Exploring the New Testament concept of "house church" as a possible agent for discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults in a globalised South Africa

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Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Theology with Missiology at the

North West University

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Graduation: April/May 2021

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DECLARATION

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

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R. Prince Date

ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would have not materialised but for the continuous support that I received from family, friends, academic staff and colleagues. I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to them all. I appreciate your many sacrifices, counsels, critiques and above all patience.

Firstly, I thank You my heavenly Father who makes all things possible.

Prof Hannes Knoetze, my supervisor- thank you for your patience, guidance, and encouragement- I am indebted.

To my husband and children- for your unwavering patience and kindness- thank you. Your love and support mean the world to me.

To all others not mentioned specifically by name- know that I am grateful for the grace that you extended towards me. I appreciate it.

ABSTRACT

Especially in the South, Christianity is experiencing tremendous growth, but there is also a rising global trend which sees young adults abandoning their faith and South Africa is not exempt. The volatility of emerging adulthood alongside other factors such as disillusionment with religious structures has had a negative impact on religiosity and church attendance. Young adults leave the church because it no longer caters for their needs. They are dissatisfied with the same old church programmes and are disappointed with church hypocrisy. Faith formation plans and practices meant to instil Godly character in a person through discipleship seem inadequate at equipping young believers to live as disciples of Christ. Discipleship is often a learned pattern of behaviour associated with observation rather than mere head knowledge. Through mentorship, believers are thought to replicate the life and activities of Jesus. House churches provide the ideal setting through which discipleship and faith formation can occur.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title

The New Testament concept of “house church” as a possible agent for discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults in a globalised South Africa

1.2 Background

Emerging adulthood (18-25 years) is a subset of the millennial[1] generation which is the largest cohort in Africa. Most existing research describing millennials is from a Western or American perspective, whereas the African millennial identity is in flux and is developing under influencing factors unfamiliar to the West such as the spirituality of Black Africans which is often a mixture of traditional beliefs and formal religion (Knoetze, 2017a:4,5; Brittian, Lewin & Norris, 2013:3). Arnett (2000:473) first described emerging adulthood as a distinct life period for young people in mainly industrialised societies. However, the effect of globalisation, an intertwining of the world into a single unified society if you may (Hanciles, 2014:210), has led to emerging adults in more developing and third world societies conforming to some or more of the characteristics of their counterparts in developed nations. In the United States of America emerging adults are less likely to be religious than other generations (Smith & Snell, 2009:281; Mitchell, Poest & Espinoza, 2016:35; Hardie, Pearce & Denton, 2013:2). Similarly, in South Africa, although studies into early adulthood church attendance and religiosity is limited, available data shows a comparable pattern of growing numbers of young adults leaving the church (Brittian *et al.*, 2013:3; Gurney, 2007:11), Another complicating dynamic within the South African context especially amongst Black African Christians is a dualism of affiliations where Brittian *et al.* (2013:7) and Pew Research Center (2018:5) describe that large portions of black African Christians claim African Traditional religion alongside other Christian church memberships or practice.

The phenomenon of young adults abandoning the church may be ascribed to a perceived attitude that everyone has the right to choose their own religion and to practise that religion as they see fit. Even as mainstream missionary churches are experiencing dwindling churchgoer

[1] In this regard millennials and emerging adults will be used as synonyms in this study. Where specific meaning or characteristics are discussed a clear distinction will be made.

numbers, a concomitant upswing in numbers is being experienced by charismatic and indigenous churches according to the South African Council of Churches (City Press, 2012). However, a direct correlation between these dwindling numbers in mainline missionary churches and increased growth in charismatic and indigenous churches cannot be assumed.

Emerging adults leave the church for various reasons and Mitchell *et al.* (2016:35) explain that millennials in America abandon the church because they are cynical of and feel ignored by religious institutions. Likewise, Gurney's 2007 study demonstrates that the South African emerging adult church exodus is due to perceived Christian hypocrisy and boring church activities (Gurney, 2007:11). The reasons that emerging adults leave the church are numerous and vary, but a predominant thread appears to be that often the conventional church does not or cannot cater for this "disillusioned" group (Jamieson, 2002:32). House church growth on the other hand, has gained traction over the last half century even though they have been around since the first few centuries (Greyling, 2016:135). People desiring to return to their perceived understanding of the New Testament church leave the formal structures of mainstream churches for organic house churches which are small and intimate thereby catering for the individuals' needs at their life-stage. Due to their nature and size, house churches provide a great opportunity for individual discipleship.

1.3 Problem Statement

Globally, millennials tend to be less religious than their forbearers (Pew Research Center, 2018; Bergler, 2017:65). This is seen in dwindling church numbers for that age group. But others like Smith and Snell (2009:283) see it differently. They argue that the decreasing number of religious young adults does not equate to more people in that age group leaving the church but rather a continuity of their religious practice and commitment to their faith from their teenage lives.

Millennials leave the church for various reasons and a common thread for this is a dissatisfaction of the current religious structures and programmes. South Africans are leaving mainstream missionary churches, whilst Pentecostal and indigenous churches are concomitantly growing. People leave the formal structures of mainstream churches for organic house churches because they feel that these are most like the New Testament church (Zdero, 2004:1). Millennials demand authentic and inclusive spiritual programmes and strategies for spiritual growth (Mitchell *et al.*, 2016:35). On the one hand, it is argued that these can only be provided by the institutionalised church with the means and resources that would be lacking in

poorly resourced house churches. However, others claim that discipleship is more than mere plans and teachings but mentorship that can only come from a one-on-one basis in small settings.

Additionally, the order, accountability, and government envisioned by God for the church are witnessed in formal church structures and are often missing in house churches.

1.4 Research questions

In the light of these varying perspectives, the main research question is: What are the positive and negative characteristics that house churches offer as discipleship and faith formation platforms for the emerging adult in a globalised South Africa? This is the problem which this study will research.

Questions arising from the problem stated are:

- What are the characteristics of the church in the New Testament and how do they relate to house churches in South Africa?
- What is understood by discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults?
- What are the characteristics of South African emerging adults that can function as contact points for house churches?
- What is the influence of glocalisation on South African emerging adults?
- To which extent are house churches equipped for discipling and faith formation of emerging adults in a globalised environment?

1.5 Aim and objectives

1.5.1. Aim

The main aim of the research project is to evaluate house churches as agents of discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults in a globalised South Africa.

1.5.2. Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

- study and critically evaluate the characteristics of the church in the Bible and how these characteristics relate to house churches in South Africa
- give a theological understanding of discipleship and faith formation for emerging adults
- study and evaluate the characteristics of South African emerging adults that can function as contact points for house churches
- evaluate the influence of globalisation on the South African emerging adults
- evaluate the conditions that house churches could provide in discipling emerging adults

1.6 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is the characteristics of house churches in South Africa are best placed agents for discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults in a globalised South Africa.

1.7 Methodology

This research is conducted through a critical literature review which Mouton (2016:179) states is a study that analyses trends and debates to provide an overview of scholarship within a certain discipline. In this way, non-empirical data are generated using secondary sources. The selection of sources for this study is driven by the aim of the study, as well as the research questions (Mouton, 2016:180). Therefore, journal articles and books will be used for this research study.

Additionally, critical engagement with the relevant Scriptural texts will be undertaken which will follow a missional hermeneutic. This biblical interpretation understands the Bible as the missional word of God from which all other dimensions of mission as they affect human history flow (Wright, 2006: 24). A missiological understanding of Scripture thus derives from this: that we, the Church, are privileged participants in God's activity through all creation.

1.8 Preliminary Literature Review

The so-called "Great Commission" of Matthew's Gospel (28:16-20) has had significant influence on ecclesiological and theological circles throughout this past century. In fact, Bosch (2014:58) reckons that Matthew's entire Gospel should be understood as missional thereby giving credence to the missional interpretation of the "Great Commission's" pericope. Bolstered by the

Saviour's final parting words, Christians have throughout history preached the Gospel and sought to make disciples of all men. This evangelistic fervour has been responsible for almost a third of the world's population being Christian (Ma, 2014:101). However, Christian numbers are dwindling in an ever-increasing de-Christianised Western Europe and North America (Ma, 2014:95; Pew Research Center, 2018). Growth in Christian numbers therefore, has come from the global South: Africa, Latin America and Asia. Half a billion Christians reside in Africa constituting forty-five percent of Africa's overall population. Moreover, Knoetze (2017a:1) reckons that millennials constitute almost half of Africa's Christian population.

Millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996) unlike previous generations are often described as being more self-assured and decisive. They are characterised as having a strong sense of civic responsibility, are more demanding of a healthy work-life balance and hold socially liberal views (Zukin & Szeltner, 2012:2). Additionally, millennials are prone to reject standards and traditional values and live according to their own moral beliefs and values focusing on the "self" with a strong emphasis on one's own "best interests" (Hall & Delport, 2013:3). This is the same generation who invented many of our current digital communication platforms such as texting, instant messaging, Skype, FaceTime, Snapchat, etc. Globalisation, social media and the worldwide web have changed the way people perceive and receive information as well as how they interact socially and professionally. These factors must be taken into account when viewing discipleship amongst millennials.

Further complicating any assessment of millennials is the fact that this generation encompasses a wide age range with differing life-stages. Whilst it can be argued that particular generations share qualities such as beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours resulting from the time period in which they grew up, certain life-stages separate millennials into different subgroups which are or can be further distinguished by their own distinctive characteristics, tendencies, and experiences. With this in mind this research will focus on the millennial as well as the millennial sub-group of emerging adults; those who are between the ages of 18-25 years old.

Emerging adulthood is described by Arnett (2000:473) as a distinct life period for young people in mainly industrialised societies. It is characterised by change and exploration. It is a period that is neither adolescent nor adult. The volatility associated with this life phase often sees young adults transition from the values and practices instilled by their parents and family structures to finding their own way. This has an associated impact amongst others on the religiosity of young adults. Smith and Snell (2009:281) describe how emerging adults in the United States of America are less likely to be religious than other generations. A recent Pew Research Center study (2018) confirms that this is a global trend where young adults (between the ages of 18-39 years) are less religious than their elders. But Smith and Snell (2009:283)

argue that the decreasing number of religious young adults does not equate to more people in that age group leaving the church but rather a continuity of their religious practice from their teenage lives. The levels of commitment to their Christian faith and practice remain more or less consistent from teenagehood into early adulthood. Therefore, they argue, those who were highly religious as teenagers continue to be highly religious as adults. Conversely, moderately or not very religious teenagers continue this pattern into early adulthood. Interestingly, in this emerging adult group certain minority groups were observed to increase in their religious faith and practice (Smith & Snell, 2009:283). Still, Bergler (2017:65) argues that there is indeed a decline in church attendance numbers from emerging adults. Similar results from research conducted from 2007 to 2012 conducted by the Pew Research Center (2015) confirm a steep decline in the number of people identifying as Christians with greater numbers coming from the millennial subgroup of emerging adults than any other generation.

Much of the existing data surrounding the meaning and practice of religion amongst youth are narrated from a Western context, whereas in South Africa, studies into early adulthood church attendance and religiosity are limited (Brittian *et al.*, 2013:3; Gurney, 2007:11). It cannot be assumed that religious and spiritual development of those in first world countries is the same as those in developing countries. However, available data do show a similar pattern; there are growing numbers of emerging adults leaving the church in South Africa. Another complicating dynamic within the (South) African context especially amongst black African Christians is a dualism of affiliations where it is described that large portions of black African Christians claim African Traditional religion alongside other Christian church memberships or practices (Brittian *et al.*, 2013:7; Pew Research Center, 2018). Moreover, many black Africans are often negative toward Christianity which is viewed as a colonial export.

Mitchell *et al.* (2016:35) explain that American emerging adults abandon the church because they are cynical of and feel ignored by religious institutions. Similarly, Gurney's 2007 study demonstrates that South African emerging adults leave the church because of perceived Christian hypocrisy and boring church activities. In a "one-size-fits-all" approach many church faith formations' plans and structures often overlook the importance of providing authentic and unique programmes targeted at specific age groups. Worship services may appeal to one and not another because of different spirituality preferences, for example, hand, heart, and head spirituality types. Specific biblical teachings may not address the needs of a particular group at their life-stage. Communication style, language, mode of delivery, and spiritual and religious expression may present crossed-lines and dampen effective delivery of the message. Also, some faith formation programmes are often perceived as being irrelevant since they do not

“speak” to all involved. Faith formation and discipleship are interwoven concepts and are necessary for the spiritual growth of believers.

Discipleship has varied interpretations and is understood by Knoetze (2017a:2) as living in relationship with God and man by which ones’ true identity and calling unfurl. The Gospel of Matthew places primary emphasis on discipleship (Bosch, 2014:74), and as Erickson (2013:868) maintains, the making of disciples according to Matthew 28 is not just a soteriological concern -more than just the conversion experience of making followers of Christ, discipling entails *Imitatio Christi* – the imitation of Christ (Ruthven, 2000:61; Bosch, 2014:82). Many involved in ministry have realised that the process of discipleship comprises more than filling people with theological information which rarely changes them- it is learning how to live a life that glorifies God (Folmsbee, 2007:39). This is often a learned pattern of behaviour associated with observation or mentorship rather than mere head knowledge. The New Testament exhorts readers convincingly to replicate the life and activities of Jesus in all areas so that disciples may be agents of change and transformation beyond their respective communities (Gibson, 2016:157). As Brueggemann (2004:122) attests, discipleship involves following, obeying, and participating in God’s mission. These behaviours are best learnt in environments that are mutually inclusive and authentic. Consequently, faith formation is a process of establishing the character of Christ in a person through a process of discipleship under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Folmsbee, 2007:40; Roberto, 2015). The process of faith formation and discipleship are most suited to conditions that allow open observation, teaching of the Word, unrestricted participation and authenticity. The Church is called to be such an environment.

The English term for church is derived from the Greek word *ekklesia,* which means a *called-out* company or assembly (Strong, 2007:1622). The Bible speaks of the church in different ways: as the body of Christ, the church is often defined as a local assembly or group of believers (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1-2); as the body of individual living believers (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13); or as the universal group of all people who have trusted Christ through the ages (Matt 16:18; Eph 5:23-27). Grudem (1995:853) defines the church as “the community of all true believers for all time”.

References to the churches at various locations in the New Testament such as Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome or Galatia can be viewed as an enlargement of the conception of the Church, i.e. no longer comprised only by the local assembly, but considered of as one and the same Church here or there (biblehub.com, 2017a). Similarly, it can be considered as a group that “derives its identity and expression of the life of a local church” (Button & Van Rensburg, 2003:26). Moreover, the spiritual definition of the Church is seen as “the assembly … in God the Father”

(biblehub.com, 2017b). Further, "Church," indicates more than isolated believers, but a corporate body with spiritual rulers- implying vital union. (1Thess 5:12; 2Cor 1:1; Gal 1:2) (biblehub.com, 2017c).

This gathering or group of people, the New Testament Church (Button & Van Rensburg, 2003:11), may provide the ideal platform for discipleship and faith formation. The house church concept has been around since the Early Church where believers met in homes rather than church buildings. However, the house church model has gained traction over the last half century (Greyling, 2016:135) and in modern times this concept is responsible for the most rapidly growing church planting and evangelistic movement (Zdero, 2004:1). House churches consist of small groups with a strong evangelistic focus. Due to their size, everyone contributes. Every voice can be heard. Since the services are not as formal as mainstream churches, they can meet more often and share Christ without being encumbered by formal programmes. In this manner the opportunity for individual discipleship is greatly enhanced (Krupp, 2003:51).

Simple house churches are often compared to the “cell group” structures that exist in contemporary churches. But house churches are differentiated from cell groups by their autonomy and pastoral leadership. A house church is independent whereas a cell group is reliant on the mother church. Cell group leadership is accountable to the mother church’s clergy, whereas leadership in the house church is through laity (Greyling, 2016:139).

1.9 Concept clarification

Millennial: Those born between 1981 and 1996 and are characterised by the time period in which they were born (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Emerging adult: This a distinct life period for young people (aged 18-25) in mainly industrialised societies and is often characterised by change and exploration (Arnett, 2000:473).

Globalisation: Process of integration and interaction between governments, companies and people worldwide and is especially an extension of Western cultural systems into the way of life of other nations (Kangwa, 2016: 133).

House churches: consist of small groups with a strong evangelistic focus who meet in homes or businesses of members. They are autonomous, and their leadership is through the laity (Simson, 2009:5).

Discipleship: a process where individuals are taught/learn to replicate the life of Christ through mentorship and not only head knowledge. It involves following, obeying, and participating in God's mission (Wright, 2010:94).

Faith formation: a process of establishing the character of Christ in a person through a process of discipleship under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Weber, 2014:82; Folmsbee, 2007:37).

1.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations of this study are a minimal risk as this is a literature study. The study will follow the ethical code of the NWU and ethical clearance will be sought.

1.11. Proposed classification of chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction (Research Proposal)

Chapter 2: Characteristics of the church in the Bible and how it relates to house churches in South Africa

Chapter 3: Understanding discipleship and faith formation

Chapter 4: The characteristics of South African millennials which function as contact points for house churches

Chapter 5: The influence of globalisation on South African millennials

Chapter 6: To which extent are house churches better equipped for discipling and faith formation of millennials in a globalised environment?

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH IN THE BIBLE AND HOW IT RELATES TO HOUSE CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

Is it possible to clearly define the church that is described in the New Testament? Does the Bible really provide clear demarcations that can be drawn from it? In the attempt to imitate perceived notions of the Early Church some authors such as Krupp (2003), Payne (2007), Simson (2009) and others look to the New Testament to gauge God's expectations for His church. It is after all Christ's church which He promised to build (Matthew 16:18). Advocates of the modern house church movement such as Krupp, Payne and Simson argue that current church structures are far removed from those of the Early Church. It is claimed that formalised constructions have removed the essence of what the New Testament believers did and shared in (Wright, 2010:73). But does the Bible comprehensively lay out a blueprint of church structure? And if so, what are the similarities between the church of the Bible and the modern church especially house churches, whose advocates claim are most like the Early Church. That is what the next several pages will explore. Having examined the nature and essence of the Early Church an attempt will be made to find correlation between these and house churches. If the church of the New Testament is the prototype, the more comprehensive the knowledge, the closer that ideal is achieved. In this regard it will be helpful to attempt to define "*church*."

2.2 Defining ekklesia: What's in the meaning?

People's behaviours and attitudes are informed by their perceptions. In this regard, Malphurs (2007:115) states, "that people do church as they understand it". The Early Church's self-perception was particularly mission-orientated which is of importance for the modern-day believer who wishes to emulate that praxis. An attempt to understand the Early Church's self-perception is undertaken by studying the primary Greek word used in the New Testament referring to the church: *ekklesia*. According to Ferguson (1996:129), the English word "church" is not an accurate biblical understanding of the word. In fact, it originates from the Greek

adjective meaning “the Lord’s” (*Kyriakos*), or *kuriakon* (Hussey, 2012:212; Erickson, 2013:954). Northern European languages incorporated the word and applied it to mean church buildings (“the Lord’s house”). Although the English translation “church” can be appropriated to refer to the church as a building it is inaccurate for the Greek word it translates (Smither, 2014:156). An interpretation derived from a single word-study can very often slant its meaning (Carson, 1984:25). This is especially true in attempting to translate *ekklesia* which is used so variously in the New Testament. Further, Carson (1984:26) warns of the risk of imposing a particular meaning to the word to suite one’s particular view, which in this case is the view of the church. However, the manner in which *ekklesia* is diversely used in the New Testament may assist in drawing a picture of the Early Church’s self-perception.

Ekklesia is used 114 times in the New Testament (Trebilco, 2012:164; biblehub.com, 2017a) diversely (Giles, 1995:7). The term rarely appears in the Gospels, occurring only trice in Matthew (Scholz, 2009:93), however it is used over sixty times in the Pauline letters (Erickson, 2013:956; Banks, 1994:27). Nevertheless, it appears that the word was borrowed from earlier sources such as the Septuagint which uses the term about one hundred times (Trebilco, 2012:207). The New Testament usually uses the word to signify a meeting, an assembly, or congregation of people (Button & Van Rensburg, 2003:3). The Greeks generally used the term to indicate a calling of citizens out of their homes and gathering them together in a public space with a specific purpose (Erickson, 2013:955). Jesus’ use of *ekklesia* in the Gospel of Matthew differs slightly in that it could be understood as an announcement of the structure wherein he begins to build his ministry (Scholz, 2009:94). Another view of *ekklesia* is one that speaks of the church as the universal body of Christ or invisible church composed of all believers in Christ for all times irrespective of geographical location, race, gender, or social status (Mims, 2003:66). Witness of this is borne in the Great Commission challenge to the church to make disciples of all men, a clear dissolution of every barrier and dividing wall (Hertig, 2001:251).

The Septuagint’s use of *ekklesia* occurs mainly in reference to Israel’s meetings before God and is associated with two Hebrew terms: *qahal* and *edah* (Erickson, 2013:955). The former term is translated as “synagogue” and is used in reference to a summons to an assembly (Erickson, 2013:955). It refers to the occurrence of the assembly and not the members who assemble. The latter Hebrew term (*edah*) occurs predominantly in the Pentateuch of the Old Testament meaning congregation and refers to the people gathered (Erickson, 2013:955). Israel is depicted as God’s covenant community, a people called out from among the other nations for the purpose of worshipping and making God visible in the Old Testament. Thus, *ekklesia* translated as “assembly” is fitting in this regard as the term is often used to describe a group of people who are called out to a meeting (Banks, 1994:28). For the Jews “*synagogue*” and for

Christians "*ekklesia"* were used to refer to a gathered people. But in the book of James (2:2; 5:14) it can be seen that for the early Jewish Christian both words could be used interchangeably (Ferguson, 1996:130, 132).

The contexts in which the term was used by Jews and Christians are notable. *Ekklesia* was first used by the Hellenists in Jerusalem to associate Christianity with Israel's coveted tradition as God's people (Trebilco, 2012: 206). Thus, when calling themselves the *ekklesia* Christians were claiming to be true Israel (Giles, 1995:24). Further, as Harrison (1985:103) states, from Jesus' perspective *ekklesia* could readily convey the essential idea of the remnant. The church was thus seen as the continuation of the Jewish nation as the people of God, the remnant that has been set apart by God. However, it must be noted that the expansion of Israel to include the Gentiles was not the abandonment of Israel in favour of the Gentiles, but rather a continuation of the Jews with the Gentiles as God's people (Wright, 2010:43).

From the 5th Century onwards *ekklesia* was used to describe the political assembly of Greek citizens of the polis with the intention of decision-making over a range of issues (Erickson, 2013:955). The emphasis here is on the action of meeting rather than the body of people meeting together (Trebilco, 2012:165). The word referred to the occurrence of the actual gathering. So, when the people went home, the *ekklesia* ceased (Giles, 1995:24). This term is used in Acts 19:21-41 where Luke speaks of the riotous mob at Ephesus gathered in the theatre as *ekklesia* (19:32, 40). This illegally gathered mob was in contrast to a lawful, appropriately called meeting of the citizens (Banks, 1994:29). Thus, *ekklesia* as used in political Greek civic life, made its adoption by Jews appropriate for their religious assemblies (Ferguson, 1996:32).

2.3 Etymology of *ekklesia*

The etymology of the term *ekklesia* provides additional understanding of the word. By separating *ekklesia* into its root form, the prefix "*ek*" and "*kaleo*" are found which translate as "out of" and "calling" respectively (Strong, 2007:1622). Thus, the meaning "to come out of" or "the called out" becomes clear. In this manner the church is viewed as being materially and spiritually called to come out of the world (Bovon, 2003:135). Such a definition is comparable with various Scriptures calling the church to be separate from the world to a new life in Christ. The similarity between Israel and the church as God's elect, distinct from the nations of the world can be seen. On the other hand, they are different. Whereas, Israel as God's people were expected to keep away from the surrounding nations to remain undefiled, the church is called to

maintain positive contact as the light in the world reaching it with the Gospel of Christ (van der Walt, 2009:44). The logical inference of the church as the "called out" has merit, but this view is not supported by the actual usage of the word according to Ferguson (1996:132). Whereas, the former argument favours separation from others, Ferguson holds that the emphasis was on the assembling together. The term *ekklesia* was used of any assembly, religious or not. Acts 7:38 is such an example where in a religious sense reference is made to Israel in the wilderness. Here the argument that *ekklesia* refers to a gathering or assembly over the designation of a "called out body" is strengthened. But Israel could not have been called to separate from others since there were no other people in the wilderness. The "out" factor may have possibly arisen from the element of a summons, such as when citizens of Athens were called out of their homes to attend *ekklesia* of the city state (Erickson, 2013:956). Similarly, Jesus' declaration of "my church" in Matthew 16:18 makes reference to the particular assembly of which he spoke whether a local congregation or as a community as a whole (France, 1985:19).

2.4. Various New Testament uses of *ekklesia*

The New Testament use of the term *ekklesia* varies widely and interchangeably providing some insight as to how the word was perceived. Paul's writings mirror the understanding of *ekklesia* as the town meeting of free male citizens of a Greek city; an actual gathering together of a group of people. He addressed the "*ekklesia* of God in Corinth" (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1) or when all in a given town "come together in *ekklesia*" (1 Cor 11:18; cf. 14:19; 23, 28, 35) (Erickson, 2013:956). For Meeks (2001:108) *ekklesia* is more than an occasional gathering together, rather it refers to the group itself. It denotes all Christian groups everywhere either individually or as a whole (Button & Van Rensburg, 2003:7). There are numerous instances when Paul refers to *ekklesiae* (plural) of a province- Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Judea (1 Cor 16:1; 16:9; Gal 1:2; 2 Cor 8:1; 1 Thess 2:15) and also, of the "*ekklesia* of the Gentiles" (Rom 16:4) and "all the *ekklesia* of Christ" (Rom 16:16) or "of God" (1 Cor 11:16) (Meeks, 2001:108). So *ekklesia* was used by Paul to refer to an actual assembly of Christians (1 Cor 11:18; 14:19; 14:34) in some instances, and at other times he refers to those people who assemble, whether it is the whole church at Corinth (I Cor 14:23) on a smaller group such as a house church (Rom 16:5; Phil 2). It is thus reasonable to assume that the use of *ekklesia* referred to people, whether assembled or not. The widest use of the word *ekklesia* refers to the local assembly, but there are instances where it is used in reference to the global Christian community (Matt. 16:18; Eph 1:22; Col 1:18) (Ferguson, 1996:131-132; Erickson, 2013:956). In Acts the word is also used in this dualistic nature referring to the universal and the individual. The local use of the term *ekklesia* springs from the conviction that the individual church (congregation) manifests the one universal church,

of which itself is representative (Harrison, 1985:101). Thus, for Banks (1994:31) *ekklesia* is not a mere human association or gathering of like-minded individuals. No, it is divinely created!

2.5. English translation of *ekklesia*

Is there a readily available equivalent English translation of the word *ekklesia*? Giles (1995:120) comments that translating *ekklesia* in the singular is challenging. The word is often miss-applied to refer to the church as a building. But Ferguson (1996:132) cautions that when *ekklesia* is translated as "assembly" it must refer to what is done and not where it is done. For Giles (1995:120) the most suitable English translation is "community" which assumes a commonality. Wright (2010:73) echoes the theme of community when describing the church which serves as a vessel of God's blessings to the nations thus alluding to the missional character of the church. The notion of community incorporates the perspective of universality since it refers to the community of faith that can be found within a household, or within a specific geographic location, and across the entire globe (Giles, 1995:120-121). For Paul there was only one Christian community: whether he referred to all the believers in the Empire, all Christians in a city, or only of those in a particular house church. Their common shared faith in Christ is what defined believers as *ekklesia.* It was not so much the act of assembling together that made them church. Rather, the church derived its meaning through the like-minded community which assembled (Giles, 1995:120-121; Trebilco, 2012:205).

