel practice. The absence of conflict does not define peace, as Van der Walt contends (2021:7), “peace emanates from a person’s presence”, which is the outcome of God's relationship with his people, not a technique or a requirement (Van der Walt, 2021:6). Peacemaking refers to the standards of living and behaviours fostered by a society that recognises itself as forgiving people. Peacemaking virtue is a Christian vocation response to a divine call that is central to the *missio Dei* (World Council of Churches, 2011:11). As a peacemaker (Vorster, (2018:4), the church has a prophetic and priestly role to play concerning the promotion of peaceful relationships in society. Thus, a pastor in a diverse community must have pacific traits because the pastor represents Jesus and provides for the sheep out of “love” and devotion to Jesus - a master of humility who exemplifies good deeds both in word and deed.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter's focus was the pragmatic task, which sought to give church leaders guidance that significantly impacted results on conflict management. The aim is to encourage Christians to adopt new behaviours to improve their spiritual and physical well-being. Given that the church is a product of its historical context and operates under the direction of God, its leadership must be aware of the challenges and complexities of humanity's diversity and exercise good stewardship by conducting ecclesiastical administration following biblical teachings. This chapter illustrates that Christians encounter various circumstances, including happiness and sorrowful moments, triumphs and failures, and the global quest is replete with challenging and crisis-filled moments. The rapid changes in our society and the increasing individualism they bring affect everyone. As a result, conflicts characterise the community of believers in the same manner as love and peace.

Thus, multicultural church pastors ought to aim to identify challenges, behaviour and morally wrong thought habits because the church should be a community of repentant godliness. Hence, pastors must have the credentials and standard of excellence based on the Scriptures to guide all people. However, in practice, some pastors' lack of competency, understanding, and interpersonal engagement in a diverse church may hinder interpersonal efficiency and unity in worshipping God. There are no conflict-free worship churches; thus, pastors must possess strong social skills because they influence people's lives and work in a socially and culturally diverse community. Moreover, contemporary pastors must learn from the concept of early church leadership (in the Bible) in these situations.

Based on this reality faced by pastors, the question was how the church should react to challenges in a diverse community. The church must be a model after the ultimate leader, Jesus, who demonstrated accountability, responsible leadership and uniqueness from the outside world. Since the church's goal is to effect human reconciliation, it implies that God seeks leaders who will fulfil their commitments to God and the church. Thus, pastors must play a vital role in this process, guiding the church to peacefully resolve disputes by promoting reconciliation among members. Hence, pastors have an enormous duty. They must realise that the church's unity will be stronger and more evident the closer its members are to the Shepherd, Jesus. Above all, godlike pastor are significantly interested in their sheep's existence, caring for their well-being and reassuring them of what is essential for now and the future.

To inspire service and instil spiritual values in Christians, pastors should also possess servant leadership qualities, exemplified by their actions. These actions must concentrate on serving people out of love for them and showing the essence of their character. Thus, pastoral caregivers are critical in preserving a positive church atmosphere and fostering members' growth. Pastors and Christians must witness the legitimacy of the message they preach and uphold. They should welcome diversity by acknowledging and judiciously utilising individuals' cultural differences to advance the gospel. Knowing those around us is essential to recognising their spiritual and physical needs and responding to the signs of the times. In light of this, the successful process of pastoral ministries requires a profound knowledge of oneself and others as pastoral caregivers.

Similarly, the purpose of the church is to be a living example of God's compassion and love. As a result, the mission mandate strongly emphasises compassion in all four Gospels because compassion is a moral virtue that allows pastors to relate to people from their core and deepest feelings. The servant leader has to have compassion, just as Jesus did. Christians' compassion points to their commitment to living a Christian lifestyle. Pastors thus need to understand the difficulties facing the contemporary church. Given this, many African churches face numerous problems; they must stay current with global events and developments to make a difference in society, as these bring them new challenges. For instance, the growing number of migrants in South Africa has forced the church to adjust for members to grow in empathy and compassion, which are necessary for genuine Christian-to-Christian engagement with migrants. Thus, the gospel must reach out to others because the Scriptures call us to repent and change. But the essence of the message of the gospel may never alter.

Another implication is that pastors of multicultural churches must be aware of their congregation's different demographics and cultural backgrounds to effectively address the particular issues that members and people face, implying that change is essential for a diverse church. Serving a diverse congregation with a range of needs requires administration skills, so pastors must possess biblical and administrative knowledge as taught in God's word.