2.6. *Ekklesia* as community in the book of Acts

The notion of community underscores the relational nature of Christianity. The Christian community of faith is global and represented in local communities committed to Christ who is the Head of the Church. The church as a remnant is called by God and thus divinely created (Banks, 1994:38). Her responsibility is to extend Christ's work. The Bible refers to those who share a common faith in Christ as believers. Throughout the Book of Acts, Luke uses various terminologies to denote believers. Believers are referred to as disciples (6:1; 9:1; 11:26) which essentially mean "follower" (Naseri, 2010:1). The idea of the disciples of Jesus leaving their lives and following him is comparable with notion of *ekklesia* being the "called out." Believers are also referred to as brethren (6:3; 11:1), which is an Old Testament designation for members of the same family, neighbour, or of the tribe of Israel. The parallelism of *ekklesia* as community, both locally and globally, is highlighted here. The notion of separateness and called out is imagined by Luke's use of "the Saints" (9:13), designed to appeal to live a life of godliness.

Again, Luke refers to 'the fellowship" (2:42) as a description of the "community-spirit" that binds people together and calls them to share in a common faith participating in shared experiences (Harrison, 1985:103-104; van der Walt, 2009:42). Here community is referenced as an actual assembly. Thus, the *ekklesia* is a community (globally and locally) which assembles in the Name of Christ.

2.7. Images of the Church: *Her Identity*

The Early Church's self-perception may also be examined through the imagery the New Testament uses to describe the church. An appreciation of these qualities or characteristics of the Early Church, advances a self-understanding for the contemporary church (Erickson, 2013:957). However, this is only important as a measure since it allows the contemporary church to realign itself with the truth. Mere knowledge puffs up (1 Cor 8:1); applying what is learnt is not only beneficial but the church is commanded to be doers of the word, and not hearers only (Jas 1:22-25). The authors of the New Testament used metaphors to describe the church. This may be because no single word or sentence can accurately convey the depths of her attributes. The church is thus described in the New Testament as:

2.7.1. *The people of God: Israel and the New Testament Church*

Just as Israel was elected by God as his chosen people, so is the church divinely created. The church did not originate with man's initiative (2 Cor 6:16) (Erickson, 2013:958). In Scripture the parallelism between Israel as God's chosen people in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament can be found. In the Old Testament Israel was created when God chose Abraham and his seed to be his people. In the New Testament, God's chosen people go beyond the Jews to include the Gentiles as well (2 Thess 2:13-14). Again, the Old Testament archetype of a nomadic Israel is echoed in the book of Hebrews. As a mirror of Israel, the church is seen to be on pilgrimage, "called out" of this world while sent to the world (Bosch, 2014:383). God expects his church to be holy just as He required the same from Israel. Holiness under the new covenant comes through the "*cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*" (Eph 5:25-27). Moreover, as a people of God, the church can expect that just as God took care of Israel He would also take care of them as the "apple of his eye" (Deut 32:10). Similarly, He expects the church's loyalty just as He expected Israel to have no other God besides Him (Ex 34:14) (Erickson, 2013:958). Whereas in the Old

Testament circumcision was the external mark of the covenant between God and Israel, the New Testament calls for an inward circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29) (2013:959). Inclusion as God's people under the old covenant was ethnic or national, but under the new dispensation God's people are those whom He has called (Rom 9:24) (2013:959).

2.7.2. *The Body of Christ*

The imagery of the *body of Christ* is so encompassing that it could be felt that this statement is a complete account of the church. Whilst Erickson (2013:959) feels that the declaration of the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) is full and rich, it does not describe the essence of church in its entirety. As the body of Christ, the church, universally and locally, is called to continue the earthly ministry of Christ. Every believer is a member of that body where each one is in Christ and Christ in each one. Moreover, Christ is the head of this body (Col 1:18) under which all things are subjected (Eph 1:10). It is through the believers' connection to Christ that they are spiritually nourished and sustained in the same manner as the branches are connected to the vine (Erickson, 2013:960). The members of this body are interconnected and dependent on each other (Hussey, 2012:214). Moreover, each member is given (a) spiritual gift/s through which they are called to edify the church. The gifts are not for self-service. As no-one has all the spiritual gifts, the body of believers need each other to be built-up and strengthened (Erickson, 2013:960). Also, members bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2). Unity of the body, as opposed to dismemberment, is characterised by genuine fellowship. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:26a, "*If one part suffers, every part suffers with it*." This unity of the body that Paul envisaged is also demonstrated in the Book of Acts which shows how the early Christians shared their material possessions amongst those in need (Erickson, 2013:961). The body of Christ is a unified body having been baptised in one Spirit (1 Cor 12:12-13). All barriers are dismantled in Christ (Col 3:11) and it is through the church that the ministry of Christ extends.

2.7.3. *The temple of the Holy Spirit*

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit birthed the church and through Him the church grew (1Cor 12:13). The Holy Spirit indwells the church as a collective (1Cor 3:16) or individually (1Cor 6:19) (van der Walt, 2009:41). As 1 Corinthians 3:16 says, "*Don't you know you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"* and 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, "*Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own*." Since the Spirit dwells in the church He imparts life, spoken as the "fruit

of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23) (Erickson, 2013:962). If these "fruit": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, are evident in the church, it points to the activity of the Holy Spirit, and thus a genuineness of the church (2013:962). The power of the Holy Spirit enabled the Early Church to be effective in ministry and brought unity in the church where Acts 4:32 describes how the Early Church were "*one in heart and mind."* Further, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a witness that believers are Christ's (Rom 8:9-10). He reminds the believers of Christ's teachings, and equips the church for service (1Cor 12:11) (2013:963).

2.8 The Early Church as Community: *Expressions of the Church*

Community is perhaps the best way to describe the New Testament Church. The church is a living dynamic organism that does not merely exist or do. Beyond meetings and buildings, it is characterised by relationships with God, with other believers, and with the world. This relationship may be imaged by a cross, vertically she is called to commune with God, and horizontally with other believers and humanity. People need to belong and are drawn to those who share a commonality. In the Greco-Roman world community existed in public life, *politeia*, and in family or household structures, *oikonomia* (Banks, 1994:28). The nature of community as expressed in the Early Church is the next section which will be examined.

2.8.1 Community is relational

Christianity is relational (Last, 2016:400). When one accepts the calling of a believer one enters into a relationship with God. The adoption as a child of God brings the believer into the brotherhood of the saints. Through Christ Jesus humankind is reconciled to God and therefore believers are responsible to act in like manner, "*accept one another as Christ accepted us*" (Rom 15:7) (Banks, 1994:26). Believers become the people that are the community of God. No longer separated by race, creed or gender, amongst other dividing walls, the church receives a new identity. From the Greek *koinonia*, comes the term fellowship which means to "have something in common." *Koinos* is its root word from where the term "common" is derived; hence the development of the word community. Ferguson (1996:369) expands that only through a shared commonality can people have fellowship. As such Philippians 2:1 speaks of, "*any common sharing in the Spirit*" which is understood as fellowship that originates through the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit creates community and the common participation in the Spirit brings people together. The community and fellowship of the church originate from and are held together by the Spirit (Ferguson, 1996:103-104; van Der Walt, 2009:42). The Early Church's

experience of community centred around fellowship. The relationship with fellow believers and God was central. Unlike other religious worship practices of the day which placed emphasis on holy books or rites, for the Early Church God and each other had primacy (Banks, 1994:89/90). The *ekklesia*, the assembly of the community, met with the intent of members ministering to each other (Ferguson, 1996:233).

2.8.2. Community is familial

Another trait of Christianity is being familial (van der Walt, 2009:42; Banks, 1994:49). The notion of family dominates Scripture which often portrays the family unit as recipient and agent of blessing (Jeong, 2018:11). God's mission of redeeming mankind came first through the children of Israel and then through His Son so that all peoples of the earth would be given the opportunity to be adopted into the family of God through Jesus Christ (Krupp, 2003:21). Through the adoption as sons of God, believers have become joint heirs with the Son (Rom 8:17). As children, the church belongs to the household of faith (Gal 6:10).

This new identity as family affected how the early Christians engaged with one another. The church as family is not just a metaphor. In Matthew 12:46-50 Jesus taught that his family are those who do the will of the Father. Paul writes to the church in Rome to "*show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honour*" (Rom 12:10). The bonds that hold a family together are to be the same bonds shared by the church. Just as an earthly family loves, honours, protects, encourages, and cares for one another, the church is to do likewise (Payne, 2007:30). The New Testament often spoke of how the church grew; daily numbers were added. Yet in this large organism the sense of community was still preserved. Harrison (1985:148) states that community happened in believers' homes. In the Jerusalem Church for instance, people gathered at the Temple where preaching and teaching occurred, and at the homes of other believers where they shared communal meals (Acts 2:46). Several other passages of Scripture point to the early Christians gathering in particular homes. When the Pauline letters are examined reference is often found to "the assembly at a particular household" (Meeks, 1983:75).

The New Testament notion of the household was much broader than the Western connotation. There the immediate family was the nucleus around which were slaves, freedmen, hired workers, and sometimes tenants and partners in trade (Last, 2016:413). Thus, with the adoption of Christianity, both the internal structure of households and their relationship to society were

affected. The new group was inserted onto an existing network of relationships (Meeks, 1983:75). In fact, the New Testament shows how the Christian faith spread along the lines of relationships. For instance, Andrew and Simon Peter; James and John; Paul and Andronicus and Junias (Jeong, 2018:11).

2.9. Development of the Early Church: *How it soared*

The church is called to worship God and the accomplishment of this purpose is actualised through growth and societal engagement. This is the essence of mission. Based on Matthew 28's Great Commission the church is mandated to make disciples of all men. From its early inception, mission was "a fundamental expression of life of the church," and it was very successful in its directive says Bosch (2014:15). The missional mindset, the ecclesiology and development of the Early Church serves as yardstick and motivation for any contemporary church movement. The lens through which the New Testament church can be examined provides the measure of overlap, of similarities and divergences, of our perceptions of church and what the Bible describes. Thus, an error in the teachings or practice can be corrected by returning to the Word of God as rule and standard for Christian life and praxis. Due to the successes of the Early Church perceptions of "perfect" church have arisen (Wright, 1992:341) but these notions may be flawed.

Bosch (2014:50) does not believe that the Early Church is the perfect model to imitate. No, never in church history was there a perfect period wherein all believers lived together harmoniously, believed the same thing, and worked together on sound doctrine for the Church says Wright (1992:452). From early on in Scripture it can be seen how inadequate the Early Church really was. For instance, the rivalries between the disciples of Jesus in Mark 10:35-41 is observed. In addition the inadequacies of the first believers is highlighted by texts such as 1 Corinthians and the letters to the seven churches in Revelations (2 & 3). Indeed, some of these shortcomings are highlighted in the Book of Acts: Ananias and Sapphira's sin, the dispute between the Hebrews and Hellenists, the vacillating of Peter, the major division over circumcision, the fierce quarrel between Paul and Barnabas (Wright, 1992:452). Luke's Gospel also doesn't shy away from the apostles' imperfections either (van der Walt, 2009:26; Bosch, 2014:45, 51). Such examples counter the perception of a faultless Early Church.

New Testament writings do not clearly outline the contours of the Early Church. Extra biblical evidence of the Early Church such as archaeological finds are limited. The literary evidence that is available is scant and is acquired from the upper class thence limiting our understanding of

what life was like for the masses (Wright, 1992:341). So, there is a danger that in the study of the New Testament Church the researcher may be duped by false speculation and possible remythologisation by creating stories about the past with the purpose of supporting a certain view of the present (Wright, 1992:341). Whilst the evidence of the Early Church is sparse, there is sufficient information which can be drawn from Scripture. Paul, writing to his protégé Timothy (2 Tim 3:15-17), encourages him on the importance of Scripture which is sufficiently reliable for worship of God and service to fellow man.

The New Testament abounds with numerous examples from where the characteristics of the Early Church may be extrapolated. The Church in Jerusalem is known as the parent community (Bosch, 2014:44) and the Acts accounts demonstrates how the church which was first established in Jerusalem systematically grew and spread from there (van der Walt, 2009:29; Callan, 1987:18). Daily God increased their numbers. It was also the base of some of the best-known apostles: Peter, James and John who exerted perhaps the most influential leadership over the Early Church (van der Walt, 2009:21, 43; Bosch, 2014:45). Drawing from biblical and extra-biblical accounts a picture starts to form of the contours of the Early Church. The church of the 1st century successfully engaged society and was seen as the visible hands and feet of Christ (Mckinion, 2001:1). They did not "do" mission, they lived it. In this way society came into contact with a "visible" church. The paradigm of a visible-doing-church is important since society was affected by the practical service of the church and not necessarily its deep theology. But these concepts are not mutually exclusive. The Early Church "did" because they were cognisant of God's plan for his people.

2.10. The Early Church's effectiveness: *How they did church*

Church growth is an important objective and is closely related to the church's influence on society. The rapid expansion of the Early Church clearly shows their relevance in society at that time. Irrespective of its flaws, the church described in the New Testament was successful in fulfilling its mission. Time and again research reminds of its evangelistic nature and fervour. Luke, in the Book of Acts, indicates the growth of the Jerusalem Church. At Pentecost about 3000 were added and daily God added to this number (van der Walt, 2009:44). The Gospel was not constrained by geography but spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:4-25), Ethiopia (8:26-39), Damascus (9:2), the towns of Judea (8:40; 32:10-48), Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (11:19) (van der Walt, 2009: 49-51). However, the Jerusalem church did not engage any real missionary action; it was in fact the church in Antioch that was foremost in its missionary efforts evangelising the Gentiles in the cities of Asia Minor (Acts 13-14) (Callan,

1986:17, van der Walt, 2009: 51; Bosch, 2014: 42; 43). The growth of the church was so phenomenal that Paul could claim that everyone had heard of Jesus in the known world as he understood it. He wrote to the Colossian Church that, "*This is the Gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant*" (Col 1:23b, NIV).

The rate at which the Gospel spread was remarkable. It rose from a position of obscurity to notoriety in a single century (Wright, 1992:359). Christianity was even labelled the third race after the Romans/Greeks which were the first race and the Jews (the second) (Bosch, 2014:49). Many factors contributed to the rapid growth and spread of the church of the first century. Biblical accounts speak of this readiness for the message of the Gospel where in Galatians (4:4a) Paul writes of the "*fullness of time*" and Mark (1:15) emphasises the coming of Christ when all was made ready on earth (Cairns, 1996:39). The Gospel could not have come at a time when the socio-economic and cultural conditions were more fitting (Vorster, 1988:137). Through the historical developments of the Jews, Greeks and Romans, God had set the scene in which the Gospel would make the greatest impact according to Cairns (1996:40). For one, most people in the Roman Empire spoke a universal language, *Koine,* or common Greek. How more effective a propaganda tool than through communicating in a language that is collectively understood? Additionally, the success of the Early Church's evangelistic efforts was due to the ease of travelling in the Roman Empire (Vorster, 1988:138).

However, this "right time" view is not shared by all. The birth of the church came at a time of tremendous opposition and the church did not "fit" society. According to Wright (1992) and Bosch (2014), the Early Church was counter cultural and subversive, it preached a message that loyalty to Christ may be met with torture and death and it taught to love across racial and social boundaries, an unconventional view at that time. Sexual immorality, a characteristic of early pagan worship and life was chastised (Wright, 1992:260). The Gospel totally rejected all gods and declared Jesus as Lord of all lords, a revolutionary political demonstration in the Roman Empire at that time (Bosch, 2014:48). Those who converted from Judaism faced excommunication, and many were even labelled traitors ultimately leading to some of their deaths. Slavery and torture seemed interwoven with the fabric of Christian identity. That the Early Church grew despite hostility and turmoil is nothing short of miraculous according to Wright (1992:360). Nevertheless, these very same hardships could be the reason that Christianity grew as it did (van der Walt, 2009:41). As Tertullian said, "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church". Mckinion (2001:116) and Chadwick (2001:1) agree that where martyrdom failed to restrain the Gospel, it paradoxically led to an increase in community. For the Early Church martyrdom and mission seemed inextricable. Thus, the English word "witness"

from the Greek term *martyrs* who often had to seal his *martyria* (witness) with his blood is derived (Bosch, 2014:50).

Christianity spread because believers were mission-filled (Dreyer, 2012:2). They believed that the message that they carried was true for the whole world. As Bosch (2014:44) puts it "the church became a community with a concern for people they had never met," spurring the Antiochian church to commission missionaries (Acts13:1). For Wright (2010:46) mission does not originate with the church or humans, rather the church gets to participate in God's mission; something the Early Church successfully did. Therefore, for both Wright (1992:361) and Bosch (2014:45, 47) mission was the most obvious characteristic of Early Christianity. Extra-biblical sources confirm the zealousness of Christians to share their faith. An old man speaks of Christ to Justin. Pliny moans the "poison" of Christianity spreading into the villages and the countryside. Ignatius finds churches wherever he goes throughout Asia Minor (Wright, 1992:360). However, formal evangelism structures out of the earliest Jerusalem church are not seen. Rather there is this organic word-of-mouth extension of the Gospel. People returning home from Jerusalem after Pentecost, or later as persecution arose, spread the message as far as they travelled (Harrison, 1985:178; van der Walt, 2009:44). The church grew organically and voluntarily which resulted in the multiplication of churches. The Early Church experienced significant growth through a number of factors such as evangelism and church planting. But Das (2017:31) also believes that this growth was as a result of their good works enacted through love and charitable deeds towards the poor. The church helped the poor and marginalised because it is what they had seen Jesus do and teach.

How do these characteristics of the Early Church relate to house churches?

2.11 House Churches

2.11.1 Introduction

House churches have been around since the 1st century. From numerous biblical accounts believers gathered in the Temple and also met in each other's homes (Adubofour & Badu, 2019:78). Simson (2009:3) maintains that Christians have continued to gather in homes throughout the centuries. In fact, house churches have always been a part of church history and most contemporary church plants in the West go through an organic house-church phase in

their early days (Adubofour & Badu, 2019:79). A strong trend towards house churches has emerged in the last half-century. In the West, the movement has seen particular growth in Great Britain since the 1970s with a concerted effort on returning the church to New Testament principles and with a strong emphasis on the charismata (Hollenweger, 1980:45). In the USA, Barna research estimates about 11 million people are involved in house churches (Payne, 2007:13). The East, particularly China and Korea, is another area influenced by the house church movement. During the 1960s the world's largest church, in Seoul, Korea, was growing through small group/house church initiatives. Whereas, in China, the expansion of house churches occurred during the 1980s. Estimates of the numbers of house churches in China run into the tens of thousands (Hadaway, DuBose & Wright, 1987:15-20). Correspondingly, says Jeong (2018:3), there has been an upswing in the study of house churches over the last 30 years especially in North America and China.

To enhance the understanding of the house church it is necessary to draw parallels between house churches and institutionalised churches as well as between house churches and cell groups.

2.11.2 House churches versus the institutionalised church

The house church differs from the institutionalised or traditional church in certain aspects and as a result may be more appealing to millennials who view the institutionalised church with scepticism. Payne's (2007:10-11) definition of the institutionalised church as basis for understanding will be used. The institutionalised church can be understood by looking at how the local church is perceived. Traditional churches primarily gather on Sunday morning for worship. The Sunday worship gathering generally requires much time and energy to prepare for this one- or two-hour weekly event. The majority of the income of traditional churches is spent on ministers' salaries and physical properties. These churches tend to be campus-based where the majority of their ministry events occur (Payne, 2007:11). They are inclined to be programme, event-, or purpose-orientated in their identities. Pastoral leadership is characterised as positional rather than relational. Evangelism within these churches occurs through programmes in which members invite unbelievers to a worship service where the Gospel is shared (Payne, 2007:11). In institutionalised churches the number of members usually far exceeds the number of people who actually gather weekly for worship and actively use their gifts and talents to build up the church. Moreover, many traditional churches identify themselves primarily in terms of their services, events, structures, buildings, and organisations (Payne, 2007:11). This seems at odds with the notion of the New Testament church which should be understood as a living,

functioning organism that expresses the attributes of Christ, love, joy, compassion, wisdom, etc. No human being or man-devised programme can produce these attributes (Krupp, 2003:12). Additionally, the church is meant to be a way of life and not an orchestrated formalised performance (Simson, 2009:3).

While traditional religion teaches people to go to church as an event, the New Testament notion of Christianity is to teach people to walk with God (Krupp, 2003:29) and according to Hebrews 10:24-25 believers gather, "*to stimulate one another to love and good deeds" and "to encourage one another*". Thus, for Simson (2009:30), the house church is ideally positioned to provide this way of living the Christian life communally in ordinary homes where believers no longer live for themselves but adopt a corporate lifestyle and share their lives and resources. The house church acts like a spiritual extended family, it is relational, spontaneous, and organic. It has the ability to form its own support structure from within and thus provides a healthy, non-competitive way for loving, forgiving, and living with each other (Simson, 2009:33). It a community lifestyle that is moulded in the spirit of love, truth, forgiveness, faith, and grace.

A broad definition of the missional church is one that engages the culture with the Gospel, makes disciples, and plants churches (Payne, 2007:8). By being mission focused the church does not only engage in mission-orientated programmes once in a while which are often seen in traditional churches. A true mission-orientated church is actively engaged taking the Gospel to their society. They are intentionally and regularly involved with evangelism. They take the Gospel to their surroundings and do not wait for unbelievers to come to them (Payne, 2007:9). The house church more often espouses the ideals of being mission-orientated than traditional churches. Having a strong presence within their communities, evangelism is often relational; where believers interact with people in their workplaces, at the supermarkets, their neighbours, etc. House churches do not have mission-programmes, they live mission, says Payne (2009:10).

Larger institutionalised churches tend to be more formalised and organised. The size of the group meeting usually dictates how formal and organised a meeting becomes. Smaller groups encourage a familial environment (Payne, 2007:30). Smaller numbers enhance organic interaction, whereas increased numbers force structure and impose agendas in order to limit chaos. With fixed structures and set agendas meetings stop being independent and

spontaneous. Formality begins to restrict relational and spontaneous fellowship (Simson, 2009:4). But, this goes against the essence of biblical *koinonia* of fellowship, sharing, giving generously, and participating with someone (Simson, 2009:4). In addition, it is this very *koinonia* that influences personal spiritual growth and increases numbers. Traditional churches have larger numbers than house churches and as a result fellowship often suffers.

Teaching was a strong emphasis of the New Testament house church where more than imparting knowledge teaching also involved showing people how to obey and serve God and His purposes (Rom 1:5) (Krupp, 2003:43). In the contemporary house church, an elder imparts knowledge of the Word of God (Simson, 2009:36). Learning takes on the form of hearing and also seeing how it is done and by doing it and teaching it to others (Simson, 2009:37). Paul uses the Greek word *dialegomai* for teaching which means dialogue between people. Dialogue facilitates learning and increases participation (Krupp, 2003:42). The institutionalised church has a more static form of teaching, where many listen to a few. The Eastern style of teaching is more kinetic where the topic of discussion moves from person to person and everyone gets involved. Participatory kinetic models of instruction are more effective in changing opinions and values than the static models (Simson, 2009:37). Therefore, by encouraging participation, people are driven more to become doers of the word as stated in James 1:22. The most effective teaching tool is by example of the truth in the way that believers live.

There are two formats of instruction noted in the New Testament. (1) Teacher-student format as seen in Acts 2:41-42 where the apostles taught three thousand. A few teach with many learning. It was for the instruction of new converts, teaching them the basics of the Christian faith and life (Krupp, 2003:42). (2) The second format is the circle-type where everyone can share in ministry and the group can function as body.

2.11.3 House churches versus home cell groups

House churches are small congregations that are distinguished from home cell groups which are extensions of a traditional church (Birkey, 1991:70). A house church is self-functioning and locates in a space large enough to accommodate its members, usually within a person's home. The contemporary church exhibits three levels of church structure which are defined by their purpose and function, namely *cell*, *congregation* and *celebration* (Simson, 2009:6). The *cell* is small and typically house based with between three and twenty people. Its purpose is relational

fellowship, and it functions organically where members are often in direct contact with each other and by extension a natural part of one another's lives (2009:7).

The *congregation* is medium sized with roughly twenty to two hundred people operating from a sanctuary or building dedicated for religious purposes. It functions more formally, is organised, often has a pastor, and includes a worship service and various programmes. There is limited interaction between members as meetings are often too large or not structured for that purpose (Simson, 2009:7).

The *celebration* is a large gathering of hundreds of Christians from a region in a large or open space. Direct contact with all present is impossible, but people are united by their worship of Christ and celebration of what He has done for them (Simson, 2009:7).

We find two of these levels in the Bible, the cell and the celebration. New Testament Christians gathered in large groups at places like Solomon's Temple or in the open air. More commonly, Christians gathered in cell-sized units: the house-based church (Krupp, 2003:42). As persecution of Christians increased the celebration was not possible, but Christians continued to gather in homes.

House churches differ from the cell church in their autonomy and pastoral leadership (Birkey, 1991:70). While New Testament house churches were autonomous they often connected to other house churches and larger congregations (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:85). Similarly, the contemporary house church is fully autonomous and makes its own decisions without an authoritative body dictating terms, but these house churches often form strong interdependent networks even though they are not dependent on a common mother body for oversight (Payne, 2007:13, 14). On the other hand, a cell church may consist of several small home groups (cells) which all together comprise the church. The groups are semiautonomous and cell group decisions are made by the mother body. The pastoral leadership oversees all the cells whereas the house church has its own leadership (Payne, 2007:13, 14).

The house churches in the New Testament met regularly as seen in the case of the Jerusalem and Corinthian churches. They worshipped together and received teachings from the apostles (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:85). However, the contemporary house church may be imbalanced in this regard. For instance, some independent house churches may not acknowledge connections with larger church celebrations. On the other hand, many traditional churches have

an imbalanced approach to Sunday celebration. Small groups are often seen as a technique to keep people coming back to Sunday celebration, rather than them being at the very heart of ministry (2014:85). So, churches can view the cell group as the church and the primary care structure for members or simply another programme to keep people coming back to a Sunday gathering. If the cell meeting is recognised as the primary care provider then leaders need to be equipped, coached, and cared for through church leadership. These cell leaders will in turn care for the rest of the church (2014:85). Thus, for Atkinson and Comiskey (2014:85) cell meetings should be the primary place of ministry. As such the church should not neglect the importance that house groups play in worship and preaching the word.

Let us now turn our attention to the house church specifically.

2.11.4 A church that meets in a house: Biblical evidence of the house church

The Early Church met in homes. There are numerous New Testament examples substantiating the importance of the house for the gathering of the early believers. For instance, after Jesus' ascension the church was gathered in the upper room where they prayed together (Acts 1:12-14). On the day of Pentecost believers were gathered in a house when the Holy Spirit fell on them (Acts 2:2). Believers worshipped in the temple as well as in houses (Acts 2:46) (Simson, 2009:44). That house churches continued to flourish in spite of persecution is evidenced by how easy it was for Paul to locate and arrest them (Acts 8:3). Jason's house in Thessalonica was the setting for Paul and Silas' arrest (Acts 17:5) and when Peter was arrested the church gathered in Mary's house for prayer (Acts 12:12). Paul taught in public and from house to house (Acts 20:20) and Nympha had a church in her house (Col 4:15). The church also met in Philemon's house (Phil1) (Krupp, 2003:53) and in correspondence to the church in Rome, Paul sent greetings to the church that met in Prisca and Aquila's house (Rom 16:5) (Erickson, 2013:956). The tradition of the church meeting in homes which began during the first few centuries continued up until the advent of the basilica following Constantine's conversion. Once Constantine became Christian he issued an edict making Christianity the official state religion leading to the commissioning of dedicated buildings for worship (De Beer, 2018:75). However, Payne (2007:2) maintains that meeting in homes continued throughout the centuries even if only less conspicuously.

2.11.5 The house church through the Ages: *A brief history*

New Testament Christians met in houses. For practical reasons house churches must have been small. The size of the home would restrict the numbers that could actually attend. Even amongst the wealthier who could afford larger houses, numbers would still be limited. It has been estimated that groups meeting at homes could be as small as 10 or be as many as 100 and Banks (1994: 35) estimates the average membership to be around 30 people. Simson (2009:17) speculates that due to limited space the average house church membership would have been small and once the group got larger it usually multiplied by starting another house church.

In 312 AD Constantine converted to Christianity and subsequently declared it the official religion of the state. It is speculated that church buildings begun to appear soon after Constantine's edict and it is supposed that the emperor himself may have issued instructions for the erection of buildings specifically for worship or religious practices (Smither, 2014:150). So, in keeping with the imperial proclamations the church needed to morph into something fit for a king and thus ceremony and pomp ensued and cathedrals replaced simple homes as places of worship (Simson, 2009:19). In the years following, the church became heavily professionalised and priests became "licensed" to perform public functions such as marriages. Another result was the divide between clergy and laity (Simson, 2009:19). The church began to lose its countercultural voice and became complicit in carrying out the state sponsored agenda with the resultant loss in distinction between church and state (Cairns, 1996:270). Christianity became the exclusive religion of the empire and the Catholic Church's one rule-set of faith under Theodosius I became law. Thus, every Roman citizen was forced to become a member of the Catholic Church and to adopt the *Lex fidei*, the law of faith (Simson, 2009:20). All other groups and gatherings, including meeting in house churches, became illegal. And so, the house church became persecuted by the church itself and the associated stigma of being an outcast still prevails in certain religious camps that do not acknowledge house churches as valid expression of the church today (Payne, 2007:12).

The new formalised structure of the church saw worship patterned after the synagogue-style of worship and not that of the Temple (Simson, 2009:21). This pattern followed the five basic elements of synagogue worship being: "the invitation to worship with hymns and a formal call to worship; prayers and petitions; Scripture lessons; an address based on Scripture lessons; and a conclusion with benedictions" (Simson, 2009:22). The organic style of worship gave way to structure and rigidity.

The development of the house church appears to have undergone three significant stages according to Smither (2014:150) who feels that during the first few centuries rather than erecting new buildings for religious purposes, existing homes were modified to adapt to the needs of the expanding community. The gradual progress of Christian purposed buildings began around 50-150 AD. This was the first stage and termed *oikos ecclesiae* (Billings, 2011: 544). During this phase Christian believers met in private homes of members or benefactors. Then from about 150-250 AD the second stage termed *Domus ecclesiae* saw private homes undergoing construction for the specific purpose of worship and Christian usage (Billings, 2011:545). As the church burgeoned, the need for larger buildings to accommodate these growing numbers led to the erection and renovation of larger buildings for Christian usage. This phase coincided with the third stage, *Aula ecclesiae,* which occurred between 250-313 AD. The evolution of Christian architecture to the basilica followed a progression of architectural adaptions mixed with a number of precipitating social factors (Jeong, 2018:43).

2.12 The Reformation

By the 16th century the Reformation challenged the religious and political status quo of the Roman Catholic Church (Cairns, 1996:267). Incidentally, the modern house church movement borrows some validation from events and teachings championed during that time. For instance, German Reformer Martin Luther published his preface to the German Mass and order in 1526 wherein he distinguished three "orders of service" namely, (1) the Latin Mass conducted in the cosmopolitan language of the day; (2) the German Mass; and (3) a worship service which Luther stated that, "… *kind of service should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptise, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian work*" (Simson, 2009:24). Here, Luther identifies the need for church houses even though he failed to implement such. In Switzerland the work of the Reformation began with Zwingli and a group of friends who risked starting a fellowship in a home despite censure (Cairn, 1996:293). That began the Anabaptist movement which quickly spread and grew attracting thousands of people who despite the threat of persecution and death joined (Simson, 2009:25). In fact, between 1535 and 1546 thousands of Anabaptists were put to death in the Netherlands and Friesland. In England, the Separatists, being persecuted by the state church, went underground and gathered in house churches and met for celebrations in forest clearings (Adubofour & Badu, 2019:179). Philip Spener, the father of Pietism in Germany, organised home meetings for practical Bible study and prayer (Cairns, 1996:383). Moreover, the Methodist revival of the

eighteenth century is also attributed to small groups (Simson, 2009:27; Cairns, 1996:385). These and many other examples are proof of a continuing house church movement that has spanned centuries.

2.13 Social interdependence in the Early Church

The concept of social interdependence in Scripture is particularly strong. Evidence of this is witnessed in the Early Church community that was bonded by strong social networks. The concept of interdependence can be understood as the accomplishment of the individual's goals through the actions of others (Jeong, 2018:47). In the West, independence, self-sufficiency and assertiveness are highly prized but this is in contrast to Eastern and traditional societies' values of cohesion and solidarity with one's social group. The model on interdependence is often highlighted in Scripture. Numerous biblical examples demonstrate the cohesiveness of the Early Church- see for example Acts 4:32-25. The early believers shared what they had and accepted help where they were lacking (Simson, 2009:39). In the New Testament the numerous "one another" passages highlight the early Christians' responsibility for and accountability to each other (Payne, 2007:32). The believer is encouraged to honour one another (Rom 15:7), live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16), accept one another (Rom 15:7), bear with one another (Eph 4:2), forgive one another (Col 3:13), and encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11). The "one another" passages make plain the interdependent nature of the early faith community (Jeong, 2018:52). On one hand believers provided for one another and on the other hand had their needs met by others.

The metaphor of the "body" used by Paul in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 highlights the Early Church's interdependence, their need for and reliance on one another (Payne, 2007:30; 37). Whilst united as one body, they are made up of individual parts. Each person had abilities needed by the others, but no one was so capable that they could do without the other members (Jeong, 2018:52). Similarly, Payne's research shows the importance of the biblical concept of interdependence in North American house churches. Just as the early house church did not function in isolation and independence, but rather fostered relationships with other churches for the sake of the global mission so do the contemporary house churches in North America (Payne, 2007). These individual houses of worship work together with other autonomous congregations for missionary work, benevolence, leader training, accountability and fellowship (2007:63).

Whilst the biblical notion of social interdependence was most evident in the house church of the first few centuries, this social cohesion is also evident in the contemporary house church especially those located in familial and traditional societies for whom this concept is not alien.

2.14 The importance of the household (*Oikos)* in social interdependence of the Early Church

The Early Church had its beginning in the family and the family home. In the Greco-Roman world the household consisting of the family, slaves, freedmen, labourers, tenants, and sometimes associates (business or personal) were considered the basic political unit (Banks, 1994:6). As a result of these close associations and relationships the Christian faith moved from house to house and family to family (Last, 2016:413). *Oikos* is the Greek term used by the New Testament writers with reference to house, household or family (Meeks, 1987:75). For Button and Van Rensburg (2003:11) *oikos* more readily translates as home since it signifies a dwelling place of which several different types of accommodation were evident during that time. Christianity spread as households were converted to the faith and through house churches that were planted in urban centres. For Last (2016:419) the propagation of the Gospel involved more than the household structure, but included the networks these households held within their neighbourhoods. It was up until about 250AD that Christians gathered mainly in homes for worship, teaching, praying, evangelising, and partaking of communion (Jeong, 2018:12).

The theme of the home in Gospel proclamation is important in the New Testament writings about the Early Church. Important imagery associated with *oikos* is “the household of God” and the “household of faith.” Examples of the household functioning as the church both implicitly and explicitly can be seen in Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:5-7, 6:10; and Ephesians 2:19, 3:14-15, 5:1, 6:23 (Birkey, 1991:70). Additionally, the New Testament notion of the church that met in homes emphasises the interpersonal family life and reflects a Hebrew model of Christian education where parents were the primary influences (1991:70). When the New Testament Church was birthed, the Judaic pattern of worship continued to be practised in house churches since most initial converts of early Christianity were in fact Jewish (Andraeas, 2014:129). The family-household provided the experiential reality as example for the early believers to understand and practise the doctrine of the church (Birkey, 1991:70). This type of experiential learning is important for millennials who tend to be more hands-on and participatory. In this way

new believers learn to imitate mature Christians as they observe and interact with them in authentic and real ways.

The ancient Jewish household (*oikos*) was the centre of daily activity, worship, praying and reading Scripture where the synagogue order, structure, leadership and liturgy were carried into private homes (Andraeas, 2014:131). This tradition was continued by the first century converts who continued to use the house as a place of worship (Smither, 2014:152). The sacredness of Jewish homes was evidenced in prayer, training in the Torah, and for serving the needs of the community (Andraeas, 2014: 131). Thus, this religious nature of the home easily transferred to the corporate life of the Early Church. It was not long after people began to gather in homes that these became known as the "household of God" (1 Tim. 3:15), a term which reflects two aspects about the early church: (a) that the house/family constituted the fundamental unit of the local church, and (b), the church's social structure was patterned after the household. It was in these homes that Christians experienced and lived out their faith (Andraeas, 2014:131).

Broadly speaking, *oikos* may also be used in reference to community (Harrison, 1985:100). For example, in Luke 1:33 and Acts 7:46, the "house of Israel" refers to the collective people. In other instances, *oikos* also referred to the people and the place, "*Look, your house is left to you desolate*" (Matt 23:38). Additionally, the "Father's house" (Jn 14:2) and God's Kingdom are intimately related concepts, and therefore one can infer that *oikos* also refers to the Kingdom of God. Now, *oikos* referred to physical structures such as dwellings and the Temple, but also to people where in particular it is used in reference to the entire community of Israel (Banks, 1994:32-34). Thus, for Giles (1995:121) *oikos* also refers to the community of faith that is found within a household.

Oikos as family is imaged by descriptions of the Father (Matt 5-7), adoption into God's family (Eph 1:5; Rom 8:16 & 1 Jn 3:1), the love of the Father for his lost children (Luke 15:11-32), and Jesus calling the disciples brothers, etc. Since a significant portion of Jesus' ministry centred in the household the house served as a base for teachings, working of miracles, healings and fellowship (Jeong, 2018:13).

2.14.1 Household and social interdependence in the ministry of Jesus

The household structure of the New Testament provided the all-important hospitality and base required by Jesus on his earthly ministerial mission (Smithers, 2014:153). Jesus would be dependent on the household for provision, generosity, care as well as a network evangelistic centre. The house would have also provided sanctuary from persecution. It is likely that Jesus used Peter's home as base for evangelistic outreach to the surrounding area along Sea of Galilee which was accessible by foot from Capernaum (Jeong, 2018:17). Through Jesus' ministry a glance of the social interdependence between Jesus and those he interacted with is seen. On one hand, Jesus was dependent on the household for his material needs, and on the other the household was dependent on Jesus for their spiritual and physical needs (e.g. healings and miracles).

2.14.2. Household and interdependence in Luke 10

Again, the importance of the New Testament notion of interdependence is seen in Luke 10 when Jesus sends out the seventy-two in pairs. The pairing of the disciples could possibly be for the sake of mutual accountability, support and safety (Jeong, 2018:15). The seventy-two are instructed to go to a house and accept the hospitality of the host who receives their peace. They were to remain in that home and build a base of operations while reaching those relationships that were connected to that particular home (Payne, 2007:105; Jeong, 2018:15). Like Jesus, these disciples with their host and related household developed interdependent relationships.

2.14.3. Household and interdependence in Acts

Similarly, in the book of Acts this mutually interdependent relationship is highlighted. Acts 2:42 describes how the Early Church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and praying (Simson, 2003:34). Their sacrificial love was outworked in mutually sharing and receiving from one another when they had lack. Biblical *koinonia* means fellowship, sharing, giving generously, and participating with someone (Simson, 2009:4). *Koinonia* took on a more pragmatic aspect than mere fellowship for the New Testament believer. On one hand the believer had fellowship with other believers through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 1:9; 10:16) and then also through the sharing of material possessions as found in Acts 2:32-37; 45 and Romans 15:26 (Krupp, 2003:40). So, for the Early Church meeting in homes and treating each other as family, sharing meals and possessions were as equally important as

sharing in spiritual matters (Jeong, 2018:20). Therefore, the breaking of bread and prayer can be seen as a parallel; nourishment for body and spirit, two important activities of the Early Church.

Yet again, as Jesus did, the apostles taught and preached in the temple and in homes. A chiasm in Acts 5:41-42 is found (Jeong, 2018:21). A chiasm is a Greek rhetorical construction (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:333) which in this case delineates the settings for teaching and preaching. It is patterned on an A-B-B-A format (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:183): “In the temple (A) and in homes (B), the apostles taught (B) and preached the Gospel (A).” Whilst, teaching is aimed at the Christian fellowship, preaching was designed as a public task in the temple grounds (Jeong, 2018:21). This also emphasises that the content in both settings was essentially the same. In this instance, the role of the house was just as significant for the Gospel proclamation and growth as the temple (Jeong, 2018:21). Really early on the house emerges as a parallel to the temple but eventually supplants its religious role in the Early Church community. The house became a viable venue for corporate worship (Smithers, 2014:153) especially as persecution against the church increased. Since it was fairly easy for persecutors such as Paul to identify and locate Christians, the house must have already been established as a gathering place for apostolic teaching and worship.

2.14.4. Household and interdependence in Paul’s ministry

Later for Paul, the house church represented the means to extend the Gospel. Romans 16:3-16 tells of several house churches: the home of Prisca and Aquila; those who belong to Aristobulus; and those who belong to Narcissus (Jeong, 2018:23). The Roman household consisted of several cultural strata such as the homeowner and family, slaves and freedmen (Harrison, 1985:148). What is also significant about the church in Rome was its high Gentile component. It appears as if the church in Rome truly lived out the truth that everyone was “one in Christ” (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:10-12) (Jeong, 2018:24). The early house church became an important conduit for reaching and including Gentiles (Bosch, 2014:42; 43). The presence of several house churches outlined in Romans 16 point to Paul’s intentional strategy of advancing the Gospel to the Gentiles. These Roman house churches displayed an interdependence through their connection with each other where at times they gathered together as a whole group (Jeong, 2018:24).

New Testament house churches operated within a network. Networking helped foster a participatory role of individual house churches within the burgeoning global Gospel movement (Last, 2016:413). This sense of belonging also promoted a culture that unified the body of Christ through the support of travelling apostolic workers; circulating apostolic letters; and gathering together house churches within a particular city (Jeong, 2018:28). The interdependent house church network stimulated the house church movement on the local, regional, and international levels. The strong metaphor of the family espoused by the New Testament house church places emphasis on the interdependence of all believers. Yet again, the church was not understood as a place where believers gathered, but a gathering of people united in their belief in Jesus Christ (Krupp, 2003:17).

2.15 The role of the household and hospitality for evangelism

From the first century the house church has played a crucial role in evangelism. Not only was the house church a place for worship and fellowship providing a means of spiritual development for the community of faith (Buckman, 2014:90), it also served as base for missional operations. Through residing in the homes of Christian benefactors, Jesus, the apostles and others like Paul, used the house as headquarters for their outreaches during the missional stay at any one location (Smither, 2014:153). Moreover, these missional bases functioned as places for missional proclamation, catechetical baptismal instruction, and Christian teaching. Paul's letter writing, important for church planting and building, was greatly enhanced through the hospitality-network of *oikos.* Missionary travel was aided through material and financial support afforded by the house church. Further, the network of relationships (extended family, clients, and business contacts) offered natural evangelistic contacts and conversation opportunities (Jeong, 2018:37).

The New Testament church grew from Jerusalem through homes and house churches (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:77). Houses served as evangelistic centres. For instance, the jailer's house in Philippi following his conversion (Acts 16:16-40), Jason's house at Thessalonica (Acts 17:5), and Lydia's house which served as a missionary base for Paul and others (Acts 16:14-15) but was also a place of fellowship and worship (2014:77). The house church emerged as the centre of church life for various reasons such as:

a. The home and extended family were central to the efforts to convert people to Christianity
b. The household offered security and community for Christians who were marginalised by the Romans and the Jews

c. The household or home provided an already existing avenue that embodied Christian values (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:82).

The propagation of the Gospel message was made possible by the hospitality practised by the early house church (Birkey, 1991:74). The household provided the meeting place and centre for operations. As new believers multiplied, a place was needed for the gathered church. Thus, the two needs met in one place (Birkey, 1991:74). It could be that when missionaries such as Paul began their work in a city, their primary objective would have been to win a household since the household consisted of an extended network comprising the immediate relatives, slaves, freedmen, hired workers, tenants and sometimes trusted friends and business partners; it could serve as a network. As such, the apostles like Paul and other missionaries made purposeful efforts to convert entire households, making house churches central to the advancement of Christianity (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:82) where the household served as a centre for evangelism to other households and the surrounding areas.

In the ancient world the practice of hospitality centred on the welcoming of others (Ahn, 2010:245). Early Christian tradition valued hospitality as a virtue as well as an important practice. In Christian tradition the focus was on receiving the alien and extending one's resources to them without "concern for advantage or benefit to the host" (Oden cited by Ahn, 2010:245). The Early Church's adoption of this kind of hospitality was also socio-political where providing shelter for fellow believers under threat of persecution became imperative (Ahn, 2010:246). Hospitality in the Early Church centred on the physical and spiritual needs of the stranger who was most often the vulnerable in society in need of physical, economic, social and spiritual help (2010:247). For the contemporary Christian the biblical implication of hospitality should still pervade our welcoming of the alien who in our globalised society could mean the unknown neighbour, the refugee and immigrant.

The New Testament house church structure changed the lives of the people associated with it. People were able to witness Christianity first hand as the home was the centre of life. A principal way to imitate the early house church is through practising hospitality (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9). In this way people should view their homes as God's possessions rather than their own personal possessions. For example, sharing meals with each other elevates the experience of community and provides practical ways of making the house a centre for ministry. Additionally,

with the primary objective to engage people where they live and work or other neutral venues such as work places and coffee shops should also be considered. Neighbourhoods and work places should thus be seen as mission fields (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014: 84).

The New Testament household offered security and a sense of belonging in the larger social structure. The household served as nucleus and basic cell of the congregation in the early Christian movement. Hospitality offered by the household structure gave worship a distinctive style through the sharing of lives. The small size as well as the household setting provided a more personally focused catechesis and discipleship experience (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:83). The community of faith shared in all things, prayed together and the communal lifestyle encouraged transparency and accountability (Essa, 2015:377). Thus, Early Church practices were linked and determined by the venue and the home was where values were shared. Values are entrenched by living and participating in close proximity and so the house church participated and was impacted by the values of others as Christ lived in them (Neighbour cited by Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014: 83).

2.16 Early house church inclusivity and leadership

The Early Church reflected a broad social mix that incorporated the wealthy homeowner and the common slave (Birkey, 1991:70). This heterogeneity transcended all outward distinctions and was inherent to the Gospel proclamation. Additionally, this social mix became the existential reality of Jew-Gentile converts in the house fellowship. What made this fellowship homogenous was the unity of the Spirit that broke down the divisions between race, class, gender and socio-economic position. According to Paul (writing to the Galatians), Christ dissolved all categories that alienated one from another; the Jew could no longer consider the Gentile inferior; the master is at the same level of the slave; and the male is not distinguished from the female based on gender. The equalisation of gender was particularly significant for that era (1991:71). Although most house church leaders mentioned in the New Testament were men in keeping with the culture of the day. The New Testament does mention a few women in leadership positions for instance, Prisca and Aquilla were a married couple, and in most references of them Prisca is mentioned first which may suggest that she may have had some precedence in the relationship (Giles, 2010:6). Other women leaders include Phoebe from Cenchreae who Paul referred to as a “deacon of the church” and who was a patron of Paul and many others (Rom 16); Lydia whose home was the meeting place for believers in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15; 40);

Nympha in whose house Colossian believers met (Col 4;15); and Chloe who likely also hosted a house church (1Cor 1:11) (Giles, 2010:7).

The biblical equalisation of women in ministry is especially important in the South African context due to the appalling statistics of gender-based violence and where in certain traditional societies the roles of women are often subservient to males affording them less opportunity, respect and protection. The role of the church in elevating women to leadership positions serves as a witness to society of God's grace extended to humanity that dismantles all barriers and calls believers as one people in the family of faith. Unfortunately, the church has historically restricted the role of the women in ministry. However, the future growth of the church must include the marginalised which incorporates women (Birkey, 1991:71). In the modern house church movement, women should play an equally significant role in leadership. Consider Paul Yongii Cho, pastor of the world's largest church in Seoul, Korea, who appointed women as home cell leaders leading to the great revival and growth experienced in his church (Giles, 2010:7). Historically, it has been women who have held the fort interceding for their children, their families, their communities, and their nation. The church has the responsibility to join the fight against all forms of abuse and violence and to provide women with the opportunity to exercise their God-given leadership talents.

Leadership in the New Testament house church arose organically and out of necessity following the influences and requirements of church life (Birkey, 1991:73). For instance, often the host of the house would provide natural leadership (1Cor 16:15-16) (Last, 2016:403; Smither, 2014:153). Additionally, women participated in the founding of house churches and were given leadership functions as well (cf. Acts 16:14-15, 50; Rom 16;1-2, 3-4; 1Cor 1:11, 16:19; Col 4:15; 2 Jn). The pattern of the New Testament church followed that of the family household (Jeong, 2018:31). In fact, Payne (2007:37) says that the Early Church should be understood in simple relational terms. One only has to look at the metaphors used in the New Testament emphasising the believers' relationship with God, their relationship with one another and the relationship of believers with unbelievers. Numerous familial metaphors found in the New Testament such as father and brothers and sisters convey the relational understanding of the Early Church. However, the church was not expected to merely adopt and implement the Roman hierarchical and authoritarian model of the family. As a new creation, former patterns needed to be transformed into God's new pattern. Thus, the world's pattern of leadership that pursued status and power was replaced with servanthood and love (Jeong, 2018:31). In this way the Early Church's pattern of leadership was countercultural to that of the world that espoused power and control (Simson, 2009:64) as spiritual leaders were taught not to "lord it

over" the church. The Lord was supreme and his Kingdom authority governed the church (Jeong, 2018:32). Godly leaders were therefore expected to be relational rather than enforcing rules because of titles (Payne, 2007:61). Consider Philippians 2:5 as example, "*In your relationships, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus*." Paul encourages the Philippians to adopt an attitude that resembles Christ, one of humility. Just as Christ took on the form of a servant and lived in humility, so should believers. In this way, leadership models the way of a disciple in the Christ-like lifestyles they have before the church.

In as much as Christ is the head on the church, there were recognised local leaders in the churches who were entitled to honour and respect (1 Thess 5:12-13). These leaders most likely functioned as elders and deacons (cf. Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; Phil 1;1; 1 Tim 5:1) (Jeong, 2018:32).

2.16.1 Elders and deacons

Elders in the New Testament were not merely older in age, but seniors in households. This seniority most likely represented their longevity or spiritual maturity as believers (Elliot, 2008:685; Krupp, 2003:90). They were recognised and respected leaders of their respective household. In 1 Peter 2, these elders were exhorted to "*shepherd the flock of God … by exercising oversight*" which involves the responsibility of safeguarding or acting as a guardian. The term shepherd is also noted in other texts, such as Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11, and Romans 9:1 in which elders are seen to exercise spiritual oversight over the church. Elders are required to teach (1 Tim 3:2) and be "*able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it*" (Titus 1:9) (Strauch, 2017:26). The term elder is synonymous with bishop or overseer (Erickson, 2013:995) and usually occurs in the plural suggesting that the authority of the elders is collective rather than individual. These collective groups of authority would thus form the decision-making group (Erickson, 2013:995/6).

Deacons: Although the term deacon never occurs in Acts 6 some authors such as Strauch (2017:26) believe that the role and function of deacons can be read in verses 1-6. They were to oversee and assume responsibility for certain duties in the church allocated to them which in the case of Acts 6 were to oversee the distribution of food to the Hellenistic widows. However, as mundane as food distribution sounds, verse 3 provides qualifications that those responsible for

this task are to be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. In this way deacons are said to function in both practical and spiritual oversight of the church (Krupp, 2003:93). On the other hand, Breed (2019:1) cautions against using Acts 6 as a description of the duties of a deacon since the essence and tasks of the seven are not particularly outlined in the text. Instead Breed (2019:1) argues that although the word deacon is used for a variety of people in the New Testament, its use is particular of a certain type of leader in the church of which Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3 are examples. Deacons were to undergo the same assessment of their fitness to stand for office in the same way as elders or overseers were to be examined by the church and its leadership to assess their appropriateness for leadership (1 Tim 3) (Strauch, 2017: 22). When referenced together with overseers, deacons are mentioned second which may suggest that deacons worked under the supervision of overseers. In addition, overseer denotes superintendent, manager or guardian, whereas deacon, in Greek *diakonos*, can mean servant, one who executes the commands of another, commissioned messenger or agent of a superior (Krupp, 2003:93/4), thus denoting its possible subordinate role (Strauch, 2017:24).

2.16.2 The five-fold ministry

Paul writes of the five-fold ministry in Ephesians 4 as the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. They function to equip God's people for ministry and to edify the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-13). In modern times they should act as coaches, releasing, encouraging, and serving all others in their various ministries (Krupp, 2003:100). According to Jeong (2018:32), the modern house church movement emphasises the equipping gifts of the apostle, prophet, pastor, evangelist and teacher as found in Ephesians 4:11-13. These gifts are different to the spiritual gifts that are found in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30, and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

In the modern house church movement, the five-fold ministry gifts are seen as five different individuals who provide the foundational structure. They travel throughout a given network of house churches to assist believers for spiritual maturity (Jeong: 2018:35).

The apostle: the term is derived from the Greek *apostolos* meaning "a messenger" or "one sent on a mission" (Bayes, 2010:116). Thus, apostles were literally commissioned messengers carrying out their sender's mission and backed by the sender's authority (2010:116). There are

three kinds of apostles in the New Testament: those who had been with Jesus in his ministry and witnessed his resurrection, i.e. the Twelve (Acts 1:21-220); Paul (1Cor 15:8-9); and those who received the gift of apostleship (Jeong, 2018:33). Those gifted with apostleship were Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 9:5-7), Apollos (1 Cor 4:6, 9), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), and possibly Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16:7) (Jeong, 2018:33; Krupp, 2003:101). The main function of the apostle is to establish churches in areas not previously reached by others (Rom 15:20) (Simson, 2009:68).