Another implication is that pastors must be able to handle various conflicts, requiring organisational abilities in management effectively. Pastors must also be able to teach Christians how to live in harmony since the Trinity created the world in unison and unity is a defining feature of the Christian faith. Jesus perfectly exemplifies how harmony is necessary to accomplish the church's mission. God wants Christians to live in harmony because unity promotes peace.

Ultimately, the role of the pastor as a peacemaker is to promote peace also in societal situations, something that their faith instils in them. Making peace is not a choice but a church virtue in a Christian community. Thus, restoring peace necessitates a significant commitment from pastors to heal various complex relationships. Therefore, peacemaking, a biblical principle and a gospel practice are the most acceptable means of resolving conflict. Thus, faith leaders must endeavour to promote peace in the face of ideological diversity. A pastor in a multicultural society must be a peacemaker

because the pastor is a master of humility who embodies good deeds in action and deed, representing Jesus and providing for the sheep out of “love” and loyalty to Jesus.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The study concludes with this chapter, which is a synopsis of chapters 1 through 5. This academic master's degree can be seen as a chance to research and expand further knowledge about the conflicts multicultural churches face. This study proposes to conduct a comparative literature review on the role of the place of worship in pastoral counselling in a diverse church experiencing conflict. The thesis thus outlined theoretical paradigms in order to accomplish this goal. The literature reviewed addressed worship in Spirit and truth, conflict, culture, multicultural communities, and transformation. Even if the significance of each concept is indisputable, the researcher was motivated to examine ways to lessen the conflicts that arise among church members from diverse cultural backgrounds because multicultural congregations often experience conflict owing to member diversity. The examination of Christianity's interactions with other world cultures, based on different authors referred to, aims to understand a church relationship marked by conflicts. Therefore, this recapitulation pursues to illuminate our understanding of managing multicultural conflict and encourage Christians to worship together, express their faith, and grow spiritually.

6.2 The study's aim

This study's scientific value comes from examining a situation that energises religious studies, given that migration has become a global phenomenon and created a significant shift in the Christian community due to diversity in many ways. Thus, the research's primary goal was to examine how worship can help resolve conflicts between members in a multicultural congregation when they worship in Spirit and truth. The study employed Osmer's model of inquiry, which has four tasks: descriptive, interpretative, normative, and pragmatic, to direct, evaluate, and explore potential solutions for the issue in investigations.

The research chapter started in Chapter 2, with a review of literature that involved evaluating the unique challenges of a multicultural church, focusing on challenges posed by diversity, a review of worship conflict in Christian ministry and the challenges

of comprehensive counseling. Chapter 3 argues why multicultural churches experience conflicts and the adverse effects of ignoring cultural differences. A biblical and theological analysis of the Scriptures and multicultural relationships is presented in Chapter 4 to determine what normative traits cross-cultural relationships should possess. Chapter 5 addresses how joint worship can help pastors better understand how to handle conflict in multicultural churches and presents congregational leaders with “action plans that impact outcomes in meaningful ways and encourage believers to make a change that will benefit their physical and spiritual health.

6.3 Summary of the study objectives

6.3.1 Chapter 2: Unique challenges of a multicultural church

This chapter explored what happens in members, leaders, and the congregation’s lives. It completes Osmer’s initial task (2008:35), the descriptive task of answering the question “What is going on?” The answers to these findings included a lack of understanding of the church’s core function in modern society, which opens precedents for interpretations and action of the church that is inconsistent with the Bible principles. Cultural differences cause many divisions among believers, and some Christians do not commit to the truth and the alliance of love. Some Christians perceived the exuberant and unfamiliar nature of multicultural worship as unreformed and inappropriate.

Furthermore, particularly in South Africa, the difficulty is the need to recognise each member’s uniqueness and originality. Cultural, social, and spiritual conflicts arise in multicultural places of worship. Additionally, human migration, culture shock, ignorance of other cultures and language barriers are among the causes of church conflict in South Africa. Furthermore, people living in the global village of the twenty-first century face various challenges, including dislocation, a loss of sense of identity, existential fear, and hopelessness. These issues also impact Christians who attend multicultural churches. This sense of hopelessness among the populace comes along with refugee crises, which exacerbate xenophobic concerns because of the South African locals’ fear and prejudice towards foreigners.