There are various views regarding the continuation of the role of the apostle. On one hand, the apostle along with the prophet are said to have played a foundational but temporary role in the first century church and are thus no longer evident in the contemporary church (Krupp, 2003:101). So, in the modern church the role of the apostle and the prophet has been marginalised with other ministries assuming leadership roles. The temporary interpretation of the apostolic and prophetic ministries is not without disagreement. For one, it is argued that the roles of the evangelist, pastor and teacher were in operation during the apostles' time, so why would some fall away and not others (Jeong, 201:33). While there is no evidence of the office of the apostle outside the designation of the Twelve and Paul, the function of the apostle existed before and after Paul's Ephesians epistle and therefore likely continued (Bayes, 2010:119). Jeong (2018:35) agrees, although the practical scope of the apostle and prophet are not as clear as the evangelist, pastor or teacher there exists no clear biblical text that rescinds these two gifts.

The prophet communicates divine revelation (Bayes, 2010:116). As a gift, it edifies, brings comfort, and encourages (1Cor.14: 3:31). Similarly, prophecy seeks to provide understanding and communicating God's mysteries and revelation to the church (1Cor 12:10; 13:2) (Simson, 2009:66). Paul's letter to the Ephesians may not provide a basis for the continuation of prophetic activity in modern times, but the existence of prophetic activity elsewhere in the New Testament and beyond provides justification for its continuance (Jeong, 2018:34; Bayes, 2010: 119).

Evangelist: the term means "one who proclaims the good news" and the role of the evangelist seems to begin in the New Testament (Bayes, 2010:120). The only named evangelist in the New Testament is Philip (Acts 2:18), but Paul mentions the ministry of the evangelist in

Ephesians 4:11. Also in writing to Timothy, Paul admonishes him to do the work of an evangelist. The role of the contemporary evangelist is to work within and outside the church by continually speaking the message of Christ's salvation (Simson, 2009:69; Krupp, 2003:103).

Pastors, also referred to as shepherds in the New Testament (Krupp, 2003:104; Bayes, 2010:116), provide leadership through nurture, care, and guidance and fulfil functions of "rule" or "manage" (1 Thess 5:12; Rom 12:8); "administration" (1 Cor 12:28); and "bishop/overseer" (Phil 1:1) (Jeong, 2018:34).

Teachers communicated and interpreted tradition from the Old Testament and earlier Christians (Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 4:17) (Jeong, 2018:34; Bayes, 2010:116). As Krupp (2003:105) says, the New Testament teacher was given to the church to clarify the meaning of Scriptures.

The leadership ideal whether in the Early Church or in contemporary churches is one where all members are equally free to demonstrate their leadership gifts in all areas of church and mission (Birkey, 1991:73). However, that being said, problems in the contemporary house church model may arise. Consider the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 which was convened to address whether new converts to Christianity needed to follow the Law of Moses. Because of the leadership structures in place the matter was resolved and a doctrine for Gentile converts was initiated. Nevertheless, how do contemporary house churches deal with ecclesial and doctrinal problems in light of the fact that no oversight seems to exist?

For many house churches church discipline is up to the local leadership where biblical principles of discipline should be followed. These may be through reproof, rebuke or admonishment. For Krupp (2003:128) discipline is mainly the responsibility of the elders of the local house church in addressing problems that occur during gatherings or addressing those living in sin. In terms of doctrinal issues Krupp (2003:128) advises that such people not be allowed to teach and should they persist in false teachings then perhaps they should be expelled from the group. Again, for Payne (2007:48) house churches tend to rely on networks and in this regard local leaders can benefit from advice from leaders from other fellowships. Although most house churches are autonomous some may be affiliated to larger institutions (Payne, 2007:120) whose constitutions the house churches may adhere to and thus circumnavigate any potential doctrinal problems.

What is certain is that house churches need to rely on each other as well as the institutionalised church in order to promote unity and growth in the body of Christ.

2.17 Common defining characteristics of the early and contemporary house church

House churches tend to embody certain characteristics wherever they occur. As the *ekklesia* they see themselves as a people called out to be the church of God. Organic house churches embody simplicity, community, and high levels of participation that make them appealing to many (Payne, 2007:43). It will be seen that such aspects are particularly appealing to millennials. Further, house churches can exist anywhere (Krupp, 2003:48). They are found in both rural and urban areas. Historically house churches have thrived during periods of persecution (Jeong, 2018:95), but evidence is mounting that house churches flourish in industrialised, wealthy nations as well (Payne, 2007:48; 13).

2.17.1 House churches are more organic and less institutional

The Pauline ideal of house churches encompassed all three human quests in small group movements. The church as a household fulfilled the longing for personal identity and intimacy and fulfilled the aspiration for a kind of universal fraternity (Birkey, 1991:72). Additionally, house churches provided decentralised missional freedom for creative expression within cultural diversity (1991:72). The house church provided the most dynamic setting for fellowship and worship as well as providing the location for Christian gatherings without dependence on temple or synagogue styles. This distinct setting facilitated the development of worship patterns which validated their own beliefs and needs. They were not dependent on a building to justify their calling as a true church (1991:72). Neither did they relate to the notion of church with an actual building.

In the same vein the contemporary house church also tends to be more organic and less institutional, says Payne (2007:38). If asked to describe themselves members are inclined to use Scriptural metaphors rather than institutional concepts to illustrate. Rarely is the local church referred to as a building, time, service, event, or activity. More often than not, the church is understood as the people associated with the house church (2007:39). For Krupp (2003:39; 54) the church is not a building or event, but a gathering of believers with the purpose of worship. He further notes that nowhere in the New Testament are instructions given for the

erection of a building specific for religious purposes. Again, Simson (2009: xv) voices that God does not live in temples constructed by humans, but people are the church of God. So, Krupp's (2003:7) idea that God's blueprint for the church is the organic house church may not be without merit. However, care must be taken not to limit the church based on personal perceptions as God choses to build His church how He wills. Humans cannot and should not limit any expression of God's church.

House churches tend to be more organic with less structure (Simson, 2003:3). Rigidity is associated with institutionalism which has the potential to distort genuine relationships which are of utmost importance to the local house church family (Payne, 2007: 29). While some prefer a structured format, the goal of gatherings is for edification. Lesson material alone is not responsible for great meetings; rather it is through the ministry that takes place when people gather together. Thus, people should be encouraged to participate and leaders should listen more. Less structure allows for meetings that are more dynamic, free flowing, and controlled by the Holy Spirit thus allowing for people's lives to be more deeply impacted (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:84).

House churches enjoy a greater sense of structural freedom and autonomy than institutionalised churches. However, it is important that house churches do have some structure to prevent failure. While the organic, less institutional structure of house churches if of value, Banks (as quoted in Andraeas, 2014:161/2) cautions for some structure within house church. Sound foundations such proper theological understanding of who they are as the church, their governmental structure, their operation, leadership, doctrinal faith statements, and each member's covenantal obligations provide the basis that could result in success. Yet again, formalised concepts of constitutions and regulations, covenants and doctrinal statements may be a roadblock to the organic dynamic of the house church (Viola as quoted in Andraeas, 2014:162). The success of the house church is not dependent on religious activities and programmes. Rather, it is experienced through intentionally sharing their life and faith with the surrounding communities that causes people to encounter the Gospel in their own space (Effa, 2015:376). The flexibility afforded by house church meetings is ideal for millennials who are often averse to formalised structures and rigidity (Nicholson, 2019).

2.18 Contemporary examples of the house church movement

How and where the modern house church movement began is uncertain (Hadaway *et al.*, 1987:14). What can be clearly identified is the increase in house church practice as well as the precipitating factors. The house church movement in the West is distinguished from that of the East in that the trend is still developing there, whereas in the East house church practice has been around for decades; only consider China and Korea as examples. But house churches in the West are not a new phenomenon says Payne (2007:11). The first Western church actually met in the house of Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40). In India the house church movement is also gradually gaining momentum (Jeong, 2018:13). In the East, house churches emerged because of the persecution of the Christian church in areas such as China (Hadaway *et al.*, 1987:20), but in the West the movement was inspired to returning the church to biblical principles as the contemporary believer understood them (Hollenweger, 1980:45).

The contemporary house church movement was born from a longing for spiritual renewal and Christian engagement in the West (Effa, 2015:376). The modern movement towards house churches that locates in neutral spaces such as homes, coffee shops, workplaces, etc. has a much more strategic impact on society where people can witness first-hand the missional and incarnational nature of the church.

There are various examples of the propagation of the contemporary house church. In China the growth of the house church from house to house closely resembles the propagation of the early house church that survived and thrived in a fluctuating and unpredictable political climate and persecution (Adubofour & Badu, 2019:179). Additionally, Birkey (1991:75) believes that the house church in China has demonstrated more than any other contemporary church what it means to be the household of faith in that they have learnt to rely on the essentials, excluding the unnecessary. They have learnt that buildings and organisation structures may facilitate growth, but they can also become hindrances.

In Latin America the house church movement is conceptualised by small base churches which comprise mainly the poor and marginalised which makes up nearly 80% of the population. In these parts the base church generally centres on community life in small groups, ministry to the poor, and the prophetic mission of the church to society (Birkey, 1991:75).

In Nepal, a predominantly Hindu nation, Christianity is gaining ground through small groups. Worship services tend to be small and rarely are large church buildings used for gatherings; instead they gather in homes of believers to share the Word (Birkey, 1991:75).

Other examples include Vietnam where in the mid-seventies the communist government closed over 200 churches in order to quell the propagation of the Gospel. However, the attempt to suppress the spread of the Gospel was unsuccessful. In fact, the Gospel advanced to such an extent that the government offered to reopen churches in order to regain control of the Christian churches. However, Vietnamese Christians refused the church buildings, preferring to meet as they had been meeting - outside of formal church buildings (Birkey, 1991:75).

And lastly, in Ghana, the fastest growing charismatic church operates from small group meetings. Since the 1960s its rapid growth is directly related to the concept of the house church (Adubofour & Badu, 2019:179).

2.19 Conclusion

The phenomenal growth of the Gospel during the 1st century was as a result of numerous factors. Whilst the notion of a “ripe” time leading to the development of the Early Church is contested, there is little doubt that there was indeed divine orchestration aligning multiple aspects so that God’s plan of the church could be birthed. The prevailing socio-economic and cultural factors facilitated Christianity’s spread. So did zealous believers who spread the word as they moved from place to place. Evangelism was organic and led by passionate Christians willing to face death and torture because of the message they carried. This persecution rather than thwart their work energised their efforts. The inclusive nature of the cross found practical expression in the lives of the community of faith which overcame racial, religious and cultural barriers.

The Early Church gathered in homes and the temple and when they were thrown out of the temple they made no attempt to erect buildings for the purpose of worship. Instead they continued to meet from house to house. Meeting in homes afforded privacy, intimacy, and stability of place. This intimate setting was ideal in developing relationships and friendships and speaks to the familial theme which dominates Scripture. In addition, the modern house church meets in homes, but also gathers where convenient in places like coffee shops, schools and

work places. It is not so much where they gather as much as what they do and, in whose Name, they gather. As the faith community of Christ, house churches embody the *oikos* espoused in the New Testament, the household of God, where they participate in each other's lives as a family for the glory of God. The "one another" commands of the New Testament demonstrate the accountability, community, and church discipline necessary for the church. These ideals are best accomplished in smaller groups such as the organic house church where people know and love each and are accountable to and responsible for one another.

The New Testament house church does not necessarily sanction the modern house church movement. However, the strong biblical tradition of the church meeting in homes during the first few centuries does lend support to the continuation of the modern house church movement. Additionally, the modern house church movement also draws validity from events and teachings of the Reformation of the 16th century. That house churches have continued throughout the centuries validates that they are indeed an expression of the church of God.

Thus, the house church is recognised as an alternative to the institutionalised church and is ideal in an environment of persecution and economic weakness. The house church model is able to work under any circumstance, in any culture, geographical area, political climate, in urban and rural areas, and in any economic condition. It can function in centralising and disseminating mission work. Additionally, the house church functions in aspects of intimacy and relationship better than the institutionalised church and as seen later is ideally positioned for discipleship and faith formation in the emergent adult.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP AND FAITH FORMATION

"Where social reforms and education fail in reforming human nature, the supernatural work of the triune God transforms the once destitute soul into a new creation of Christlikeness" (Erickson, 2013:875).

And,

"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain." (Ps 127:1a).

God is in the work of building and restoring. Through the act of redemption, the Triune God saved us from sin and regained possession of us in exchange for a very high price, the life of His Son Jesus Christ. So, believers ought no longer to live for themselves but for God. The gift of salvation through God's mercy was freely given but once it is received it requires that believers "*offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will*" (Rom 12:1-2 NIV). Believers are not left as orphans as the Triune God abides in them (Jn 14:18 & 23b) working in them to "*will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose*" (Phil 2:13).

3.1 Introduction

The church as the body of Christ is called to participate in God's mission, that of reaching the "*ends of the earth with the Gospel, so that the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God*" (Wright, 2010:286). It may be argued that this directive is self-evident in Matthew 28:18-20. One of the key messages of that passage is to *make disciples*. Whereas, a predominant view of the Great Commission has been on the conversion experience, Bosch (2014: 76) argues that discipling is equally important. This chapter examines the nature of discipleship and faith formation as understood in a missional context. An attempt will be made to address each of these concepts separately, but it will soon be evident that it is almost impossible to detangle such interdependent processes.

3. 2 Defining key concepts

3.2.1 *Discipleship* should be understood as the process wherein individuals learn to replicate the life of Christ through mentorship over and above head knowledge. It comprises obeying, and participating in God's mission (Wright, 2010:94). Knoetze (2017:2) also says that it is through discipleship that, by living in a relationship with the Triune God and other people, one's true identity and vocation unfurl.

3.2.2 *Faith formation* is the process of establishing the character of Christ in a person (Weber, 2014:82) through the process of discipleship under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Folmsbee, 2007: 39). It is the transformative process through the work of the Holy Spirit that enables disciples to declare as Paul did, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life that I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" (Gal 2:20 NIV).

The concepts of discipleship and faith formation are inextricably intertwined. One cannot have one without the other. One cannot be a true disciple without being transformed and one cannot be transformed unless the triune God transforms us and that through a relationship with Him. Discipleship cannot occur without the resultant faith formation. Moreover, faith formation (spiritual growth) can scarcely occur without the leadership and learnership that accompanies discipleship.

The logic of this chapter, in understanding discipleship and faith formation, is based on the premise that millennials leave the church for various factors, some of which are poorly designed faith formation and discipleship plans and strategies. So, if these programmes are sufficient believers should be equipped to become mature Christians who stay in the church. Correct? But does the church really need another programme? Another strategy? Another plan? In this age of the abundance of knowledge through so many platforms such as the internet, are believers not already overloaded with information? In other words, at what point do they get knowledge-fatigue. Is it really necessary to be drumming more and more information in the hope that there will be real transformation? Is more knowledge sufficient to produce "The God-bearing life" that Dean and Foster speak about in their same titled book published in 1998?

Knowledge and more knowledge does little to impact the lives of people says Folmsbee (2007:39). This notion was also expressed by Dean and Foster (1998:12) earlier who felt that people (youth) do not need any more ideas about God. What is actually needed is more of God, not more mere knowledge of Him. Again, the results of a research project conducted in Amsterdam in the early 1990s showed that young people are interested in God but less interested in church (Simson, 2009:1). Can those results be reinterpreted as young people are after something more meaningful than the superficiality that may accompany programmes or plans and checklists? Isn't it in people's hearts a desire for authentic relationships and true encounters (with God) that no human process can ever deliver? As Yount (2019:56) states, formulas are inadequate in addressing spiritual lives if there is no engagement with God.

3.3 Discipleship

"…. teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19).

Bosch (2014:57-84) writing about discipleship in Matthew, indicates the following important concepts by which the church, disciples and their mission are described: The reign (*basileia*) of God (or of heaven), God's will (*thelema*), justice (*dikaiosyne*), commandments (*entolai),* the challenge to be perfect (*teleios*), to surpass or excel (*perisseuo*), to observe or keep (t*ereo*), to bear fruit (*karpous poiein*), and to teach (*didasko*). Some of these concepts will explored in this chapter.

3.3.1 Discipleship and calling

Discipleship is a relationship between the one being discipled and the one who is the discipler (Zhodiates, 1999:4). In the Christian faith this relationship occurs between believers and the Lord Jesus Christ (Nel, 2017:2). It is the Holy Spirit that connects the believer to Christ who in turn connects us with the Father. Thus, discipleship in the Christian faith is only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit who calls us into a relationship with the Father and the Son (Eph 2:18). Jesus' statement, "Follow Me" is the embodiment of what discipleship entails and is a continual process of learning (Nel, 2017:2).

Discipleship follows the call to salvation (Whitmore, 2018:474) but these two concepts can never be divorced from each other. In fact, Erickson (2013:868) states that repentance is a

prerequisite for discipleship. To be clear, repentance and penitence are distinguished from each other. Genuine repentance is sorrow for one's sins because of the wrong done to God and the hurt inflicted on Him (Horton, 2011: 578). Penitence, on the other hand, is born from regret for wrongdoing because of the unpleasant resultant consequences for self (Erickson, 2013:868). True repentance results in accepting Christ and His Grace, but with the forward action of real change in the inner person as found in Luke 9:23 where Jesus says, "*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me*."

So, biblical discipleship constitutes two things:

- "Acceptance into a personal relationship with Christ who calls us to belong to Him, and
- A vocation, which means that you have to be a follower and pupil of Christ who has called you" (Nel, 2015:6).

Since genuine repentance is more than mental assent (Horton, 2011:577) but embracing the reality and presence of the reign of God, it follows that discipleship is the participation in God's reign through his grace (Bosch, 2014:38). Knoetze (2017:3) notes that discipleship is closely related to the "Great Commission" – a central theme of Matthew's Gospel. For Bosch (2014:66; 67) Matthew's chief concern for mission as found in Matthew 28:19, 20 hinges on three things: *making disciples*; *baptising*; and *teaching*. Matthew's view of mission is that disciple-making is fundamental to the regenerated life and comprises of "teaching them" and baptising them" (Bosch, 2014:74; 67). Thus, for the Matthean community disciple-making was paramount for how they understood and lived out their lives. However, discipleship was not limited to the contemporaries of Jesus or Matthew's community. The pattern of discipleship can be seen in successive generations and outside the Gospels with numerous other New Testament examples. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul encourages believers to imitate him as he imitates Christ. Then again in 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6, the Thessalonians are imitators of Paul and the Lord, and Timothy is instructed to teach reliable men what Paul entrusted to him (2 Tim 2:1-20) (Ruthven, 2000:70). And so, for the contemporary Christian the function of discipleship commences once the decision is made to accept Christ as Saviour and obey all that is commanded in Scripture.

The contemporary church has placed emphasis on getting decisions, claiming converts, and making Christians (Wright, 2010:284). This limited stance of salvation that focuses only on decision-making (acceptance of Christ) rather than incorporating disciple-making as well is deficient says Nel (2015:1). The shortcoming of such an understanding is that it fails to produce

the abundant life that God has designed for His followers. Discipleship should be seen as the process that begins when the believer answers the call “Follow me,” says Whitmore (2018:473). Thus, the lifelong commitment to following Jesus Christ and being obedient to him ensue. Jesus came to give us life in abundance (Jn 10:10b) and Nel (2015:1) argues that it is through the process of discipleship and disciple-making that this abundant-life is realised. For Zhodiates (1999:3) discipleship begins the moment believers are “in Christ” at salvation and the call to salvation is the same call to discipleship. They are two inseparable invitations: firstly, there is the salvic invitation which is then immediately followed by the invitation to discipleship. Burrill (cited by Nel, 2015:3) states that one cannot accept the invitation of conversion without accepting the invitation to discipleship. Again, for Nel (2015:1) discipleship is a lifelong journey of rediscovering and recovering the fullness that may have been missed. In fact, Nel (2015:2) argues that when salvation exists solely around conversion and does not progress to discipleship and discipling, then believers are not matured into the stature of Christ, and the Christian life often results in a shallow and superficial connection to Christ. Whitmore (2018:474) agrees that maturity in faith occurs in tandem when one engages in true discipleship.

However, what is true discipleship and what does following Christ really entail? Once more, following Christ entails more than the event of conversion. One is a true disciple, said Jesus, who holds on to his teachings (Jn 8:31). The answer to the call to follow Christ is an individual one, but once a person chooses to follow Christ the commitment to Jesus is set on Christ’s terms (Whittaker, 2018:474). The disciple unreservedly gives up all rights and unconditionally accepts Christ’s conditions. If a disciple chooses to keep his own terms then that is no longer true discipleship but rather a programme or task arranged to suit self. True discipleship denies the previous life and submits to a new existence following Jesus (Whitmore, 2018:474). Discipleship then is two-fold: it is both individual and collective in nature. The *Arusha Call to Discipleship* refers to the collective nature of discipleship as the participation in the Christian community and recognises the call to serve others within the Christian faith. Discipleship always calls the disciple into contact with others and the world (Whitmore, 2018, 475). Thus Folmsbee (2007:18) explains that discipleship is “simply the process of assisting people (youth) to develop as followers of Jesus.”

3.3.2 Who are the disciples?

The term "*disciple*" is the only name for Christ's followers used in the Gospels (Bosch, 2014:75) and occurs 269 times in the New Testament (Wright, 2010:285). Obviously, the term Christian is later developed in Scripture but only occurs three times in the New Testament. Surely, the prolific use of "*disciple*" indicates its importance for the New Testament writers. The noun "*disciple*" is common to the four Gospels and Acts but is an especially central notion in the Gospel of Matthew (Bosch, 2014:75). Unlike the other Gospels, in Matthew "the disciples" are not confined to Jesus' immediate Twelve but includes "other followers" of Christ during Matthew's time. So, the practice to "make disciples" in Matthew 28:19, followers of the earthly Christ are commanded to make of others what they themselves are, disciples. The first disciples then became prototypes for future disciples (Bosh, 2014:75).

The term *disciple* is commonly associated with the verb *akolouthein*, "to follow (after)." Louw & Nida (as quoted in Nel, 2015:6) provide the literal definition of "*to be a disciple*" as "*to accompany*" or "*go along with*" or "*to be in the group of"* and the verb means to "*cause or convince people to become followers*." Similarly, Wright (2010:212) speaks of (the first) disciples as those called *"to be with him (i.e. Christ)."* He elucidates that the objective of the disciple, or rather Christ's objective for his disciples, was for them to "spend time with him, learning from him, being trained by him, understanding his identity and mission, bearing the cost of radical discipleship, witnessing his life and teaching, his death and finally his resurrection." Ultimately the goal of the first disciples was to replicate and extend the ministry of Jesus himself. Wright's views agree with those expressed by Bosch (2014:39) who states that the disciples were called *just to be with* Jesus. They shared meals with him and followed him wherever he went. They were Jesus' companions and shared in the events that occurred around Jesus. It was important for the disciples to witness and participate in the things that occurred through and with Jesus.

The biblical understanding of a disciple is one that is attached to Christ in order to share in His life and suffering (Bosch, 2014:84). This partaking in the life of Christ is introduced in John 6:51 where Jesus invites believers to eat Him. Paul continues the theme of a shared life or "being in Christ" in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (Bosch, 2014:75). Thus, a biblical understanding of a disciple is one that is attached to Christ and to His body (the church). For Burrill (cited by Nel, 2015:5) the essential characteristics of a disciple is:

1. one who has a minimum threshold of faith that is willing to endure persecution and ridicule for the sake of Christ.

2. one who lives in total allegiance to the lordship of Christ, being willing to forsake all-property, family, friends, etc., for the cause of Christ.
3. one who understands and keeps the fundamental teachings of Jesus.
4. one who loves unconditionally with the agape love of Jesus, received from Him.
5. one who is bearing fruit by creating other disciples for Jesus.

3.3.3 Discipleship and mimesis

Discipleship in the New Testament centres on the Person of Jesus who calls disciples; whereas, in Rabbinic Judaism the disciple chose to follow the rabbi (Nel, 2015:6), Jesus personally chose and called his disciples. Nel (2017:2) describes the process of discipleship as one that occurs within a teacher-student relationship. Similarly, Ruthven (2000:69) speaks of the particularly close attachment that developed between New Testament believers and their teacher. But discipleship was not unique to Christ and his disciples. Many other rabbis also had disciples, *mathetai,* says Knoetze (2017:5). Except, Bosch (2014:37) differentiates between the disciples of Jesus and those of other rabbis, central was their understanding of mission. A *talmid* chose his own teacher and attached himself to that teacher, but the disciples of Jesus were personally called by him (Ruthven, 2000:67). In the case of Jesus' disciples, their role of disciple began once they accepted his call to "Follow me!" (Senter iii; Black, Clark & Nel, 2001:138). In Judaism that the process of discipleship was transitional wherein the *talmid* readied himself to become a rabbi as well. Therefore, the role of the rabbi was to inculcate his students to become teachers like himself. Ultimately the success of the rabbi was evident in how alike the student was to master. The relationship between the *talmid* and rabbi could be described as self-seeking and ambitious with the ultimate purpose of fulfilling the personal vocations of those involved. The disciples of Jesus on the other hand became disciples for an entirely different motive. Jesus' disciples entered into a lifelong commitment of fulfilling Christ's destiny and not their own. Personal causes, agendas and notoriety are laid aside for seeking the purpose and will of God and His Kingdom. The greatest in the Kingdom was the one who became least of them all. While disciples of rabbis were just their students, Jesus' disciples were also his servants (Bosch, 2014:37).

New Testament discipleship is characterised predominantly by mimesis wherein the rabbi was to train the student to such an extent that the student would reflect the nature and instruction of that teacher (Ruthven, 2000:67). Similarly, for Nel (2016:6) a disciple was one that adhered to the teachings of the leader, and also promoted the cause of such leader. Frederick (2008:556)

expands that discipleship from the Christian perspective involved the *Imitatio Dei* - the imitation of God. However, the term *disciple* in the New Testament should not be understood as imitation only says Horton (2011:671). The biblical notion of discipleship does include the imitation of Christ but the New Testament concept is far richer in meaning and application than that. Bosch (2014:82) explains that the Gospel of Matthew emphasises that Jesus is not just someone to emulate, but Lord who is to be worshipped as well. The account found in Matthew 16:13-20 tells of the exchange between Jesus and his disciples where the disciples are asked what people's perceptions of him were. While many recognised him as being a good man that should be revered and perhaps emulated, it is Peter who has the revelation of his Lordship and as Lord deserving of worship and adoration. Thus, being a disciple means living out the teachings of Jesus as a spiritual act of worship. In fact, Jesus did not call His disciples with the sole purpose of imparting knowledge. No, Jesus demanded something more. Unlike other rabbis Jesus' goal was not to have his pupils master a particular skill or knowledge set, rather, Jesus demands an unconditional commitment to Himself (Nel, 2015:6).

A true disciple is one that is bound to following Christ and to learn from him. Matthew 11:29 is explicit on the requirements of a believer/disciple: '…. And learn from me" it says. But, this learning involves more than theoretical knowledge, it culminates in practical insight through instruction and experience. In the same chapter of Matthew in verse 27, Jesus speaks of "knowing" the Father and being "known" by the Father and unless this is revealed no one can have this knowledge (Frederick, 2008:556). "Know" implies more than knowledge, rather it denotes an intimate relationship, a communion as it were (Life Application Bible, New American Standard Version, 2000: 1614). So, the believer learns from Christ through Scripture and in communion with Him through the Holy Spirit.

3.3.4 Discipleship and teaching

The central command in the Great commission text is to "make disciples" (Wight, 2010:285) and disciple-making occurs through "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you". Teaching (*didasko*) is distinguished from preaching/proclaiming (*kerysso*) in the Gospel of Matthew (Bosch, 2014:67). "Preach" or "proclaim" is often associated with "the Gospel of the Kingdom" and is addressed to outsiders and is sometimes used with specific reference to a (future) gentile mission. But, Jesus never preached to the disciples, rather he taught them. Specifically, within the context of the Great Commission, Jesus uses the term *didasko*. It would

appear that those “within” are taught and not preached to (Bosch, 2014:67). Thus, teaching is an essential component of discipling.

For the ancient Greeks and even in our modern society teaching is an intellectual endeavour, but this wasn’t the case for Jesus. His teaching rather appealed to his listeners’ will and called for submission to God’s will (Bosch, 2014:67; 68). Thus, *didasko* is for Jesus more than instilling the precepts of the Law and obeying them, but an appeal to submit to the will of God. Discipleship, then, is determined by the relationship with Christ and not by conforming to laws. Jesus embodies everything that is meant to be taught or learnt, therefore the life of the Christian is not dependent on the law but it is based on following Christ and embodying his life (Bosch, 2014:68).

3.3.5 Discipleship and God’s will

The life of Jesus itself was the expression of the reign of God. Therefore, it is found that closely associated with Jesus’ teachings or commandments is doing the “will of the Father”. Over and over in the Matthean Gospel “God’s will” is highlighted (cf. Matthew 6:10; 7:20; and 18:14). But how is God’s will to be understood? For the Jews the will of God was found in the Torah, but for Jesus the law centred on the twofold commandment of love: love for God and for one’s neighbour (Bosch, 2014:68). As a result, this love for God and love for one’s neighbour was the standard for every action and attitude that was enacted by the Matthean community. Moreover, one could not claim to love God without loving one’s neighbour. In a similar vein, the genuineness of one’s words resulted in action. Disciples of Christ are to shine their light which is evident in their good deeds (Wright, 2010:144). One could not claim to follow or believe Jesus without an active commitment that flowed into works (Wright, 2006:390). “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them….” (Matt 7:24). Thus, true commitment to the words of Jesus has a resultant action. In fact, true disciples of Jesus are challenged to bear fruit and the failure to produce good fruit is deemed as hypocrisy (Bosch, 2014:69). Hypocrisy should then be understood as the absence of good deeds or fruit. It is a failure of conduct with reference to both God and people. Not doing good means doing evil (Bosch, 2014:71). As Yount (2019:64) points out, faith in Jesus without obedience to his commands is dead since his commands are the will of God. Since the disciples are taught to “observe all things I have commanded you…” according to Matthew 28:20, it follows that the profession of their (and present day believers’) faith is enacted by doing what Jesus commanded them to do. Secondly, the act of obedience to the Christ’s commandments demonstrates love for Him (Yount, 2019:64).

3.3.6 Discipleship and mission

Calling and discipleship are intrinsically interwoven with mission (Bosch, 2014:37). One cannot receive the calling and walk with Jesus without being prepared for missionary activities. A missional outlook is one that understands Jesus' inclusive thinking and nature which is intimately associated with evangelism (Nel, 2015:3).

Jesus appointed his disciples "to preach and cast out demons" (Mark 3:14). So, participating in the life of Jesus certainly meant participating also in his mission. Thus, discipleship should also be understood as enlisting in the service of God's reign. Jesus' disciples become his witnesses. They were endowed with full authority to do his work. Jesus states in John 5:19, "The Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son does also." The disciples are to also do and say what Jesus proclaims and does. They are Christ's ambassadors through whom God is making his appeal (2 Cor 5:20) (Bosch, 2014:39).

3.3.7 Discipleship and the Kingdom of God

As a disciple one has access to God's kingdom (*basileia*) (Nel, 2017:2) and that only through an encounter with Christ (Bosch, 2014:72). "God's people are called to participate in the divine mission to manifest and advance God's Kingdom on earth through the means of sharing and showing that Gospel of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ" (Stetzer as quoted in Nel, 2017:2).

The teachings of Jesus and later the apostles predominantly concerned the Kingdom of God. The theocentric focus of all Jesus' commandments intends to govern the entire Christian life; one where God is central and everything else emanates from this single goal. The Gospel of the Kingdom can be understood as the spreading of "his reign in practice here on earth" (Nel, 2017:3). God's reign is not only for a future time but exists in the present as well (Bosch, 2014:32). The reign is directly related to the Person and work of Jesus. Thus, for Jesus the inauguration of the Kingdom is through his own person and ministry (Wright, 2010:186). But the Kingdom of God does not mean that it is a new and tangible world. No, God's kingdom reveals a new way of life, a new ethical way of thinking (Wright, 2006:309). The Kingdom of God refers to God's Lordship in the present and future and how this is represented by God's nearness; God taking the side of the poor and oppressed; God's justice; God's will; God's victory over evil;

and God's own goodness. It determines all aspects of the proclamation and activity of Jesus and his followers (Schnelle as quoted in Nel, 2017:3).

God's Kingdom is understood by his reign and the realm over which he reigns (Van der Walt, 2007:40). As citizens of this Kingdom believers strive for righteousness of self and for society. In this way, God's righteousness should be understood as justice (Bosch, 2014:72). It follows then that the Kingdom of God is at work in and through believers who seek his Kingdom first and his justice, and in those who hunger and thirst for justice (Wright, 2010:187). Thus, the reign of God is found in those who understand their mission, to make peace, to do good, and to proclaim God's salvation (Wright, 2006:306).

3.3.8 Disciples who make disciples

The process of discipleship unfurls through living in a relationship with people and the Triune God and therefore discipling is located in the church and also in the world (Knoetze, 2017a:1, 2). Thus, the identity of a disciple is found in relation to others. Jesus as the pattern had no ministry purpose apart from the will or relationship of the Father and thus the mission of disciples of Christ is impossible apart from their communion with him.

The first disciples were commanded to make others into what they themselves were, patterned on Jesus (Wright, 2006: 391). As Jesus was the model to be followed the first disciples and subsequent disciples share with Jesus in suffering and in missionary authority (Wright, 2010:144). The disciple therefore undertakes to follow the suffering of Jesus and to look forward to his return in glory (Bosch, 2014:39). Nel (2015:6) states that the process of making disciples can only occur as true disciples make disciples who will make disciples.

However, the modern church is experiencing a discipleship malaise says Nel (2015:2), with the result that it is producing immature Christians who are unable to grow or teach others to grow spiritually. This has occurred as a result of numerous factors:

1. Pastors are no longer focussed on equipping saints for the work of Christ.
2. The role of discipling has been left to programmes and not relationships. It just costs too much personal investment and time. Programmes are so much easier!

3. The Christian life has been reduced to the eternal benefits received from Christ, rather than living students of Jesus.
4. Discipleship is designated to particular groups of people.
5. Leaders are unwilling to call people to discipleship.
6. There is a limited understanding of true discipleship which encompasses more than a solo relationship between Christ and believer but should encompass the church in a discipleship community.
7. Most churches do not have a clear, public pathway to maturity.
8. Most Christians have never been personally discipled (Nel citing Ogden, 2015:2).

So, the question arises as to "can Christians grow into self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ?" (Nel, 2015:2). According to Ogden (as quoted in Nel, 2015:2) that will only occur when Christians are involved in "highly accountable, relational, multiplying discipleship units of three or four." So, discipling should be understood as a "process that takes place within accountable relationships over a period of time for the purpose of bringing believers to spiritual maturity in Christ" (Nel, 2015:3).

Christianity therefore finds expression in the lives of Christians, and not in programmes, buildings, or creeds. The manner in which Christians live is an actual witness of their statement of faith in Christ Jesus. Authentic discipleship, then, should always be Christ-connected, directed towards and centred on Christ. Likewise, this teaching is proclaimed when Christians live out the command to "do as I have done to you" (John 13:13-15). In this way disciple-making is far beyond church programmes. Whereas, in former times (and in various current spaces) faith formation programmes were programme-orientated, the move now is and should be towards people (Nel, 2015:7). The process involves the discipler and disciplee continually learning how to live faithfully for Christ. This practice can only truly occur within the community. Discipleship is living a life that is Christ-centric, and community is important because it provides accountability and responsibility in this Christian-walk. Further, community-life provides a buffer to remain faithful to life-convictions against what society presents as norm (Nel, 2015:7). But, there is push-back stemming from Western individualism. Individualism robs sincere connections or relationships with God and with one other. Nevertheless, community formation and discipleship go together (Nel, 2015:7). Discipleship teaches to embrace community in response to the world's individualism. People are social creatures and traditional communities are more so.

For the faith community, discipleship must be intentional especially where it concerns the youth or millennials (Knoetze, 2015:2). A priority for faith development is the need to promote a love for learning. Those involved in discipling should themselves be faithful learners and disciples of Christ. To cultivate the lifestyle of discipleship teaching the youth must be relational (Nel, 2015:8). Millennials demand more than instruction, they want examples. There is a premium on authenticity "to walk the talk" as it were. Society, and that especially amongst the youth, is crying out for someone to walk the road with them (Andalas, 2018:53). Again, the echoes of interdependency are heard: "people are born for community, and it is in communion with others that people flourish and become their true self" (Allport as quoted in Nel, 2015:9).

The process of discipleship entails learning more about God, but more importantly it's about learning how to "live one's life to glorify God" (Nel, 2015:10). For Knoetze (2017:3) discipleship involves following Jesus resulting in transformation through the relationship believers have with Christ. Discipleship then is also making of disciples and a lifelong journey to rediscover and recover the fullness of life (Nel, 2015:1). Because of their socio-economic and political history, many millennials in South Africa experience many missed opportunities and have much unused potential. As a result, they do not live their lives to full capacity (Knoetze, 2015:1).

The potential of African youth is further limited by other social ills such as poverty and insufficient schooling, as well as many youth being 'victims' of their own unexploited potential because of a traditional African worldview which they are expected to honour (Knoetze, 2015:1). Spiritual transformation seeks to address this under fulfilled life by assisting youth realise their potential. The spiritual development of youth should be addressed within the context of the family since Scripture is replete with examples of the family as agents of blessing and knowledge of the salvic plan of God. Thus, the church must incorporate the African household when addressing the spiritual and physical needs of the youth (Knoetze, 2015:3). The African household is where members of the family have to deal with everyday realities such as food, water, AIDS, the absence of parents and children, and poverty.

Poverty in South Africa is multi-faceted having political, social, economic, and spiritual expressions (Knoetze, 2019: 151). Additionally, many traditional societies view poverty as witchcraft (Bruwwer as quoted in Knoetze, 2019:151) and thus poverty must be addressed in a holistic manner incorporating spiritual aspects while being mindful of the African traditional

worldview. The local church is positioned within the community to make God known through deeds of mercy and to be involved in development and the alleviation of poverty in South Africa through its good community facilities such as buildings, structures, management, and relations (2019:159). For many in rural and impoverished communities those facilities are in the form of house churches that welcome many through their doors. These house churches are ideally positioned since they engage with the community in real and authentic ways.

Bosch (2014:83) sums up discipleship as the process that, "involves a commitment to God's reign, to justice and righteousness, and to obedience to the entire will of God. Additionally, discipleship also involves making new believers sensitive to the needs of others, helping them to recognise injustice, suffering, oppression, and the plight of those who have fallen by the wayside." A product of discipleship then is maturity to the level that believers begin the ministry of discipling others.

3.4 Faith formation

"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

(2Cor 3:18)

The concept of faith formation was described earlier as the process of establishing the character of Christ in a person through the process of discipleship under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Faith formation is an on-going process of spiritual transformation. Biblical transformation entails moral change and conversion on a daily basis occurring through discipleship (Knoetze, 2017a:3). Folmsbee (2007:39) clarifies that discipleship should take on the form of living for God and not just learning about God. Weber (2014:82) also views discipleship as a process about learning how to live one's life to glorify God by living out the character of Christ (i.e. being transformed). While people are equipped with the knowledge of God, this is not an end unto itself. The Christian faith is dependent on God's self-revelation. So, if faith depends on the knowledge of God and what He is doing in one's life and the world, then discipleship is the process of equipping people with this knowledge so that they can respond appropriately says Weber (2014:82). And so, discipleship teaches people the fundamental

truths of the Christian faith and also trains them about the practices relevant to develop as a Christian.

3.4.1 Towards a clearer understanding of faith formation

The terms discipleship, spirituality and spiritual growth have been used synonymously with faith formation (Weber, 2014:71; 81). The essence of spirituality is undergirded by the human quest for the sacred and so those feelings and behaviours that accompany that search can be understood as spirituality (Christian & Kilgour, 2014:21). Mata (2014:24) expounds spirituality as the "innate, human characteristic that allows us to connect with the divine and feel part of the universe. Spirituality thus encompasses the individual capacity and the essence of life, providing humans with a greater consciousness and more profound understanding of being."

The spiritual world is often distinguished from the physical world in the modern society says Knoetze (2017:3). While scientific observation allows for knowledge with certainty, the spiritual world on the other hand is a personal and private place where people know through experience (believing). Further, a secular understanding of spiritually entails highly individualistic viewpoints with particular emphasis on personal choice and preferences (Frederick, 2008:555). So, participation in religious community becomes the individual's choice. Such a stance devalues the essential role personal and relational interactions play in the life of the spirit. The result of emphasising personal preferences is that it transforms spirituality to a mere psychological experience (Frederick, 2008:555). On the other hand, the Christian understanding of spirituality places emphasis on religious life that works through one's spirituality. But such broad definitions fall short of the Christian acknowledgement of the Triune God and the church's participation in His mission. Thus, faith formation may be a more appropriate term to describe the process where people live in a relationship with God (Christian & Kilgour, 2014:21). Spirituality for the Christian sees one's beliefs being practised in daily life through discipleship where individuals follow Christ's example and the experience of life within the Christian community (Frederick, 2008:556). Weber (2014:74) says that for the Christian faith spirituality is a progressive development towards God's holiness in one's life and is threefold:

1. It involves regeneration which encompasses being reborn as a Christian and having one's old habits changed (transformed) into God-honouring ones;
2. God's ministry in one's life; and
3. Time needed to grow (Weber, 2014:71).

From a Christian perspective spirituality is intimately connected with discipleship and is concerned with living an authentic Christian life. As the Christian walk does not start and end with the call to conversion, neither can transformation be viewed as a one-time event. No, transformation is continual (Folmsbee, 2007: 18). Thus, for the believer faith formation should be understood as the ongoing and consistent process evidenced through a Christ-like lifestyle (Weber, 2015: 4). The Christian faith actively seeks God and his will which in turn transforms our moral behaviour. It stimulates a yearning to know and understand God (Weber, 2014:71) causing the adoption of God-honouring attitudes and praxis which are borne out of the inner working of the Holy Spirit, the believer's willingness to be transformed, and their love for Him.

3.4.2 Faith formation and attachment behaviours

Previously it the attachment between teacher and student in the process of discipleship was discussed, but what facilitate attachment behaviours toward God? Attachment may be described as affectional bonds that fuel the desire to maintain proximity to a relational partner that serves as an emotional anchor and a source of strength in times of difficulty (Counted, 2016a:147). In the Christian faith, people's primary connection is to God and his mission (Folmsbee, 2014: 49). Attachment behaviours to God may manifest as,

1. A non-existent or negative impersonal and distrusting relationship or attachment-avoidance or,
2. People may model their previous positive attachment on their new relationship (Counted, 2016a: 149).

A relationship with God can be developed as a positive enduring bond even in the absence of an available or human attachment. This is especially important in our modern society and in Africa particularly. The African socio-historical and economic circumstances are quite different from the rest of the world. For instance, the AIDS epidemic has left parentless generations that are often minded by grandparents or even siblings. Brokenness in families and/or relationships often has a negative impact on future relationships. While attached youths are likely to develop religious behaviours that draw them closer to God and which see God as a relational partner in their faith formation experience. This can also be the case for previously unattached youths. Folmsbee (2007:48) cautions that people need to be passionately connected to God and his mission first and not to a charismatic leader or church or programme. It is the connection to God that ensures longevity in the Christian walk and commitment to God cannot be overshadowed by any other commitment (Folmsbee, 2007:49).

3.4.3 Developing faith formation

Faith formation (programmes) seeks to connect people with God in a way that builds relationship with Him (Christian & Kilgour, 2014: 20). Faith formation thus becomes the framework for the knowledge and understanding about God and the resulting influence of this understanding on one's values, beliefs, purpose, and relationships (Christian & Kilgour on Fowler & Dell, 2014:21). There are numerous steps in the faith journey which link faith formation with human development (Christian & Kilgour on Fisher, 2014:21) and thus faith formation needs to incorporate the heart, mind, soul, and strength.

The role of the church in the lives of youth is one of care and of transformation (Andalas, 2018: 53). Youth are often in search of a new identity and wanting to belong (Knoetze, 2017b:20). The quest to belong sees African youth embarking on rites of passage in African Traditional Religion. For Christians the sense of belonging comes from relationships and belonging to a community that is defined by belonging to the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). The church is then understood not as a collection of individuals but a "community of mutual participation in God's will and the life of the world" (Knoetze, 2017b:20).

Spiritual transformation that glorifies God aligns with the *missio Dei* and the church has the privilege to participate in this mission (Knoetze, 2015:6). Thus, the church has the responsibility to equip youth on their faith formation journeys of spiritual discovery and growth. Equipping, thus, takes on the form of teaching and discipleship in order to facilitate "spiritual engagement" opportunities with the goal of transformation (Knoetze, 2015: 6). Systematic biblical learning (knowledge) should be in tandem with a faith relationship with God. Faith formation, again, must be deliberate in its intent to deliver more than knowledge (Christian & Kilgour, 2014:22). The church must have sound theology in place. However, there is a danger of a teacher-student mode of instruction where this one-sided teaching may be seen as authoritarian and therefore lacking in authentic interest in people's actual faith formation (Knoetze, 2015: 6). This may be especially problematic for millennials who value participation and who want to feel as if they are contributing to theirs as well as the development of those around them (Anderson, 2017:8). Further, faith formation does not occur in isolation. It cannot occur solely through verbal instruction. It is influenced by socio-cultural and religious factors. In the lives of the youth, these factors should be modelled on authentic examples of mature faith (Christian & Kilgour, 2104:21)

absence of which may result in relationships with God that falter even with the increase of biblical knowledge.

Relationships are important says Knoetze (2015:6), but they cannot be seen as the primary foundation of ministry. Transformation is an activity of the Holy Spirit and so knowledge must be taught and lived in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the spiritual transformation (of youth) occurs through instruction and discipleship by modelling examples of mature faith. Hence, it is said that spiritual transformation is caught rather than taught (Knoetze, 2015:7).

The church has no power to transform people. It is the Holy Spirit that equips people for spiritual transformation and their calling in this world (cf. Jn 3:1-21; 14:16; 26; 16:5-15; Acts 2; Rom 8:1-16; and Eph 4:1-16) (Knoetze, 2015:6). In the process of spiritual transformation believers follow the pattern of Jesus Christ and not some imagined formula (Knoetze, 2015:7). Transformation does not happen because specific objectives are met or because of consistently excellent programmes. Rather, transformation is realised where the Holy Spirit is allowed to work. For Knoetze (2015:7), "the climate of transformation can be compared to a greenhouse in which the climate is set for growth. Ideally, this "greenhouse" begins with the family and then the community of faith." Andalas (2018:54) demonstrates that in the lives of the youth the primary faith formatters are parents and local religious leaders that form the core of young people's community of faith. It is this community of faith which is meant to facilitate and encourage discipleship (Nel, 2015:7). Once a believer, the Christian becomes inextricably bound to Christ and his body and thus discipleship happens within the context of relationships and it is within this fellowship of faith that the believer is strengthened and encouraged in their walk with the Lord. This cannot occur in a single Sunday service; rather, this is organically outworked in environments that foster deep relationships.

3.4.3.2 Transformation and knowledge

The aim of imparting knowledge should ultimately result in transformation. For instance, how is an accurate picture of God instilled in the lives of youth since this is crucial to faith formation? If God is seen as distant or vindictive it is hardly likely that a relationship with such will be attractive to anyone (Christian & Kilgour, 2014:21). And yet, African traditional understanding of the Supreme Being sees such a god that is distant and only accessed through ancestors (Knoetze, 2017b:19). Thus, teaching children about the true nature and character of God from an early age is important. In this respect, discipleship should entail teaching people to live and

learn from the Lord with the ultimate aim of introducing others to the Kingdom of God (Christian & Kilgour, 2014:22). In other words, it is not just about faith, but also about faithfulness. Transformation entails more than a knowing about God, it necessitates doing something with that knowledge. Hence another notion of discipleship can be seen as "shaping the life of an individual into a growing partnership with God" and integrating Christ's Lordship into every area of one's daily life (Maxson, 2002:3). Consequently, faith formation should not be understood as a once off thing. It develops like scaffolding one precept upon another (Christian & Kilgour, 2014: 25). Transformation is a continual process which the Christian undergoes throughout their lives through the concerted choices they make (Knoetze, 2017b:14). People are always growing, always developing. With the specific focus on millennials transformational development may yield exponential results since it is during this age of transition that most development takes place. There is a progression from youth to adulthood with completion of studies, getting married, having children, and participating in the economy in between (Knoetze, 2017b:14).

3.4.3.3 Faith formation and evangelism

Evangelism is a two-way tool for discipleship and disciple-making (Folmsbee, 2007:32). But in order for the discipler and disciplee to both grow, evangelism should be undertaken in the context of everyday lives by connecting with people in personal spheres. Such evangelism, sharing faith verbally and in actions as events of believers' lives unfold, is authentic and successful (Folmsbee, 2007:32). This type of evangelism is more than imparting knowledge. It is dynamic and allows those that are being discipled and witnessing to experience God in many facets. It involves preaching the Gospel but also believing and living the Gospel (Knoetze, 2017a:3). Mere knowledge can lead to a stagnant faith with little opportunity for growth, change, or progression. It may provide the tool but does not equip one on how to work the tool. A mobile faith (one that is practised in an everyday context) on the other hand encourages people to take their faith with them for the rest of their journey (Folmsbee, 2007:41). Having only knowledge may cause people to believe that by learning about God they've developed a faith that is genuine and growing. But faith that is not demonstrated through inward and outward formation is underdeveloped and idle. James calls faith without works dead (Js 2).

3.4.4 Paul and Timothy: examples of discipler and disciplee

The research has previously looked at the nature of the relationship between Jesus and the Twelve. Paul and Timothy as examples of discipler and disciplee will now be considered (see

Acts 16). Timothy is brought on by Paul and accompanies him on his missionary journeys. The nature of discipling begins to unfold. Paul as discipler desires that Timothy the disciplee is involved in ministry and mission in his own right (Dean & Foster, 1998:27). Paul was not interested in Timothy as a mere missionary tool for promoting the Gospel but was interested in Timothy's own transformation and his potential for leadership. Paul apprentices Timothy before releasing him for ministry in the larger church. Therefore, relational ministry which is demonstrated through contact, fellowship and authentic communication prepares people for mission (Dean & Foster, 1998:28). Again, focus on relationships in ministry is important because it mirrors the Triune God's nature and interactions with humanity. The Bible uses relational language to describe the Triune God, The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God's love is so great that He shares it with His people. Thus, significant relationships with other Christians matter because they teach each other something about what God is like (Dean & Foster, 1998:30).

3.4.5 Faith formation as sanctification

Discipleship should not be understood as an isolated process in the believers walk with Christ. No, there are concurrent processes that occur in the daily walk that the Holy spirit manifests in believers' lives. One of these is the process of sanctification. Sanctification is the continuing progressive growth in the life of a believer after regeneration (Erickson, 2013:225). The Holy Spirit works within the believers witnessing to the truth and countering sin so that the life envisaged for them by God as illuminated in the Bible is produced in them. On the one hand, discipleship may be seen as the part believers play through cooperation with God as He seeks to accomplish his work in their lives. On the other hand, sanctification looks at the same process but where the Holy Spirit works in believers to make them Christ-like and Holy. Erickson (2013:797) describes sanctification as "the continued transformation of moral and spiritual character so that the believer's life actually comes to mirror the standing the believer already has in God's sight" which is through the Holy Spirit working in them producing a likeness to Christ.

For believers, Christian discipleship involves observing "everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20) (Yount, 2019:52). But, what a man thinks in his heart so is he (Prov 23:7). What feeds the mind directs the steps. However, the Bible says to "be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom 12:2). Yount argues that learnt negative patterns can be unlearnt and minds

previously held captive by thoughts of wickedness can be reprogrammed/ renewed by feeding these minds the word of God. So, as thought patterns change the walk changes as well. But what are the practical steps towards the changing the patterns of thought? For one, Paul admonishes, “if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things” (Phil 4:8). The Holy Spirit transforms believers’ thought lives in the midst of their necessary and well-directed efforts of feeding their minds the Word of God (Yount, 2019:56). Formulas are inadequate in addressing spiritual lives if there is no engagement with God. When believers intentionally direct their thoughts to Christ and obey his word they are organically transformed spiritually. The disciple is taught how to choose activities that are beneficial in developing a sound mind. While it is indeed the Spirit that transforms, people have the ability to choose what activities are beneficial. Those discipling plant the seed, others water, but God causes the growth (1 Cor 3:6) (Yount, 201958). In this way the disciple is taught to dispel negative imagery that assaults their minds from their environments. Spiritual formation thus includes a social dimension (Yount, 2019:59). Disciples learn from those seasoned in their walk with God, not as a rule of law because they are not perfect, but as examples.

Programmes are helpful to the extent that they keep God firmly foremost (Yount, 2019:61). Proper discipleship demands ongoing engagement of the Holy Spirit as discipler. Human programmes have no power to transform hearts. Proper discipleship places priority on a submitted mind. Proper discipleship emphasises the study of Scripture as the source of material for change. Proper discipleship seeks the Lord, and not the mere acquisition of Him. Proper discipleship dwells lovingly on the Word. Proper discipleship requires minds focused on Christ continually despite distractions (Yount, 2019: 63-64). The ultimate goal of discipleship is that the believer grows in maturity to the level that he/she begins the ministry of discipling others.

3.4.6 Faith formation in the 21st century

The concept of the digital age and its impact on the practices of millennials will be explored in greater detail in the chapter on globalisation. For now its impact of faith formation on youth will be briefly considered

Through advances in technology such as social and electronic media most emerging adults are connected 24/7 in this globalised world. This is also true of the emerging adult in South Africa.

Although many (South) African millennials may not have access to a computer, they are still connecting via mobile phones or some other form of electronic media (Knoetze, 2020:1). As a direct result of the impact of the digital world there is a change in the way people live and worship and the way faith formation is being experienced. In fact, Andalas (2018:52) states that digital platforms are being used to recreate faith practices. The incorporation of digital technology in faith formation practices however is not without resistance. Andalas (2018:52) names a few reasons why the incorporation of social media into faith formation is perceived negatively. Firstly, social media may be considered by some as a form of entertainment. Secondly, some may regard social media as an artificial form of expression. Thirdly, the church may perceive digital technology as secular in nature and lastly the digital world may also be seen as unreal. For Knoetze (2020:1) the use of social and electronic media has both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand people are more connected than before the advent of these technologies, but on the flip side there is increasing disconnectedness because of polarisation, populism, protectionism, post-truth and patriarchy associated with online media usage (Jackelson as referenced by Knoetze, 2019:14). Also known as the five *P's,* these alongside other factors may result in conflicts between states, faith communities, families and individuals (Knoetze, 2020:1).