Thus, from these findings for pastoral counselors, pastoral relationships are challenging since community members must learn to communicate relationships to

solve life's problems. The absence of pastoral care creates an imbalance between the church leadership and the members, making it impossible to recognise or solve issues as they arise. Additionally, many pastors do not possess the expertise required to offer specialised counseling and pastoral care. Furthermore, the modern church cannot respond to migration concerns effectively due to the lack of biblical-theological core principles for migration theology. Lastly, it was observed that modernity has shifted from focusing on Christianity-based caring for souls to favouring social science, which is theoretical and in the process, neglecting to commit to pastoral care adequately rather than combining the credibility of God's message with appropriate psychological techniques. Christian counsellors ought to assist members in strengthening their relationship with Christ while enhancing their scientific abilities and allowing them to practice freely within a biblical worldview.

6.3.2 Chapter 3: Why does conflict occur in a multicultural church?

This chapter focused on the interpretative task, which sought to explain a variety of conflicts that can legitimately arise in today's churches to answer the question, "Why is it happening?" From this chapter, it was clear that, even from the Bible, there are instances in which conflicts are reasonable and even necessary to accomplish God's purposes. Hence, it is pertinent to comprehend the causes of conflict.

This study found that conflict happens due to diverse reactions from communication, ideas, perception, and values, and also some Christians' propensity to keep church and culture apart rather than handling disagreement in a way consistent with Scripture and spiritual growth. This results in some Christians ignoring other cultures, causing miscommunication through language, incorrect behaviour, and even inefficiency in carrying out specific tasks.

Furthermore, many Christian leaders lack sufficient cultural knowledge to carry out their pastoral responsibilities successfully; additionally, variances in their vision, ecclesiology, and expectations regarding the role of pastors and leaders in the church and how it operates lead to substantial variations and occasional disagreements. Furthermore, rather than bringing believers together, some Christian churches provide a platform for latent misogyny, homophobia, and racial tension because of insecurities. Many conflicts also occur unintentionally due to unknown corresponding rules.

6.3.3 Chapter 4: Scriptures and multicultural interrelationships

Finding the normative aspects of cross-cultural interactions that make sense from a biblical and theological perspective was the goal of this chapter. To achieve this purpose and fulfil the normative task for this chapter, the question “What should be happening?” was addressed. A grammatical-historical exegetical of John 4:24 was applied to respond to this question. The exegetical was relevant because it provided insight into the challenges and historical background of the Johannine community (a mix of members) while highlighting its positive aspects and proving how Scripture is the foundation for guiding diversity in a place of worship.

As a result, narrative criticism and other literary methods of biblical study were applied to define the text of John 4:24. From the analysis conducted in this chapter; this text can help Christians reach out to believers from different cultures, races, social classes and genders. Moreover, the analysis made it clear that true worship promotes harmony, sharing leadership, and permitting all of God’s people to worship despite their diverse origins. The normative perspective is met by reviewing the chosen scripture passages. It allowed us to develop pastoral guidelines to direct pastoral care providers in their mission to lead people to worship together because God is not confined to any physical constraints. The primary purpose of worship is to worship God in Spirit because God is Spirit and desires that his children worship him in Spirit and truth and not in a specific location or geographical area.

6.3.4 Chapter 5: What social requirements are needed for a multicultural church pastor?

The last chapter of the study attempted to answer the question, “How might we respond?” using Osmer’s pragmatic task paradigm. Put differently, how believers worship together can help pastors understand the best way to settle disputes in a multicultural church more effectively.

The findings of this chapter revealed the need for pastoral caregivers to develop their leadership and task-competence abilities and be equipped spiritually to handle worship conflict skillfully. Also, they ought to be trained to have the knowledge and understanding to minister in a diverse community. Furthermore, pastors who share God’s missionary purpose must learn and be willing to walk alongside humanity

through every process, no matter how difficult or time-consuming. The need for pastoral caregiver awareness is crucial to becoming a faithful servant because expanding knowledge of social problem-solving will help improve community relationships and promote compassion, solidarity and Christian discipline. A church's pastor needs to be aware of the diversity of cultures within their mission field.

Pastors also need to be empathetic toward God's people from different cultures and those who are not yet living in accordance with the truth. Pastoral caregivers are required to pay close attention and be proactive to what is happening in the world and within the Christian community to bring about the direction of a transformative relationship with God. They need to be flexible, adapt to changes and adopt the modern culture while constantly grounded in a biblical theological vision. Hence, diversity is becoming prevalent in our society. Pastors must be proficient in administrative abilities since they are essential in handling various problems within the Christian community.