Although there are negatives associated with it, digital technology is increasingly intersecting with faith life and has become an integral part of the modern human existence. Thus, the manner in which believers, more especially millennials practise their faith is influenced by it. Whereas, older generations addressed issues of faith in the context of the tangible and present community of faith, millennials are accessing the power of social media to solve faith issues. These online platforms provide an alternative community that afford millennials with faith formation resources not previously and not as readily available as it is now.

Millennials are generally relational, finding community and a sense of belonging through relationships with God, through their neighbour, with self, with creation (Knoetze, 2020:2) and through online platforms. More and more millennials are connecting and finding community outside of traditional roles and incorporating the digital world in their ecology (Andalas, 2018:54). However, where truth and wisdom regarding issues of faith were garnered before in trusting relationships between millennials and their parents or other figures of authority, the trustworthiness of what is available online is brought into question. Millennials must now navigate through heaps of data, which are often contrasting to find answers to many of their

complicated questions. Even more importantly, millennials have to find the balance between what is available online and wisdom. One gains wisdom through circumnavigating life. It is a lifelong process wherein knowledge and understanding which grows spiritual maturity is attained. Digital wisdom too occurs over time but with the ever-increasing content available online, is there sufficient time for millennials to develop the necessary wisdom to understand the immediately available content as it applies to their particular situations? In this fast food society of convenience and immediate gratification can young people really quickly attain the skills to decipher the good from the bad that is ever available on the Net? Andalas (2018:54) does think that digital users can learn to navigate and discern the trustworthiness of the sites they visit especially with proper direction from trusted figures in their lives.

There are benefits associated with online social network usage for active and collaborative learning says Knoetze (2020:4). These include the delivery of educational outcomes; facilitating supportive relationships; identifying formation; self-esteem; and promoting a sense of belonging (Alt cited by Knoetze, 2020:4). But a valid concern regarding accessing online information is how and with whom do millennials cross-check the trustworthiness of this information especially if traditional roles are replaced by technology. For Andalas (2018:54) the attainment of digital wisdom and faith wisdom (maturing in the knowledge and practice of one's faith) are co-dependent processes for the millennial.

For the contemporary church, its relevance is demonstrated through its "social media presence, through space-making, through hospitality, and compassion in these and other public spaces" (Knoetze, 2020:4). Thus, for Andalas (2018:55) it is incumbent for the church to adapt and apply other faith formation strategies aimed towards the emergent adult. Social media can be used to enhance connectedness of the African emerging adult (Knoetze, 2020:9). Those wanting to impart and provide teaching and wisdom online need to allow more engagement and collaboration. Millennials have access to the net 24/7 and faith formatters using these platforms must transform to allow for a community of connectedness. Additionally, religious institutions need to incorporate more digital platforms into their make-up. On one hand, the brick and mortar buildings that allow for gathering and fellowship needed for the edifying of the faith community are not always accessible or readily available to the person that seeks to connect and commune. On the other hand, millennials desire fellowship and community outside these traditional structures and turn to the internet for these (Andalas, 2018:55).

So, online religious sites can become a place to connect. The demands of millennials for greater collaboration and connectedness must drive online religious sites to adapt from being mere storage sites. Religious sites may provide knowledge and problem-solving characteristics, but the faith formatter in the digital age should be available to assist the millennial navigate their faith issues. Rather than an authoritative voice with regards faith issues, the digital discipler walks that journey of discovery with the disciplee. The authority of religious leaders is thus decentralised and the danger of one becoming an authoritarian voice is diminished (Andalas, 2018:55). Going forward, how online faith formation programmes are designed must take into consideration the millennial who should be incorporated in faith-related activities.

3.5 Conclusion

When engaging in true discipleship the believer grows and matures in faith through encountering God and participating in God's mission for their lives and the wider world. Personal faith formation benefits the individual and society as they outwork God's mission in serving others (Whitmore, 2018:477) because mission goes beyond evangelism (the preached word) (Wright, 2010:285); it entails living in right relationship with God and society. But, disciples cannot really make a Godly impact in the world unless they are connected to Christ through whom all life flows. This connection or abiding occurs when one remains in engagement with Christ and being obedient to his teachings. The process is continual and underscores the believer's connection to Jesus. It implies perseverance, steadfastness, and faithfulness (Whitmore, 2018:478). It is dynamic, ever moving, never stagnating. It involves a "doing" and a "living." This doing and living occur within the community of faith. It happens when believers learn to replicate the life of Christ through imitating mature Christians through mentorship, coaching and observing. It ideally locates within smaller units such as the house church where ultimately discipleship results in spiritual maturity. In this regard the house church produces disciples that disciple others helping them mature in their faith.

CHAPTER 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOUTH AFRICAN MILLENNIALS WHICH FUNCTION AS CONTACT POINTS FOR HOUSE CHURCHES

4.1 Introduction

Millennials as a cohort are those born roughly between 1980 and 2000. Their values and beliefs are somewhat different from preceding generations but are consistent with the milieu of their upbringing. Dissimilar views between millennials and older cohorts exist in religious, cultural, socio-economic and political spheres. A concern for the church is that millennials are less likely than other generations to attend church or view institutional religion of significant value. Churches with lower youth numbers are less likely to grow. The church vies with cultural influences for the millennial's attention. This chapter will evaluate the characteristics of South African millennials which function as contact points for (house) churches. Three contributing factors have affected millennial development: the rise of postmodernity, the advancement of technology, and globalisation. (An in depth look into the effects of globalisation on millennials will be undertaken in the next chapter).

Millennials constitute the largest population group in Africa (Knoetze, 2017a:1; 4) and one of the largest in the world. There are approximately 200 million African millennials aged between 15 and 24 years (Counted & Arawole, 2015:7) whilst the American millennial population is estimated to grow to 73 million in 2019 (Pew Research Center, 2018) and is said to be the largest cohort in America (Cramer, 2014:12). Although the African millennial generation is one of the largest population groups in the world it is also the least researched according to Knoetze (2018a:485).

Based on the plethora of American literature on this subject, millennials will initially be described in broad homogenous terms. But as identity parallels between American or Westernised millennials differ from their African counterparts, the African millennial identity is then distinguished by incorporating local opinion. The socio-historical context defines a generation and Africans though affected by historical world occurrences have unique experiences that mould and differentiate them from the rest of the globe (Knoetze, 2017a:15).

4.2 Designating generations

Understanding generational differences informs an appreciation of the behaviours and characteristics of that particular group which arms those tending them. According to Smola & Sutton (2002:363), generational differences which are not adequately addressed may cause misunderstandings, miscommunications, and conflict within the workforce, but this author argues that this is true for any other environment. Within the corporate world an understanding of these generational differences may facilitate employee productivity, innovation, and corporate citizenship (Kupperschmidt, 2000:66). These positive benefits are also transferable to other social environments such as the church.

Generational theory was first described by Karl Mannheim as the characteristics developed by a particular generation in response to the social and historical events that occurred in that era (Milkman, 2016:4). Researchers differ slightly on the precise years used for categorising generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002:364; Cramer, 2014:11) but a generation is defined in more than only the year of birth, it is an identifiable group delineated as well by age, location, and significant life events (Kupperschmidt, 2000:66; DeVaney, 2015:11) which moulds their character and behaviours (Ng & Johnson, 2015: 122). Another term for a generational group is cohort. Cohorts display similar behaviours which are largely influenced by factors such as changes in society, economy, public policy, and major events such as wars (Smith & Nichols, 2015:39). Through their shared experiences, cohorts develop a peer personality or generational characteristics (Cramer, 2014:1; Sandeen, 2008:13). These generational characteristics include relatively enduring values, attitudes, preferences, and behaviours which ultimately informs a generation's worldview and behaviours (Smith & Nichols, 2015:39; Kupperschmidt, 2000:66). There are four generations that constitute contemporary American society: the silent generation or veterans, the baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials or Generation Y (Wong, Gardiner, Lang & Coulon, 2007:879). These generations are described around historical world events that influenced their identity irreversibly (Knoetze, 2017a:15). Further, Knoetze (2017a:15) argues that within the African context these historical world events alongside local historical happenings influenced the identity of African cohorts more intensely.

4.2.1 The silent generation or veterans

The silent generation was born between 1930 and 1945 (Wong *et al.*, 2007:879) and followed the economic hardships of the Great Depression and World War II (DeVaney, 2015:11). Kupperschimdt (2000:68) describes this period as a time which called for strong and decisive

leadership to promote socio-economic growth and peace. Children of this generation were most likely raised in very religious (Judeo-Christian) environments that stressed morality, obligations, social norms and hard work as inherently valuable and part of one's social duty (Kupperschmidt, 2000:68). They are characterised as having strong work ethic, saving and sacrificing to provide for their children, their aging parents, and for their retirement (Kupperschmidt, 2000:68). DeVaney (2015:13) sums up the following traits of the silent generation: patriotic, dependable, conformist, respects authority, rigid, socially and financially conservative, and a solid work ethic. Within the African context, this cohort was also influenced by colonisation where Africans were oppressed and subjected to the rule of Western outsiders (Knoetze, 2017a:15).

4.2.2 Baby Boom Generation

This cohort is so-called because of the boom of their births following World War II, which occurred in the early to mid-1940s and early to mid-1960s (Smith & Nichols, 2015:39; Smola & Sutton, 2000:364). Boomers grew up during economic and educational expansion (Smith & Nichols, 2015:39; Kupperschmidt, 2000:68). On-job security and a stable work environment were highly valued by this cohort (Wong *et al.*, 2007:879). This generation saw the breakdown of traditional family structures with increasing divorce rates. This trend led to the introduction of the phenomenon of latchkey kids (Kupperschmidt, 2000:68). Baby boomers are described as idealists who initiated and joined many causes such as demanding civil rights for American Africans and women. They were profoundly affected by the Vietnam War, the civil rights riots, the class of the Kennedy's, the Kennedy and King assassinations, Watergate, and the sexual revolution (Smola & Sutton, 2002:364). Boomers are characterised as workaholic, strong-willed employees who are concerned about content and material gain (Kupperschmidt, 2000:68; Sandeen, 2008:15). Political, religious and institutional scandals caused a loss of respect and loyalty for authority and social institutions says Kupperschmidt (2000:69). DeVaney (2015:13) sums up the traits of baby boomers as workaholic, idealistic, competitive, loyal, materialistic, seeks personal fulfilment, and values titles and the corner office. The baby boomer generation in Africa started their fight against colonialism and during this period there were several hundred instances of political violence in over 40 African states (Knoetze, 2017b:15, 16).

4.2.3 Generation X

Generation X or Gen X was born between 1961 and 1979/81 (Smith & Nichols, 2015:39; DeVaney, 2015:12). They inherited divorce, latchkey kids, soaring national debt, an educational

system that emphasised social skills and self-esteem over academic achievement, an anti-child society, and reality driven television shows and movies (Kupperschmidt, 2000:69). Smith and Nichols (2015:399) describe latchkey kids as those children returning from school to empty homes as parents were out at work. The increased divorce rate resulted in the phenomenon of disappearing fathers, with many youths and infants raised in poverty (Kupperschmidt, 2000:69). This cohort was the first to really experience blended families due to the high prevalence of divorces and remarriages (Sandeen, 2008:16).

They were raised in a socially diverse society: diverse races resulting from liberalised immigration laws; diverse family structures resulting from society's increased tolerance of divorce, remarriage, and alternate lifestyles; and diverse technology says Kupperschmidt (2000:69). This cohort was influenced by the Vietnam War and energy crisis (DeVaney, 2015:11). Gen X is attributed with the following characteristics: self-reliant, adaptable, cynical, distrusts authority, resourceful, entrepreneurial, and technologically savvy (DeVaney, 2015:12). The African Gen X experienced decolonisation and many experienced the first African regimes (Knoetze, 2017b:16).

4.2.4 Millennials

The millennial generation has also been identified by several other names in literature, such as Generation Y, Echo Boomers, Digital Natives, and the iGeneration (Mercadante, 2008:2). The birth reference for millennials differs slightly where some designate the birth years between 1979 and 1994 (Smola & Sutton, 2002:365), whereas others such as Counted (2016b:290) and Smith and Nichols (2015:40) use 1980 to 2000 as the birth reference. In 2018, more than a decade after Pew Research Center began studying millennials, they made the decision to designate millennials as those born between 1981 and 1996 for two reasons. One, by 1996 the oldest millennial would have been well into adulthood and two they opted for this period to remain analytically meaningful and to begin to look at the unique characteristics of the next cohort (Pew Research Center, 2018). For the purpose of this study, millennials will be designated as those born between 1981 and 1996.

Millennials are as motivated by their personal relationships and human connections as they are by the influences of their technological skills and social media (DeVaney, 2015:13). Often described as digital natives (Knoetze, 2017b:16) millennials are the first to be born in a wired world of computers and are connected 24-7 (Smola & Sutton, 2000:365). They enjoy utilising

technology and tend to develop proficiency from a younger age than previous generations (Smith & Nichols, 2015:40). Global social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. are foundered by millennials (Knoetze, 2017a:2). Further, for DeVaney (2015:11) phenomena such as globalism and events such as the September 11, 2001 attacks have had significant impact on millennials.

Millennials are described as being confident and optimistic (Smith & Nichols, 2015:40) which is most likely as a result of their upbringing by supportive and caring parents (Cramer, 2014:11). However, millennials also have lower levels of wealth and higher levels of debt due to the economic recession of 2008 (Cramer, 2014:11). They face a slow job market and mounting student loan debt as more millennials study further consequently exceeding the educational levels of previous generations (DeVaney, 2015:12). Along with other factors, lengthy periods of post school study has resulted in prolonged adolescence (Arnett, 2000:470) or delayed adulthood as it is also termed (Milkman, 2017:9) as more millennials put off responsibilities of adulthood for later in life. For DeVaney (2015:12) delayed adulthood may be due in part to millennials tackling challenging economic situations by moving back in with their parents, delaying marriage, delaying buying first homes, and starting their own businesses.

In America millennials are the most ethnically and racially diverse group (Cramer, 2014:12). Similarly, South Africa also demonstrates a multi-racial society incorporating multiple ethnicities such as black, white, Asian and coloured race groups. But the black South African population can be further subdivided into more ethnic groups. Due to its pluralistic nature, South Africa is dubbed the rainbow nation (Brundson, 2017:4) Millennials are described as being more tolerant than previous generations (Smith & Nichols, 2000:40; Reed, 2016:158) which may be attributed to growing up with such diversity as well as in postmodern culture.

Millennials are achievement focussed and are thus driven to seek out new learning opportunities to advance their career prospects (Sandeen, 2008: 18). They prefer to work in small companies where they are more hands-on and feel they can make a bigger impact. They tend to change jobs more frequently desiring job satisfaction and are thus willing to move jobs if they feel their contributions don't matter (DeVaney, 2015:13). They enjoy working in teams (Smith & Nichols, 2000:40) and are family focused and therefore demand better work/life

balance (DeVaney, 2015:13). This may be due to seeing their parents' divorce or being laid off from work for economic reasons (Smith & Nichols, 2000:40).

African millennials are often referred to as the first "free born" generation after colonialism (Knoetze, 2017b:16). In South Africa the "born frees" are those born after 1994, after the fall of apartheid (Brundson, 2017:3). However, "free born" is not a term that many African millennials easily identify with as many still struggle with the multi-generational negative effects of colonialism (Knoetze, 2017b:16; Brundson, 2017:4, Counted, 2016b:288). Whilst, millennials in the global north were born into a world of computers, the African millennial experience, especially rurally, with digital technology centres on the use of mobile phones (Knoetze, 2018a:486). Mobile phone usage in Africa is among the highest in the world (Counted & Arawole, 2016:3), with smartphones sales exceeding that of computers. In fact, mobile subscriptions on the continent exceed those of the USA or EU (Counted & Arawole, 2016:7).

Societal shifts in parenting has seen millennials being raised by doting and nurturing parents who seem obsessed with preparing their children for the future (Sandeen, 2008:18). The phenomenon of helicoptering is dominant in the millennial generation. Helicopter parenting is described as an over involved style of parenting that leans towards over controlling, overprotecting, and over perfecting (Mercadante, 2008:3).

DeVaney (2015:13) sums up the characteristics of millennials as: entitled, optimistic, civic minded, close parental involvement, values work-life balance, impatient, multi-tasking, and team-orientated. Some of these traits will now be explored as the researcher deep-dives into the millennial identity.

4.3 Millennials: a deep dive

The beliefs and behaviours of millennials are unlike their predecessors (Ng & Johnson, 2015:129). Whilst, millennials exhibit some negative attributes such as narcissism and entitlement (Ng & Johnson, 2015: 124), there are also a number of positive characteristics to be celebrated. These include optimism, a strong leaning to teamwork and multi-tasking. Research shows a significant divergence in religious views between millennials and their older

counterparts, but there are also a number of dissimilarities between millennials and previous generations in other spheres. For instance, their views of work/life balance are different from previous generations. While financial security is important for millennials, they are unwilling to become workaholics in order to advance financially. They value time spent with family over career advancement (Sandeen, 2008:17). As a result of their stance millennials are often labelled by older generations as lazy and unwilling to get the job done. Millennials are also found to exhibit lower job satisfaction but according to Ng and Johnson (2015:127) lower job satisfaction prevalent amongst millennials may actually be due to feelings of entitlement exhibited by these young adults.

The socio-historical and economic situations in Africa differ from those in the West implying new trends in the family, economic situations, and communication for the African millennial. There are also gender dynamics in Africa to be considered. In traditional African culture where there is preference of boys over girls, discrepancies in educational levels between the genders arise (Knoetze, 2018b:2). In America research treats millennials as students but in the African context millennials should also be considered as millennial parents (Knoetze, 2018a:485). African millennial families may be single-parented with mothers who are often unemployed (Knoetze, 2018b:1) due to their lack of postsecondary education. Single mothers may be forced to leave school to secure child support grants which are given to unmarried women with new born children (Knoetze, 2018b:2).

Additionally, whilst poverty is experienced by both American and African millennials, the concepts differ. In America millennials experience poverty due to excessive and burdensome student loan debt (Knoetze, 2018a:486, Cramer, 2014:11). In Africa poverty stems from socio-economic and political issues, which include the lack of proper education or educational opportunities and a lack of job opportunities (Knoetze, 2018a:486). Additionally, in traditional African culture parents may take young women out of school in preference for boys to complete schooling (Knoetze, 2018b:2).

So how do millennials see the world around them and what are their values?

4.3.1. The millennial worldview or identity

Worldview may be loosely described as a particular philosophy of life and is framed by life situations, experiences and environment (Halloran & Kashima, 2004:915). It indicates a personal and historical point of view. The concept may apply variously such as to a socio-political stance, or a particular religious orientation (Goldberg, 2009: 407). Additionally, a generation's worldview is also a considering factor when delineating generations. Worldview gives meaning to how people interact with the world and this evolves under the pressures of development and contributions of various spheres such as science, humanities, religion, etc. (Van der Merwe, 2019:2).

Identity may be summed up as "who I am and who I want to become" (Knoetze, 2017a:2) and an individual derives identity to "the extent that they see themselves living in accordance with the values and beliefs prescribed by the cultural worldview" in which the individual locates (Halloran & Kashima, 2004:915). Identity comprises individual as well as societal components and has to do with the way believers think about themselves and how they relate to the world (Brundson, 2016:2). There is a reciprocal relationship between identity and society where through individual identity a person effects society and where society exerts influence on the individual leading to ongoing identity formation (Knoetze, 2017a:2). Identify is the conduit that individuals use to understand and interpret themselves and society. Thus, collective identity forms and develops socially through influences of individuals on each other and on society and through factors such as historical experiences (Brundson, 2016:3).

Millennial views and behaviours are impacted by trends not witnessed in previous generations which include delayed marriage, having children later, uncertainties over work and money, rising education levels, globalisation, and the technological information explosion (Sandeen, 2008:18; DeVaney, 2015:12). Consequently, these trends impact the spirituality of millennials and their views and beliefs contrast traditionally held beliefs and views of older generations.

The African millennial is distinguished from those from the West because of their socio-historical and political context (Knoetze, 2018a:485). To further enhance an understanding of the African millennial's worldview and to distinguish that from their global counterparts, there should be a consideration of the commonalities such as African culture, traditions, and value systems, as well as an understanding of African consciousness (Knoetze, 2018a:484). Also, in Africa Christianity is often tied to colonialism and thus the identity of the African millennial is strongly

influenced by Africa's colonial history, but like the rest of the globe their worldview is also informed by how they experience globalisation and the impact of the internet in a postmodern society.

Identity formation amongst millennials naturally undergoes processes of change and development congruent with the transitioning life-stage that they are in. Knoetze (2017a:2) states that "it is only through participation in the social world that individuals create a view of themselves and the world which forms their identity". However, identity is not fixed nor permanent. It is always developing or in development (Knoetze, 2017a:1). It may even be that a person has different identities in different contexts. Knoetze (2018a:486) identifies numerous influencing factors that contribute to the constant flux of the millennial identity. One of these being technology. Since the younger generation is always plugged in there is a continual flow of information through the internet that forces millennials to reinterpret and reintegrate messages. Bearing in mind that in cyber space there are no fixed truths and value systems for society so millennials are constantly having to re-evaluate the information they receive and balance it with personal experience, societal norms and peer evaluation.

The identity of millennials is largely influenced by the pluralistic society which affects the daily millennial experience. In Africa these effects are especially profound amongst the urban youth. Postmodernism celebrates particularity and otherness in all dimensions of life, from race and ethnicity to gender, religion and culture (Knoetze, 2018a:486). But African society espouses traditional views and culture. Whilst Western culture dictates a particular modern view, many African millennials are still expected to uphold traditional customs through childbirth, sickness, initiation, marriage and death (Knoetze, 2018a:486). For contextual reasons many millennial parents leave their children to be raised by traditional parents living in rural areas (Knoetze, 2017a:5). There is a pluralistic worldview at play in the African context which does not seem at odds with the traditional African worldview that seamlessly integrates the spiritual and material worlds (Knoetze, 2018b:3).

Millennials spend large proportions of their time in cyberspace thus their identity becomes more representative of their social influences rather than individual property and their actions and behaviours should be understood from a social understanding (Knoetze, 2017a:2). Millennials manage their social identity through the relationships they maintain on social media but they

also want to be seen as unique and different emphasising their individuality and being real (Milkman, 2017:7).

4.4 Religiosity of millennials

There is a shifting trend of spirituality amongst young adults unlike previous generations (Bergler, 2017: 64) which causes young adults to abandon the church (Mitchell *et al.*, 2016:36). In North America the millennial group has the lowest number of church attendees when compared to previous generations (Devlin, 2018:42). There are certain beliefs and behaviours espoused by millennials that conflict with those of previous generations.

General misunderstanding and mistrust between millennials and older generations within the church is often derived from the contrasting views and behaviours espoused by these groups. But it is important for the church to understand millennials to produce common ground and mutually edifying spiritual experiences especially in light of their dwindling church going numbers. Another religious-disaffiliated group amongst millennials are the nones which represent the fastest growing religious group in America (Reed, 2016:154). Nones are understood as those who do not identity with any religion and worryingly this trend of religious-disaffiliation is growing amongst young adults under the age of 30 (Pew Research Center, 2012). On the one hand, nones are thought to be non-spiritual by older generations, but this view is in contrast to the millennial notion of being less religious but more spiritual (Reed, 2016:156). In fact, nones claim to be spiritual but are not members of any particular faith or church (King, 2016:6). While on the surface there appears to be a chasm in religious views and practices between millennials and older generations, Pew Research Center (2010a) demonstrates that these groups have in fact shared beliefs and practices about the existence of God, heaven, hell, and miracles.

Millennials are sceptical about the significance of religious institutions (Moodley, 2017:1518) and religiosity of millennials often declines after high school as a result of various factors such as the church's irrelevance, hypocrisy, and the moral failures of its leaders (Devlin, 2108:42). However, Hardie, Pearce and Denton (2013:3), demonstrate that declining church attendance amongst adolescents may also be attributed to development changes in cognition that may lead to questioning their religious beliefs and either straying from or reaffirming their religious

commitments. Research shows positive correlation between religious attendance and psychosocial, educational, and behavioural outcomes (Hardie *et al.*, 2013:2) and a decrease in feelings of lostness (Bird, 2016:311). Religion is also demonstrated to positively moderate sexual behaviour of emerging adults (Moodley, 2017:1515). Conversely, abstaining from religious attendance is often linked to negative outcomes such as substance abuse, delinquency, and risky sexual activity amongst adolescents (Hardie *et al.*, 2013:2). The increase in risk taking behaviour engaged by young adults often has detrimental consequences on society. Risky behaviour could include speeding and driving under the influence or having unprotected sex which seems common among emerging adults (Arnett, 2000:475).

4.4.1 Religiosity and secularisation

While millennials abstain from church activities because they feel ignored and excluded (Mitchell, 2016:36), or isolated even within the church (DeVries, 2004:350) other factors are also competing for the attention of millennials. For instance, declining church attendance may be due to secularisation (Brewitt-Taylor, 2020:139). Secularisation refers to the process of religious change wherein the sacred gives way to the secular or irreligious (Schoeman, 2016:6). Thus, religion exerts less influence on the government and society (Brewitt-Taylor, 2020:132). While in South Africa, Christianity is experiencing declining numbers, this phenomenon is more prevalent amongst white and coloured population groups according to the general household survey conducted in 2013 (Stats Sa, 2018). Conversely, increasing numbers are seen in black and Asian ethnic groups (Schoeman, 2017:2) especially within the independent and Pentecostal churches.

Secularisation has been attributed to laws which prohibited or restricted a number of activities such retail, shopping or trading, from taking place on a Sunday. These were called Sunday observance laws in South Africa (Ismail, 2001:563) or blue laws in America (Gerber, Gruber & Hungerman, 2008:7). The introduction of these laws was meant to foster Sunday as a day of observance for Christian worship and rest. However, over time these laws were omitted or repealed because they were found to be unconstitutional (Cohen-Zada & Sander, 2011:894). This allowed for commercial trade to continue daily. Research demonstrates congruency of the repeal of these laws with a decrease in church attendance (Gerber *et al.*, 2008:11; Cohen-Zada & Sander, 2011:894). However, the repealing of these laws were not entirely responsible for declining churchgoer numbers. Other contributing factors include: the cost of going to church,

engaging in other leisure activities not feasible during the working week, and having to work (Gruber & Hungerman, 2006:25).

The church is in competition with people's time. Families have become involved in so many different activities that leave no time for church (Cohen-Zada & Sander, 2011:895). In the case of millennials, emerging adult years are so fraught with disruptions and distractions from work, tertiary education, and finding their way as adults that they may have little time for church attendance.

However, secularisation cannot be solely blamed for the decrease in church attendance. Devlin (2018:43) states that even with the growing millennial absenteeism, the church has not seemed to implement meaningful changes. Whilst, no single factor is responsible for the deterioration of the American family, DeVries (2004:26) asserts that the church has been ineffective in producing youth that mature into Christian adulthood. Maturing Christians stay in church. The church has not adequately prepared youth for adulthood in the ever-increasing demands of the complex society. A predominant factor responsible for the crisis in youth ministry is that "culture and churches have systematically isolated young people from the very relationships that are most likely to lead them to maturity". Cultural shifts have increasingly separated youth from adults, especially adults in their own family (DeVries, 2004:38), which include: fathers' vocational choices that have removed them from the home for lengthy periods of time; increase in the number of working mothers; increase in divorces; rapid increase in single-parent families; steady decline of the extended family; evolution of the physical environment of the home through the introduction of family rooms, play rooms, and master bedrooms; replacement of adults by the peer group; and isolation of schools from the rest of the world. In order for millennials to mature spiritually they need to be around people who exhibit spiritual maturity themselves (DeVries, 2004:37). Further, research demonstrates a strong correlation between healthy families and positive social behaviour in youth (DeVries, 2004:62).

Church leaders and millennials alike want the church to re-evaluate and retool their ministries to make them more attractive to the millennial demographic group (Devlin, 2018:43). In response, the church has focussed on restyling their brands to appeal to the younger generation, employing contemporary styles of worship, edgier programming and impressive technology. But these methods may be ineffective, because they fail to draw millennials back to God in a lasting

and meaningful way (Devlin, 2018:43). On the other hand, Jones and Cox's research (2011:7) demonstrated that millennials felt excluded by the current church programmes and structures which they felt often did not focus on spiritual development or transformation.

Smith (cited by Devlin, 2018:44) goes on to assert that the dominant religion among American teenagers is "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" (MTD) which is the belief that there is a distant god who wants everyone to practise religious tolerance and acceptance. MTD changes and distorts traditional religious beliefs in order to create its own distinctive theological and religious viewpoint (Devlin, 2018:44). MTD has found full expression in the current millennial demographic that gutted and modified traditional faiths into one of their own making and image. This current generation, it would appear, wants to force the church to accommodate and pander to their own perceived needs and desires. However, MTD is not just a millennial problem, it affects society as well (Smith as cited by Devlin, 2018:44). Millennials merely mimic what they have witnessed in adults. Thus, older generations can also be blamed for this religious-disaffiliation since they crafted the church into what is now, a more casual and entertaining space forsaking sound doctrine for a more feel-good derivative (Devlin, 2018:44).

Spiritually for millennials may have a different meaning from previous generations which allows for the picking-and-choosing from a range of choices to construct a spirituality that best suits the individual (Smith & Snell, 2009:137). This pluralistic spirituality pervasive in the postmodern climate that incorporates a variety of beliefs from a variety of religions is contrary to Scripture (cf. Deut 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before me"). Thus is the notion that allows for religious choice of what parts they like and accept and rejection of those that are troublesome or outdated. Devlin (2018:44) believes that church should continue with the traditions that are informed by the apostolic doctrine. He uses the work of C.S. Lewis to back his case. A lesser-known essay by C.S. Lewis, "On the transmission of Christianity" demonstrates that young people who are told about the Gospel are often open to receiving this good news. In other words, it may not be necessary for the church to reinvent itself into what millennials desire, rather it simply needs to present the clear message of the Gospel (Devlin, 2018:45). In fact, millennials still remain open spiritually and believe in some form of God (Smith & Snell, 2009:295); they will listen if people talk to them about God. Whilst the church finds itself in competition for people's attention and time, millennials' time will only be devoted to the church if they feel that it contributes meaning and purpose to their lives. Although millennials are abandoning the church, they are not necessarily abandoning their faith says King (2016:6). They may reject institutional religion, but they are open to spirituality (Smith & Snell, 2009:296).

Unlike the rest of the Western world, many millennials in Africa are still very involved in the church, especially in rural areas (Knoetze, 2018a:487). Nevertheless, for the African millennial Christianity is often associated with colonialism or apartheid (Knoetze, 2018b:4). They view the Bible as being unjust and corrupt (Knoetze, 2018b:4) and thus leave mainstream missionary churches to join independent and mostly Pentecostal churches (Schoeman, 2017:2) and so it is important to consider Africa Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) in the role of transformation amongst the African millennials (Knoetze, 2018a:484). Most (South) African millennials view mainline missionary churches, especially the Afrikaans churches, negatively as they link them directly to apartheid and colonialism (Knoetze, 2018a:491). Conversely, Western churches are often sceptical of AICs (Daughrity, 2014:354). The need for clearly determined values in regards to development and transformation is thus paramount.

Development and transformation are closely associated with missional theology (Knoetze, 2018a:491). Whilst the concerns of the material welfare and temporal concerns of church members are important, the role of the church in the lives of its members focuses also on common faith and development. Unfortunately, modern secularism distanced religion from socio-economic and political spheres in developed countries (2018a:492). This phenomenon is less impactful in African societies which see religious influences in both socio-economic and political spheres.

African independent churches (AICs) accommodate a wide spectrum of religious beliefs and practices. Traditional African religion centres on relationships between the natural (human) world and the spiritual world (Knoetze, 2018a:492). Some socio-economic issues such as poverty are seen by some Africans as witchcraft (spiritual world) which results in fear. So, Knoetze (2018a:492) argues that development in Africa will continue to fail where there is a lack of understanding of the spiritual beliefs and fears of Africans or fails to consider the elements of the African worldview, such as the role of ancestors, magic, and impurity. Many AICs are poor church houses, but it is important to involve them in development since “they attend to the needs of Africa in a credible way” (2018a:493). This is strongly witnessed in the healing ministry of AICs. For Africans, power and the source of power, are important, and the church is proclaiming a new power, the Trinitarian God. Thus, the church’s role in transformation needs to shift focus from project-based ministries to policy making and changing of worldviews (2018a:495).

4.5 Postmodernism

The millennial generation locates in a postmodern society which has had a profound influence on the way society believes and behaves. In fact, postmodern philosophy has permeated the thinking of millennials to such an extent that it has impacted on how millennials think about morality, truth, values, and cultural expectations compared to previous generations (Hall & Delport, 2013:1). Postmodernism may be described as a way of thinking which allows for different interpretations of situations. The millennial spiritual experience differs from those of former generations and this is in part due to the postmodern view that dominates the millennial thinking contrasting it with previous generations' modernist ideals (Mercadante, 2008:10). But, as Van der Merwe (2019:3) articulates, Christianity as a faith has always been influenced by the prevailing philosophy of the era, whether the premodern, modern, postmodern, or post-postmodernist views. The church is dynamic and adapts with changes in society, and society in turn adapts reciprocally with these changes (Beyers, 2014:1).

Some postmodern views related to truth, pluralism, and authority will be considered as well as their impact on how millennials view the world.

Postmodernism is best understood against the backdrop of modernism and the Enlightenment (Williams & Sewpaul, 2004:555). Modernism which emphasised rationality and certainty has been the prevailing view held by society until recently (Erickson, 2013:24/5; Smith & Snell, 2009:101). Modernism was birthed from the Enlightenment (Mercadante, 2008:10) which espoused ideals of justification, objectivity, proof and unity of science and along with the use of human intellect and rationale was believed to help man discover objective truth and thereby make the world a better place (Williams & Sewpaul, 2004:555). Modernism provided moral absolutes offering little choice in what to think or believe, whereas postmodernism offered a myriad of choices with little certainty (Spearritt, 1992:67). Whilst the modernist identity of God is fixed, the postmodern view of God is flexible (Van der Merwe, 2019:3). Older generations held to church doctrine as basis and praxis for their faith in line with the modernist philosophy but millennial spirituality reflects a postmodernist view. Many millennials say they believe in God, but their concept of God differs from that of previous generations (Sandfort & Haworth, 2002:8). They have a pluralistic view seeing the God of the Bible as no different from the gods worshipped by other world religions (Sandfort & Haworth, 2002:9).

4.5.1 Postmodernism versus Modernism

Modernism emerged in the West in the late 20th century and advocated reason and progress but the effects of World War II collapsed any utopian notion of being able to create a peaceful and harmonious society based on rational thought and intellect (Beyers, 2014:2). The failure of modernism paved the way for postmodernism. The rising doubt in humanity's judgement, ability and objective truth especially in the face of the human rights atrocities of the world wars, the threat of nuclear destruction, and the Jewish holocaust precipitated a rejection of the idealistic modernist notions (Mercadante, 2008:10) that relied on the scientific method in order to define and determine truth (Erickson, 2013:25).

Since science was unable to explain certain things, the burgeoning postmodernist view argued that science is not adequate for defining truth and since objective truth cannot be known, truth is ultimately to be determined by the individual. Postmodernism does not view the arrival at the truth through a single entity, but that people can come to truth through multiple avenues (Van der Merwe, 2019:4). The postmodernist views truth as relative and subject to peoples' feelings, relationships, intuition, and experiences as the means of arriving at the truth (Hall & Delport, 2013:4). Personal experience becomes the basis for faith. Personal choice as well as choosing certain aspects of religion that suit a person is emphasised and thus it is common to see millennials blend various religious beliefs and philosophies into a personalised spiritual system (Smith & Snell, 2009:137). Nevertheless, the postmodern philosophy is problematic for the church since religion requires a "hermeneutic of trust" which was prevalent during the Enlightenment that espoused certainty, trust and optimism (Van der Merwe, 2019:4). The postmodern primacy on subjectivity and feelings brings the chain of thought to existentialism (Erickson, 2013:833).

4.5.2 Existentialism

Existentialism focuses on the individual who uses their inherent creativity to find personal truth and to have meaning (Bolea, 2014: 64). The individual through their own volition determines their own development. Right and wrong ultimately becomes a matter of personal opinion and as such each individual has their own version of the truth. Whilst existentialism does not deny the validity of sciences such as physics, psychology or biology, it claims that human beings cannot be fully understood in terms of these (Crowell, 2017). Truth in postmodernism is subject to the individual and thus judging another person's perception of truth is unacceptable. As a

result, millennials will reject what they believe to be judgemental and arrogant stances held by the church on social issues such as homosexuality amongst others (Jones & Cox, 2011: 4).

4.5.3 Pluralism

Another facet of postmodernism is pluralism (Forghani, Keshtiaray & Yousefy, 2015:100). Pluralism teaches that all religions have the same purpose but are mere alternatives to the same end (Erickson, 2013:814; Knoetze, 2018b:3). Thus, religion is a personal choice and no one's views should be imposed on another. Millennials believe that people have the right to choose what they want to do and believe without censorship (Reed, 2016:159). They regard tolerance very highly. But the notion of tolerance in the postmodern era is different to what it meant previously. Whereas tolerance formerly referred to respecting the right of another's held viewpoint different from one's own, tolerance for the millennial means that one person does not have the right to disagree with, or call into question another's viewpoint, because the meaning of truth is defined by each individual (Reed, 2016:160). Avoidance of judgement and acceptance are of primary importance for millennials.

4.5.4 Deconstructionism

Another facet of postmodernism is deconstructionism (Wright, 2006:45). Deconstructionism places the locus of meaning of the text with the reader as opposed to the text itself (Erickson, 2013:27). Wright (2006:45) explains that with deconstructionism multiple perspectives and interpretations are employed to arrive at the meaning of the text. It rejects the possibility that the text itself contains truth and meaning. Scripture may be read and interpreted as the reader wishes, abandoning the rules of proper exegesis. Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur proposed that the meaning of the text lay with the interpreter and not within the text itself and since it is impossible to understand what a deceased author actually meant, it is permissible for the reader to assign any meaning to their writings (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:30/31). Deconstructionism is problematic for Scriptural interpretation as the foundational truths of the Christian faith are built on the Word of God. Thus, meaning cannot lie with the interpreter but is derived from Scripture through sound exegesis which follows authorial intention (Kaiser & Silva, 2007:45).

4.5.5 Rejection of standards and traditional values

Another facet of postmodernism is the rejection of standards and traditional values (Hall & Delport, 2013:3). Postmodernism is underscored by a rejection of the idealistic modernist notions (Mercadante, 2008:10) of reason, truth, justice, morality and reality (Hall & Delport, 2013:2). Thus, there is concomitant rejection of "rigid religious norms concerning sex and reproduction and a diminished need for absolute rules" (Inglehart as quoted by Hall & Delport, 2013:3). Arnett's research (2000:475) demonstrates an increase in risky behaviours amongst emerging adults such as speeding or having unprotected sex. The millennial chooses their own rules of behaviour that are based on their own opinions and judgements over societal norms and standards (Hall & Delport, 2013:4). They are individualistic in their orientation favouring their own welfare over that of others (Grant, 2017:4) and of traditional affiliations of marriage, family, church, and nation (Hall & Delport, 2013:4). Since, postmodernist philosophy claims truth is whatever a person deems it to be, rather than what an institution declares it to be has led to the questioning of traditional authority structures. The suspicion towards authority structures has not left the church unscathed (Reed, 2016:156). Kinnaman and Hawkins (cited by Mitchell *et al.*, 2016:28) demonstrate that the millennial scepticism of authority includes scepticism of the authority of Scripture; the influence of Christianity on culture; and the authority of Christian leaders. The postmodern individual orientates toward feelings and emotions as valid expressions of knowledge rather than relying on science and the known world for meaning. Postmodern culture diminishes the meaning and values of traditional religion which is reflected in the millennial attitude towards institutional religion and church attendance and sees millennials turn towards popular culture for religious guidance (Hall & Delport, 2013:3).

4.5.6 On the flip side: a positive view of postmodernism

However, not all facets of postmodernism are negative. The postmodern emphasis on experiences (Edwards, 1994:1) is not at odds with the role of the church in transformation wherein transformation is deemed to come through experience with the living God and not through head knowledge alone (Folmsbee, 2007:39). Millennials would rather experience something than just hear or read about it. In other words, millennials are all for doing the Gospel, and not just hearing about it. It appears that the Scripture in James 1:22 admonishing believers to "be doers of the word, and not hearers only" aptly applies to the religious experiences of millennials. Since millennials are experiential, which is also a predominant feature in African independent religion, the church needs to display the Gospel in practical

demonstrations i.e. being the hand that feeds the poor and being the voice for those needing justice.

4.6 Emerging adulthood

One cannot discuss millennials without discussing the millennial subset termed emerging adulthood which concerns the group aged between 18 and 25 years (Arnett, 2007:24). It is important to highlight the characteristics of this development stage since this group constitutes the younger portion of the millennial cohort. As such characteristics between emerging adults and older millennials may differ due to the life-stage in which they locate. For instance, whilst older millennials are involved in adult practices such as marriage and having children, younger millennials identified as emerging adults, may only be transitioning into some adult roles such as attaining their first job.

Emerging adulthood was described by Arnett as a distinct life-stage marked by change and exploration (Arnett, 2000:469). This distinct life-stage was defined due to significant social changes over the last few decades which have impacted this group unlike other prior groups (Smith & Snell, 2009:4). Emerging adulthood is characterised as a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett, 2007:25) and it is during this life-stage that a large portion of a millennial's social identity develops (Arnett, 2000:473). This transitioning phase between adolescence to young adulthood sees young people develop attitudes and behaviours that they will carry into adulthood (Hardie *et al.*, 2013:6). The focus of an individual in this life-stage tends to be on self-development and developing independence (Moodley, 2017:1516). Additionally, it is an impressionable age where individuals develop the characteristics necessary for becoming autonomous (Wood, Crapnell, Lau, Bennett, Lotstein, Ferris & Kuo, 2018:124). In some respects, emerging adulthood is seen as an extension of adolescence wherein adult roles are reduced or delayed (Lo-Oh, 2016:25).

Features of emerging adulthood include intense identity exploration, instability, a focus on self, feeling in limbo or in transition or in between, and a sense of possibilities, opportunities, and unparalleled hope (Smith & Snell, 2009:6; Mitchell *et al.*, 2016:34). Whilst not seen as children anymore, they are not adults either according to Arnett (2000:476/477). Rather, emerging adulthood is a life phase characterised by a transition from teenage years into adulthood. The

development of the emerging adult phase is as a result of a number of macro social changes precipitated over the last several decades according to Smith and Snell (2009:5) and four are particularly important:

1. Dramatic growth of higher education. More high school graduates attend college and university. Less school leavers enter the workplace as more opt to extend their formal schooling into their twenties.
2. Delayed marriage. Today's youth delay marriage by almost a decade in comparison to a few decades ago.
3. Changes in the American and global economy undermine stable, long-term careers and replace them with careers that offer lower security, more frequent job changes, and an ongoing need for new training and education. Youth entering the job market require a variety of skills, maximal flexibility, and readiness to retool as needed. This has the effect of lengthening formal and informal education thus delaying marriage and postponing other commitments.
4. Parents of today's youth are more willing to offer financial and other support in the hope of helping their children succeed. The freedom afforded in turn encourages the young person to take their time settling down into adulthood with associated responsibilities and enjoy their lives. (Smith & Snell, 2009:5; Fingerman, 2017:2)

Emerging adulthood is marked by significant change and transition for most young adults resulting from massive changes in culture, reproduction and life history (Wood *et al.*, 2018:126). This in turn results in a crisis of identity in which these young people are faced with evaluating their abilities, interests, and childhood influences in order to explore possible futures and eventually make enduring choices in love and work (Arnett, 2007:24). Arnett (2000:474) identifies three key areas to demonstrate the distinctiveness of emerging adulthood: demographics, subjective perceptions, and identity explorations.

4.6.1 Emerging adulthood is distinct demographically

Emerging adulthood is a period of diversity and unpredictability with much exploration and experimentation (Arnett, 2000:471). One of the most pervasive and consistent themes in the emerging adult's life is the frequent and varied major life transitions (Smith & Snell, 2009:34) of which residential status is one (Arnett, 2000:471). This period is marked as a time where emerging adults move out of their parents' home to make permanent or temporary homes of

their own whether at university residences or flats with other students. Some return home after university only to move out again at a later stage (Arnett, 2000:471).

There is also significant change and diversity in emerging adults in terms of school attendance (Arnett, 2000:471; Raiu, 2019:34). More high school leavers enter higher education than previous generations, and even more extend their schooling career by pursuing postgraduate studies (Milkman, 2017: 9). Then again, school attendance may be non-linear for some who may combine schooling with work or leave university altogether because of financial circumstances and then return at a later stage (Arnett, 2000:471). Others may change their educational stream a few times. In terms of the workplace, many emerging adults undergo multiple job changes (Arnett, 2000:471).

Another area of significant change and diversity for emerging adults involves relationships. They start to form serious love relationships at this stage (Trible, 2015:12). Also, since many go away to university or move because of new jobs, emerging adults form new friendships and bonds and may even loose childhood friendships because of various factors (Smith & Snell, 2009:34). Unlike older millennials who may have settled into more stable relationships due to their life-stage that is more predictable, relationships for emerging adults are in flux until they have more stability.

4.6.2 Emerging adulthood is distinct subjectively

Emerging adults do not see themselves as adolescents, but they do not see themselves entirely as adults either (Arnett, 2000:471). In some respects, they may feel like adults whilst in others they do not. Their feelings of being in between reflect the subjective sense of that life-stage (Trible, 2015:15). Whilst age can be a rough indicator of the subjective transition to adulthood other factors also come into play and the timing of transitions to adulthood varies by socio-economic position (Lo-Oh, 2016:6). The emerging adult may only feel like they have entered into adulthood once certain milestones are reached. According to Arnett (2000:472) and Lo-Oh (2016:33), these milestones may include a stable residence, finished school, settled into a career, and married or committed to a long-term relationship. But the transition to adulthood is not only through attaining demographic transitions but individualistic qualities of character such as responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially

independent (Wood *et al.*, 2018:127). Smith and Snell (2009:35) propose that all emergent adults transition from a role of dependence to independence during this tumultuous period of learning to be self-sufficient and no longer reliant on parents or others.

4.6.3 Emerging adulthood is distinct for identity explorations

This period provides the most opportunity for identity exploration especially in love, work and worldviews (Raiu, 2019:2). The emerging adult forms identify by experimenting with various possibilities before gradually making permanent decisions (Arnett, 2000:473). In terms of love, relationships for the emergent adult offer the first experiences of love and sexual experimentation (Arnett, 2000:473; Trible, 2015:19). Relationships become more intimate and serious than the preceding adolescent years (Raiu, 2019:7) but may not be as serious or bearing the same commitment as older millennials.

Regarding work, emerging adults feel jobs are preparation for adult work roles (Arnett, 2000:474). They explore identity issues such as the type of work that they may be good in and the types of work that they would find satisfying (Trible, 2015:6). The older millennial in contrast may already be settled in a career that they find satisfying and worthwhile.

In terms of their worldview, emerging adults use this period to re-examine the views and beliefs that they grew up with (Moodley, 2017:1518). Some of these may be re-affirmed or others may be formed to their own set of views and beliefs (Arnett, 2000:474; Trible, 2015:61).

In Sub-Saharan Africa emergent adults are dealing with effects of HIV and AIDS. Despite various government initiatives to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS emergent adults in South Africa and in a number of sub-Saharan countries show an increase of new infections amongst emerging adults aged between 15-24 years (Moodley, 2017:1516).

4.6.4 Overview of other dominant themes affecting emerging adults

4.6.4.1 Helicopter parenting

Millennials are described as the wanted generation i.e. these are children whose births were planned (Mercadante, 2008:3). They were born at a time when America was positive about children and thus they enjoyed unprecedented focus, protection, and positive opportunities (Mercadante, 2008:3). But the style of parenting experienced by some millennials is overly involved, overcontrolling and over protecting leading to the phenomenon called helicopter parenting (Fingerman, 2017:5). Other terms to describe this style of parenting include over solicitous or intrusive (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012:1187). Helicoptering involves intense parental support whether financially, emotionally or academically (Padilla-walker, Son & Nelson, 2019:2). Helicoptering is usually motivated by love and concern for their children and may be attributed to various factors such as the parental fear that the child will fail to succeed, experience hurt and disappointment (Padilla-Walker *et al.*, 2019:2). It may result from parental separation anxiety (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012:1178) where the parent has difficulty in letting go. Parents may also feel pressure and guilt by comparing the way they bring up their children in comparison to others (Vinson, 2013:425) or parents may feel pressure to assist their children to get into the best colleges (Vinson, 2013:432). Technology is seen as another factor that has encouraged helicoptering (Fingerman, 2017:5) as parents are able to stay connected with the children constantly via cell phone. Helicoptering is also a result of parents' feelings that their children are ill-prepared psychologically (Givertz & Segrin, 2014:1113) and possibly irresponsible because of the prolonged period of emerging adulthood.

Children who have been helicoptered are found to have higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of satisfaction (Reed, Duncan, Lucier-Greer, Fixelle & Ferraro, 2016:3139). Helicoptering is associated with low academic achievement (Padilla-Walker *et al.*, 2019:9), the rise of narcissism (Winner & Nicholson, 2018:3655) and a sense of entitlement among millennials (Givertz & Segrin, 2014:1115). Decision-making skills and independence are hampered by the behaviour of helicopter parents (Reed *et al.*, 2016:3142). Cui, Darling, Coccia, Fincham and May (2019:862) demonstrate correlation between helicoptered children and use of prescription medication to treat anxiety and depression. However, Earle and LaBrie (2016:2) demonstrate that helicopter parenting is not all bad. Parent-based interventions show potential to combat student drinking and decrease sexual risk taking. Further, Fingerman (2017:3) shows that some young adults whose parents have been intensely involved in appropriate ways in their lives experienced higher life satisfaction and better goal achievement than those who have had little or no parental involvement. This is especially true of emergent adults who live at home longer due to financial concerns and studies. Practical support from involved parents during the

transition years from high school to adulthood is often found to be beneficial (Fingerman, 2017: 3).

4.7 Technology

A very distinctive characteristic of the millennial generation is their use of technology (Counted & Arawole, 2016:2). Millennials across the globe have grown up in the world of the cell phone and feel that it is vital in their lives. Technology provides the means to make connections with others and stay up to date with world news (Milkman, 2017:8). The African millennial forms part of the over 300 million Africans who make regular use of the internet which has enormous potential to revolutionise and transform the lives of Africans (Counted & Arawole, 2016:7). Some of the methods of communication millennials use include texting, Facebook, Snapchat, and email and most young adults aged 18-29 years old have a social networking presence. Amongst the emerging adult group (18-25-year-olds) 40% report using mobile technology to go online “almost constantly” (Short, Mays, Cool, Delay & Lannom, 2020:1). As a result of their technology immersion millennials are dubbed as the connected generation (Pew Research Center, 2010b).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) forms a large part of the modern daily experience and ICT includes various technologies such as mobile devices (cell phones and tablets), laptop computers and desktop computers (Short *et al.*, 2020:1). Approximately a third of a millennial’s life is spent in front of a computer screen and millennials have unparalleled access to information never experienced by former generations which in turn has had substantial impact on their behaviours and worldview (Tully, 2003:444). The unprecedented advancement of technology and availability of knowledge are drivers for the rapid pace of social change being experienced (Tully, 2003:445).

Millennial adoption of technological advancement is not without concern. Research demonstrates negative musculoskeletal, neural, cognitive and behavioural effects with (over) use of technology. Young developing brains are particularly susceptible to changes in the environment and overuse of technology is linked to poorer outcomes in adolescents including physical, behavioural, attentional and psychological issues (Gottschalk, 2019:11). Young brains are vulnerable due to their plasticity which suggests that it changes based on experiences

(Gottschalk, 2019:11). Certain parts of the brains are even more plastic than others. Childhood and adolescence are periods of rapid development and maturation when millions of neural pathways are being created. There are also sensitive periods within the brain development cycle that can be even more influenced by environmental factors which may impact future functioning (Gottschalk, 2019:12). Additionally, exposure to screens in the developing child is linked to attention and cognitive problems in adolescence (Gottschalk, 2019:13).

Other researchers blame the internet for creating a virtual almost hybrid existence. In some cases, there is a lack of distinction between subject (the individual) and object (technology) where technology becomes an extension of the individual's existence (Tully, 2003:445). However, virtual social interactions don't always reflect the actual lived experience and young people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of this artificial world.

Technology has been attributed with negative physical and neurological effects. There are associated musculoskeletal symptoms affecting about half of the population of laptop computer users (May *et al.*, 2020:2) which has a knock-on effect on occupational performance in other areas where pain during other work and leisure activities limits the person's abilities and enjoyment. The use of handheld devices such as cell phones and tablets also contributes to postural concerns as users are not mindful of proper ergonomic practices which can lead to neck, lower back and arm pain (May *et al.*, 2020:4). The colloquially termed "texting thumb" results in pain associated with tenosynovitis due to overuse of the right thumb for typing (May *et al.*, 2020:8). Negative neurological effects stem from gaming which is associated with affecting brain regions responsible for reward, impulse and sensorimotor coordination (Gottschalk, 2019:17; Huddleston, 2015:47).

Use of technology is associated with a rise in addictions (Bavelier, Green & Dye, 2010:6). Examples include addiction to pornography which is more easily accessed through the net (Huddleston, 2015:4), mobile phone and social media addictions are others (Huddleston, 2015:5/6). Constant exposure to screens and content on the internet is closely related to a decrease in focus. Younger developing brains are altered physically as a result of the constant exposure to digital media (Bavelier *et al.*, 2010:2). Technology use is also associated with transient changes in mood and long-term changes in behaviour/brain function (Bavelier *et al.*, 2010:3). A decrease in the cognitive functions of young people is directly as a result of digital

technology with a subsequent rise in displays of greater impatience and dependency (Ng & Johnson, 2015:124).