6.4 Conclusion

The church should comprehend, among other things, the complexity of today's society as it enters the modern era because it is a product of its period but operates according to biblical guidelines. Throughout the development of the research, it becomes apparent that the differences in Christian beliefs among various communities do not lead to divisions; instead, they represent adaptations of faith to the many circumstances faced by members of the contemporary place of worship. Thus, it is possible to say that a Christian from one country is a believer in another African country. In so saying, it has been established that religion and faith play a role in this kind of fundamental readjusting in our society. Thus, the bibliographical review made it feasible to learn more about an in-depth investigation of the interaction of worshippers in the South African multicultural churches and the local members.

In conclusion, the testimony of communion and unity, Christians must be able to integrate community life, capable of reconciling differences and appreciating cultural aspects in a world divided by intolerance and separation. Christian churches must acknowledge the critical significance of a constructive and reciprocal relationship between different beliefs, which entails sharing the gospel, experiences, and mutual

knowledge as a necessary precondition for reconciliation, respect, and harmony among all peoples.

6.5 Recommendations

6.1.1 How should worship in churches change to be more multicultural

Primarily, Christians should concentrate their efforts on evangelism and discipleship while being good citizens and contributing members of society. The discussion on culture in chapter 3 in terms of church conflict offered a genuinely biblical perspective. The church must focus on humanity's spiritual needs—spiritual salvation and, subsequently, spiritual growth through its faithful service to unbelievers and believers. All believers, while remaining apart from the unbiblical ideas and practices of the culture, are taught by God's Word to be law-abiding citizens, obedient students of God's Word, and loyal witnesses to those involved in an ungodly society. This perspective is supported by the biblical passage found in Matthew 28:19-20, which is frequently referred to as the "Great Commission". Making disciples of all nations is what Jesus commanded of his followers and all modern believers to do. Personal salvation and spiritual development by instruction in God's Word are aspects of this calling according to 2 Timothy 2:1-2 and Corinthians 5:20-2:4. Being a testimony to the truth and holiness in an ungodly culture is the duty of the Christian (Acts 1:6-8).

Consequently, for church worship to become increasingly diverse, the church must stand out and continue to thrive in an ungodly culture while being true to God's plan and purpose, as revealed in his Word. Promote the notion that the church is a home and a family for all Christian people, a diverse community, and a representation of the one triune God. In doing so, they need to interact with communities and gain a deeper understanding of the communities they are working with. Furthermore, church leaders should strive to become familiar with challenging discourse (Resane, 2020a:4) while fostering mutual respect and understanding by teaching churchgoers about other communities' cultural customs and beliefs.

Moreover, the church must also create an inclusive liturgy that includes aspects of the many cultures that the congregation represents. Additionally, services should be provided in the congregation's native tongues (like having a translator), and diverse member demographics and church leadership should represent multiculturalism and

diversity (Resane, 2020:6; Strecker & Naidoo, 2018:177). Subsequently, this will ensure that the variety of the congregation is reflected in the leadership roles held by the church and can guarantee that various cultural viewpoints are considered while making worship decisions. Ultimately, every occasion the church encounters refugees, migrants, and the needy provides a special chance to experience Jesus Christ (Matt 25:32) and put the commandment of love into reality. The church will accomplish this by taking steps to encourage the church members and the local community to foster a culture of compassion for newcomers, refugees, and migrants who have experienced severe trauma.

The following recommendations are pertinent to future research themes based on the literature review findings of this study:

- Biblical values that govern multicultural church pastors' practical actions.
- The church must spend more time in prayer, standing in God's word, and never compromise on world traditions.
- The contemporary church must seek divine direction from the Holy Spirit to comprehend the intensifying changes to lead a multicultural church.
- Christians must examine culture critically in light of biblical teachings rather than becoming antisocial.
- Church leaders and members must learn to accept culture as an essential component of conflict.
- Training of Christian counselors in cultural contextualisation dialogue to understand categories pertinent to African culture to be incorporated into pastoral care.
- Leadership problem-solving skills needed to solve problems in a multicultural church.
- Christian pastors should study the early church to gain a fresh perspective on Christian theology and reposition church leadership.
- Pastors must impart a behavioural pattern, godly character and habit through biblical teaching.
- Pastors should learn to adopt the Bible into the language of African peoples' which will significantly increase awareness of their cultural heritage;

- Pastoral carers for multicultural churches must approach migration from an immigrant's perspective.

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