Technology has the ability to affect the neuro-biological development of the brain that evolves through face-to-face relationships (Tobey, 2017:61; 63). For example, research demonstrates the (over)use of technology has affected the ability of millennials to empathise. Empathy develops in face-to-face interactions but the use of screens has disrupted this important biological process (Moscrip, 2019:10). Additionally, there is a rise in the inability to distinguish truth and reliability on internet sources. Images and sounds can be stored and manipulated at will (Tully, 2003:444). Poorly educated youth may not be able to tell the difference between what is real and what is not especially in an era prevalent with fake news.

Entertainment and media are important aspects in the lives of millennials. A concern about watching television and certain online content is the passive mode it enforces on the user (Bavelier *et al.*, 2010:4). Nevertheless, content is important. Certain content such as educational media that engages young children and elicits participation is linked to positive outcomes such as an improvement in basic attentional, motor, and visual skills (2010:4). On the other hand, exposure to less engaging content is linked with a reduction in language skills (2010:5). However, exposure to media whether on television or other devices is not always educational in nature.

Content in entertainment media is not driven by the goal of improving development, rather the key driver is what sells (Bavelier *et al.*, 2010:5) and DeVries (2004:50) argues that the way millennials process information is radically different from former generations. All of their lives millennials are bombarded with multi-media experiences which shape the way they think, learn, and relate. The vast array of media platforms available allows the user to multi-task, engage, and consume information in ways that are demonstrated to rewire the brain producing in some instances violent, addicted, and distracted behaviours (Bavelier *et al.*, 2010:50).

Media plays a role in the formation of the values of the youth (DeVries, 2004:50). Media have transformed the way people think, having moved from a word-centred culture to an image-centred culture. The constant bombardment of images has limited the ability of youth to make

moral decisions or even understand abstract moral concepts. An image-centred culture has resulted in young adults who are more impression- and emotion-based than rational in their thinking (DeVries, 2004:51).

Although there are valid concerns surrounding technology, the church should use technology as an opportunity to spread the Gospel and reach millennials (Jones & Cox, 2011:14). Millennials have been found to prefer to use technology in various spheres of their lives. Although it can never replace personal interaction and relationships, technology can be used as a powerful ministry tool since millennials place such great value on it (Knoetze, 2018a:494).

Technology can be an avenue for reaching millennials who do not attend church. These can be in the form on online campuses, live streaming of worship services, etc. This is especially true in this current period dominated by the Corona virus pandemic which sees people confined to their homes in a time of social distancing. Already, churches have begun implementing live streaming of Sunday worship services through standard channels of the web and YouTube as well as live television events but low data usage platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are also used in conjunction.

Smaller weekly Bible study groups can also be online but should allow for group participation. Thus, platforms that use video conferencing for webinars as well as low data usage platforms such as WhatsApp video calling or Skype may be preferable. However, in Africa live sessions may be problematic due to high data costs and a lack of internet diffusion (Counted and Arawole, 2016:2). Internet diffusion in Africa remains hampered by factors such as poverty, low computer penetration, illiteracy, lack of trained personnel, disinterest, corruption, identity theft, and a failure to understand the benefits of internet access (Counted & Arawole, 2016:3). Whilst internet connection is of value in improving lives, there are certain restrictions and limited access to varied online platforms and services which continue to pose economic and social restrictions for Africans in certain regions (Counted & Arawole, 2016:3).

A demand for affordable and widespread internet access and usage is an important driver for the African millennial (Counted & Arawole, 2016:3). The church may help by recording sessions and posting them on WhatsApp groups. Recorded sessions may also be available on platforms

such as YouTube and Instagram for later viewing to fit into the busy schedule of the millennial. The church should also join with the disgruntled voices of people demanding that data costs should fall.

4.8 The role of the house church in the lives of millennials

Jones and Cox's 2011 research demonstrates the traits that millennials find attractive in a church:

1. They had a sense of community and belonging.
2. They created opportunities for millennials to serve and become part of something bigger than themselves.
3. They provided spiritually vibrant worship environment through the use of multi-media and different types of musical instruments and songs, which helped millennials feel and connect with God.
4. They demonstrated authentic, transparent, and conversational communication. Pastors were conversational rather than preachy in their communication style and exhibited vulnerability, authenticity and honesty.
5. They emphasised cross-generational relationships between older and younger members of the congregation.
6. They used technology and social media to communicate with millennials.
7. They adopted a team approach style of ministry that included and emphasised ministry to millennials.
8. They emphasised spiritual practices such as prayer and scripture reading.
9. They had gender balance. Women tend to outnumber men in most churches.
10. New church plants were more effective in attracting millennials than established churches. (Jones & Cox, 2011).

Additionally, millennials were identified to prefer to work in small companies where they are more hands-on and where they feel they can make a bigger impact. House churches are thus ideal because of the small group setting affording millennials the opportunity to be as hands-on as they wish.

That millennials are willing to leave their jobs if they are not satisfied or if they feel their contributions do not matter, provides the house church with the opportunity to address these obstacles since they allow equal participation for all present. Every voice is heard and every

idea is considered. The close setting of the house church affords millennials with the opportunity to work in small groups and teams which they prefer.

Because millennials live through so much change and transition, they avoid long-term commitments and place a high value on flexibility. As a result, many millennials lack a sense of confidence concerning the direction and purpose of their lives due to the instability of the economy, unemployment, and changing cultural values. These provide the church with the opportunity to engage millennials in discussions about the meaning and purpose of life.

Millennials have been raised to believe that they can achieve anything they want to and as result millennials believe that they can change the world and make it better (Smith & Snell, 2009:35). This is in line with the responsibility of the church that is called to impact the world through the witness of the Gospel and the transformative power of the Triune God.

Due to specific socio-economic reasons the lived experiences of South African millennials differ from those in first world countries. Whereas, American millennials are treated as students, many African millennials are forced into adult roles due to a variety of causes such HIV/AIDS orphans that force many African millennials into parenting roles of looking after their siblings. Because of poverty African millennials may need the church to not only provide for their needs spiritually, but basic physical needs of food as well. Since there is a big distinction between the have and have-nots in South Africa many local house churches tend to be small groups in poor rural areas. Thus, more affluent churches have the responsibility to identify these churches and provide assistance as required.

4.9 Conclusion

Millennials tend to exhibit beliefs and values unlike previous generations. Their characteristics are largely influenced by the rise of postmodernity and the advancement of technology. (Globalisation, the third most dominant influence, is discussed in the next chapter). Emerging adulthood, as a subset of the millennial generation, was identified and characterised as a period of immense transition. The emerging adult undergoes transition in demographics, identify formation and the way they view themselves. Adding to the extreme stress of this period is the

need for the emerging adult to navigate and master adult tasks, responsibilities, systems and procedures. Changes in family dynamics because of divorce, blended families, or single parent households are additional stresses that affect young adults in today's world.

Because of their unique characteristics, the institutionalised church may be unable to fulfil the spiritual needs of millennials whereas these may be met by smaller settings afforded by the house church. The house church is poised to address the needs of millennials by offering a sense of community and belonging and creating opportunities for millennials to serve and become part of something bigger than themselves. In addition, leadership in house churches often takes on a more authentic, transparent and conversational style making it more appealing to millennials who are put off by authoritarian models.

CHAPTER 5

THE INFLUENCE OF GLOBALISATION ON SOUTH AFRICAN MILLENNIALS

5.1 Introduction

Globalisation results in the ever-shrinking world through technological advancements such as communications and air travel which reduce temporal and spatial differences between people and territories. Different peoples and cultures are brought to the doorsteps of distant places. One can learn a language or try a food from a distant country without even having travelled there. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has made this small world even smaller. Restricted movement and trade have forced people to adapt to and adopt technologies to keep up with connections and relationships. Globalisation is said to be the ever interconnectedness of the world relativising peoples, cultures and worldviews. Alongside postmodernism and the advancement of technologies, globalisation is arguably the most significant predetermining factor influencing the behaviours and beliefs of millennials. Every aspect of modern life has invariably been impacted by globalisation bringing about uncertainties economically, politically, socially, culturally and otherwise. Religion, especially that of the youth has not been left unscathed. Global uncertainties in many if not all spheres tend to affect the youth more than older generations. However, the same uncertainties are not uniformly experienced. The marginalised are often more negatively affected than the haves. Whilst globalisation affords many benefits, not all participating in the globalised world are equal recipients. South African millennials are particularly affected by globalisation in part because of South Africa's poor performing economy and in other ways because of South Africa's socio-historical and political past which sees generations reap the fruit of colonialism and apartheid. This chapter explores the influence of globalisation on millennials especially those in South Africa.

5.2 Defining globalisation

Globalisation may be seen as a trend where world economies migrate toward becoming an interdependent system (Golebiewski, 2014:10). Casanova (2001:423) feels that the major driver of globalisation is capitalism. It is continual processes of development which occur within and across all domains of human life whether economic, political, technological, societal, cultural or the like (LOP, 2004). For Abioje (2007:305) globalisation refers to the unifying of the world into a

single society with a common destiny and Hanciles (2014:210) feels that it is the ever-increasing interconnectedness afforded by globalisation that unifies peoples into this single society. The "contraction of the world" is made possible by air travel and electronic media which have sped up communication between peoples in different parts of the globe (O'Byrne & Hensby, 2011: 12; 24). Globalisation results in intensification of global social relations in a way that local occurrences are shaped by distant events and vice versa (Hanciles on Giddens, 2014:210).

Globalisation may be cultural, religious, political and economic (Perruci, 2011:84) and often these areas overlap, converge, mutually reinforce each other, and become organically unified (Ramose, 2003:735). Nevertheless, the effects of globalisation are not equal; globalisation may benefit some but not others (Blanco, Leyva, Nicklaw & Winton, 2006:5; Summers, 1999:9). Youth in all countries are especially susceptible to growing uncertainties in the course of globalisation (Buchholz, Hofacker, Mills, Blossfeld, Kurz & Hofmeister, 2009:57). Additionally, the degrees of uncertainty are not uniform across this spectrum. Risk accumulates in certain groups, usually those at the bottom (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:188).

Globalisation is characterised by four predominant themes: (1) the internationalisation of markets and subsequent declines of national borders; (2) the intensification of competition; (3) the spread of global networks of people and institutions linked by ICTs (information communication technologies); and (4) the rise in the importance of markets (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:190; 191; Buchholz *et al.*, 2009:54).

The processes fuelling globalisation include the development of communications and transportation technologies, the development of particular political ideologies, the integration of markets and political economies, as well as flows of people, goods, images, disease, religion and ideas across the planet (LOP, 2004). Globalisation is distinguished from globalism which is understood as ideological forces promoting prominent worldviews that have fundamental assumptions about how the world ought to be ordered. Examples include nineteenth century colonialism, communism, fascism and the like. These processes are seen as global when these developments are intercontinental in both their scope (presence) and impact (consequence) (LOP, 2004).

5.3 A historic view on globalisation

The advancement of globalisation precipitated factors that allowed for people, goods, and money to move freely throughout the world, thus resulting in a global economy. The global economy results in economies of the world interacting with each other as one market instead of many national systems (Kordos & Vojtovic, 2016:151). According to Ramose (2003:735), globalisation is driven by economic gain and its roots can be found in the rise of industrialisation, particularly in the United Kingdom and the subsequent worldwide spread of the British economic model through colonisation. Modern industrial society was made possible through the mass production assembly line and bureaucratic organisations (Inglehart, 2000:223). Boshoff and Fourie (2015:3) as well as Muller (2014:5) agree with Ramose's assessment that local markets such as South Africa were indeed integrated into the global economy as a result of British influences. However, early globalisation should not merely be seen as imperial expansion, but also as the emergence and growth of a world economy (Osterhammel & Petersson cited by Boshoff & Fourie, 2015:4). For Kangwa (2016:234) the global economy resulted from the end of communism in Eastern Europe. These economies were deregulated and opened to foreign investors.

Historically the expansion of globalisation was precipitated by factors such as the dropping of trade barriers, the advent of technology such as the steamship which improved efficiency, increased cargo handling sizes (Boshoff & Fourie, 2015:5, 10), and allowed for transportation of people across continents (Hanciles, 2014:210). South Africa's inclusion in the world economy was partly a result of mineral discoveries like diamonds in towns such as Kimberley and gold on the Witwatersrand during the late 1800s (Boshoff & Fourie, 2015:5). Although recent advancements in development and technology have progressed globalisation, this phenomenon has historical roots (Hanciles, 2014:210), roots which have irrevocably affected Africans who were not always willing participants in this global economy (Muller, 2014:5). Consider slavery which took place under colonialism where Africans were effectively de-humanised and turned into currency to be traded and bartered. Also, during apartheid black South Africans were exploited as cheap labour for the agricultural and mining sectors (Muller, 2014:5). The early forms of globalisation benefited mostly white Europeans and colonial era white settlers of European descent. Conversely, Black Africans were disadvantaged and "from a purely commercial perspective had very little if any intrinsic value attached to them. Their value resided in their usefulness as cheap and abundant labour that drove the machine of the emergent global economy" (Muller, 2014:5). This dynamic resulted in power relations that were skewed in the favour of the colonialists who determined the rules of normativity (Muller, 2014:5).

5.4 A current view on globalisation

Globalisation spurred on by capitalism exceeds geographical boundaries in the pursuit of maximising profits through increased production at minimal costs (Brenner, 1999:44). The process results in distortion of the cultural makeup of the world creating a homogenised global culture (Golebiewski, 2014:1) through processes of de-territoriality at various levels (Casanova, 2001:424). De-territoriality in a globalised world is understood as the elimination of geographical borders and time limitations and introduces a fusion of influences from various parts of the world therefore altering traditionally held beliefs, activities and territories (Brenner, 1999:40; 43). In other words, cultural systems are so transformed that their characteristics no longer resemble their natural state (Casanova, 2001:428). Territories do not refer only to a geographical area over which a sovereign state exercises jurisdiction but also refers to a space assigned for special purposes such as cultures, peoples, religion, sciences, markets, etc. (Casanova, 2001:428).

The advancement of globalisation was made possible by air travel and media which have influenced consumption patterns, culture, eating habits and diseases which are no longer isolated to the places from where they originate and as such globalisation has cultural, political, social, religious, economic and other possible implications (Abioje, 2007:306/5; Perruci, 2011:84; Kale, 2004:92). Various issues affect the global environment such as new social movements and various forms of single issues and identity politics. For instance, certain politics involving minority groups gave rise to new social movements that garnered global interest (Perruci, 2011:85). International movements that sought justice or environmental change, anti-racism and other such campaigns have also arisen. For young people change is accelerated by cultural forms such as music, cinema and fashion (Akpan, 2016:12). New social movements and various political ideologies have replaced the traditional influences of family, class, gender, and national loyalty in the minds of young people (Mikail & Abdulla, 2017:6; Barrera, 2008:290).

5.5 Economic globalisation

Most definitions of globalisation are economo-centric (LOP, 2004; Muller, 2011:2). Such an understanding may be derived from the fact that most human activities are geared toward some economic end (Abioje, 2007:306). For Boshoff and Fourie (2015:4) globalisation is the co-movement of prices and commodities across borders resulting in economic integration between these markets. If one market experiences a price shock this has an immediate spill over effect in

the other region. The interdependency of integrated markets is responsible for the rapid changes in the world. Although it is necessary for countries to participate in the global economy as isolation from global markets can lead to price fluctuations which can ultimately impede the country's economic growth (Boshoff & Fourie, 2015:6), Ramose (2003:733) mourns that the "god" of globalisation is money, "which commands the relentless pursuit of profit at whatever cost". There are positives and negatives associated with globalisation depending on which side of the coin one lies. For instance, the wealthy in a distant country may benefit from imported goods that were provided through the backbreaking labour of an impoverished worker who may only earn a minimum wage if not lower.

The vast majority of the world's population are marginalised and not adequate beneficiaries of the global economy (Ramose, 2003:743). The global increase in economic uncertainty is experienced more directly by youths entering the job market (Mill & Blossfeld, 2003:193). Youths entering the job market are not buffered by seniority, experience or strong ties to an organisation (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:193) whereas older cohorts grew up in a system where employment was guaranteed and they had higher job security (Buchholz *et al.*, 2009:57). Additionally, women face more precarious employment than males and are increasingly marginalised in a globalised economy (Buchholz, 2009:61).

According to a CNN news article dated 10 May 2019, South Africa is the most economically unequal society in the world (Scott, 2019). Economic inequalities are experienced globally due to increasing poverty, debt crises in the West, the destruction of natural resources, the effects of global warming, the increasing gap between rich and poor, and the rapid expansion of the world population (Verhoef & Rathbone, 2013:94; LOP, 2004). However, these are more acutely experienced in the South African context through its colonial and apartheid history (Muller, 2015:181). Addressing such inequalities should come from governments, civil society and the church.

Economic conditions in South Arica are bleak (and the current CoVid-19 pandemic will only exacerbate this. Globally economies have experienced mass retrenchments forcing many businesses to shut their doors). Many youths are unemployed due to poor education or lack thereof alongside other socio-economic problems. The resultant lack of participation in the economy impacts their opportunities in life (Maree, 2010:89). For Cloete (2015:513)

unemployment is not merely an economic issue, but a threat to human dignity as well. Approximately three-quarters of unemployed people in South Africa are younger than 35 years (Barker cited by Cloete, 2015:514). Stats SA (2018) reports that approximately two-thirds of unemployed people in South Africa are young people aged 15-24 years. Various factors contribute to unemployment, population growth, lack of experience, inappropriate ways of searching for a job, and lack of career guidance in schools (Cloete, 2015:514). South Africa's excessively high youth unemployment rate has resulted in young adults feeling alienated from society and betrayed by the government especially in a post democratic society that promised equality for all (Cloete, 2015:514). Since 1994 South Africa has adopted a neo-liberal economic system which has in part resulted in economic growth, but has not necessarily generated employment (Cloete, 2015:515). Neo-liberalism is understood as a philosophy that focuses on liberation, free trade and open markets (Verhoef & Rathbone, 2013:93). Contributing to the rising unemployment in South Africa is the government's labour legislation and the country's free-trade policies which have led to the importation of cheap products (Cloete, 2015:515).

Young people entering the job market are more directly affected by the global economic uncertainty (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:193) Uncertainties tend to manifest in unstable and atypical forms of employment such as short-term jobs, part-time jobs, precarious forms of self-employment, and compared to older cohorts, lower income (Buchholz, 2009:57). In South Africa young people and unskilled people are most often affected by unemployment. However, there is also a rise in unemployment amongst skilled workers in South Africa says Cloete (2015:515). Additionally, black and female youths have less access to employment than other population groups (Knoetze, 2018:3).

In a globalised, knowledge-based society there is a strong link between having an education and being able to find work (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:195). The prospects of those who study further are better than those who don't (Maree, 2010:90). Adjunct to the competition in the job market for highly educated workers are the limitations in capacity of tertiary institutions in South Africa to educate and train young people. The local problem is further exacerbated by the influx of foreign workers with good quality qualifications and skills competing for the same jobs (Mulenga & Van Lill, 2007: 31). Poor education makes it difficult to find employment. Globalisation worsens or even cultivates inequality by offering better opportunities to the better educated youth and constraining the chances of the less educated (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:195). However, unemployment especially within an unequal society such as South Africa

also reflects other social challenges such as racial and sexual inequalities which are often also related to poverty (Cloete, 2015:516).

Unemployment and poverty are bi-directional where unemployment causes poverty and poverty contributes to unemployment and its persistence (Honwana cited by Cloete, 2015:516). Poverty is a result of human social relationships and often social aspects of relationships determine the structure of economic exchange. Poverty is a lack of access to resources but is also a symptom of power inequalities where the powerful are at liberty to engage or exclude (Cloete, 2015:516). On a micro level, unequal power balances are conceptualised in the way people assign and distribute things of value, the role of individuals in the relationship and how powerful each individual is in relation to the other (Cloete, 2015:516). Additionally, Cloete (2015:516) reflects that distortion of power results in poor people being stigmatised as poverty is often associated with problems of lack of hygiene, illness, disease and lack of education. Such prejudices help keep the status quo that separates rich from poor and keep their unequal distributions of resources and power intact. Poverty excludes the poor from involvement of interactions, decision-making, and the exchange of goods in economic processes. It exerts physical, psychological and spiritual pain on individuals which has an impact on society at large (Cloete, 2015:517).

On a macro level, skewed power relations remain even after decolonisation through the continuance of economic links which favours the colonising powers who were in the position to regulate economic activity of the independent states (Ramose, 2003:735). Contemporary skewed power relations are conceptualised globally by multinationals who extend their business interests around the world, and by western-controlled institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Kangwa, 2016:133). These institutions dictate economic measures, philosophies, ideologies, and conditions based on western business practices which they consider universal. Further, these institutions expect their business practices to be implemented in developing countries where they create economic ideologies that both suit and benefit them (Kangwa, 2016:133). In addition, they impose structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in exchange for new loans (Kangwa, 2016:137) which prescribe how local policies such as government spending and subsidies should be undertaken. These practices along with companies externalising profits often compound poverty in poorer nation states such as many in Africa (Kangwa, 2016:134).

Economic globalisation is underpinned by competitiveness where nation states pass policies to improve efficiency, productivity and profitability to make their offerings more attractive (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:190). However, for Ramose (2003:750) competition has the means to undermine the human right to life and human dignity when it pushes for profits unabraded. Thus, profit-making may become irrational and unethical especially when it is orientated towards the exclusion of the other (Ramose, 2003:751). The capitalist model of owner-wealth when conceptualised by unethical profitisation and which maximises profits over lives is contrary to the African philosophy of *ubuntu* (Lutz, 2009:313).

The principle of *ubuntu* is central to the social and political organisation in African philosophy and comprises the principles of sharing and caring for one another (Ramose, 2003:752). Most traditional African cultures are extremely non-individualistic and their communal cultural character is inculcated by *ubuntu* broadly meaning, “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Okereke, Vincent & Mordi, 2018:577). The English translation for *ubuntu* is “humanness or being human.” Unlike Marxist collectivism where the good of the individual is subordinated to that of the group, the notion of true African community does not pursue the common good instead of his or her own good, but rather pursues his or her own good through pursuing the common good (Beyers, 2009:314). The underlying principle of human dignity is conceptualised through placing worth and respect on the other person as one would expect the other to do to you (Ramose, 2003:753). However, in a globalised context, money has become sovereign and has replaced the human being as the primary value and thus the principles of sharing and mutual care have been undermined and corroded by globalisation (Ramose, 2003:753).

South African youth, due in part to the current recessionary times, are one of the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and disenfranchised groups in society. The move from an industrial to post-industrial economy has left young people disenfranchised (Inglehart, 2000:223). Furthermore, young people face an uncertain economic future and well-paying careers often require a degree (Buchholz, 2009:56). As a result, young people study further to improve their chances as job markets have become increasingly competitive. Jobs that had previously required minimal education now demand a university degree; and yet, some of the educated youth struggle to get jobs. They are faced with part-time jobs, poor pay, and competition in a global economy where unpredictable market shifts directly affect opportunities (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:193). They are susceptible to becoming marginalised which is conceptualised

through exclusion from paid employment which has a follow-on effect of stalling financial and domestic independence. Additionally, the progress and independence of youth is impaired where having no home address or the "wrong" address can be a barrier to obtaining work, while having no income via paid employment negatively impacts young people's housing prospects. DeVaney (2015:12) describes that millennials who move back in with their parents do so for economic, familial and emotional reasons. However, this results in extended dependency which could hamper their recognition as adults (Arnett, 2000:479). Similarly, children wanting to exert their independency by choosing their own values and articulating their individuality may causes tensions in the home.

Lack of employment is closely associated with lack of dignity (Bauman, 2005:35). Cloete (2015:517) describes how a sense of self-worth and purpose is often derived from work. Work is an integral part of being human giving structure and meaning to people's lives, but it is also a response to God who from creation designated work as an essential part of man's purpose (Cloete, 2015:518). Unemployment is shown to have negative psychological consequences such as decrease in life satisfaction, general well-being, self-esteem, with increases in levels of depression (Inglehart, 2000:218). Other social ills associated with unemployment are crime, divorce, suicide, and child-maltreatment (Cloete, 2015:519). For South African youth, lack of employment may drive them to crime, anti-social behaviour and additional social and psychological stresses that may be perceived as dehumanising. Such negative impacts on the parts of the population demand responses from government, civil society and the church.

5.5.1 The church's response & economic justice

The social ills associated with poverty demands that it be addressed as a collective problem to ensure proper economic justice. The term globalisation obviously does not appear in Scripture, but both Old and New Testaments bear some notion of a global community (Abioje, 2007:307). In the Old Testament, the origin of all humankind is linked to Adam (Gen 1 & 2). In the New Testament Jesus as the new Adam came to reconcile humankind back to God incorporating this new creation into the family of God where "*since we are raised in Christ … and whose life is now hidden with Christ in God… There is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scynthian, slave or free, but in Christ is all and in all*" (Col 3:1, 3 & 11). Both Testaments speak of the love of God and neighbour wherein the biblical understanding of neighbour does not refer to an ethnic group, tribe or clan. Rather, it refers to whoever might be

in the position to help or assist. Human beings thus are to see themselves one people, one race and the earth is to be seen as belonging to each individual (Abioje, 2007:309).

Economic justice is a central theme throughout the Bible (Verhoef & Rathbone, 2013:95). The same authors understand economy as an organic system of interaction between people where the smallest unit participating in the economy is the household (Verhoef & Rathbone, 2013:94). Thus, any consideration for economic justice must include the individual and communal interactions and exchanges that are inclusive and sustainable. Further, the church has the responsibility not just to members of its own household, but a responsibility to those outside the commonwealth of God in its participation with God's mission (Verhoef & Rathbone, 2013:101). Further, in the church's discourse on economic justice there should be an emphasis of people over profit; the connection between environment and economy needs to be highlighted; the positive side of global networks of people recognising people "as human beings with dignity and special cultures, rather than as counting them as labourers or consumers," and the radical inclusivity of the household (Verhoef & Rathbone, 2013:102). Additionally, Abioje (2007:314) feels that the church has the responsibility to educate members about borrowing, lending and spending and the ways in which debt is serviced.

5.6 Religious Globalisation

The relationship between globalisation and religion is complex with varying impacts (Iqbal, 2016:207). Early phases of globalisation were introduced to various parts of the world through colonialism (Muller, 2014:5). Thus, globalisation may be seen as the extension of western cultural systems into the way of life of other nations integrating political, economic, cultural and demographic forces into a homogenising trend (Muller, 2011:3). Ukpong (quoted by Kangwa, 2016:132) states that the extension of western power and ideologies through globalisation results in "relativizing both the host culture and the globalising culture". Globalisation is associated with varying forms of production; the increasing mobility of people, information, and goods; fluidity and denationalising currencies; de-territorialisation of culture; glocal penetration of media networks; and the dispersal of socio-economic power (Summers, 1999:5). The term "global village" was popularised by Marshall McLuhan and as a notion engenders feelings of a shared character by the entire global community (O'Byrne & Hensby, 2011:17; 25).

Religions have spread across the globe through immigrants, refugees, aggressors or founders of a country (Blanco *et al.*, 2006:3). Religions not only respond to globalisation but have a role

in shaping the globalisation process (Kale, 2004:96). Religion may be credited with advancing globalisation since the earliest forms of knowledge to traverse borders were mainly religious in character (Kale, 2004:96). Religious evangelism has contributed substantially to international exploration and travel. Thus, globalisation of religious ideologies was some of the first international exports. The European Christian missionary expansion to Africa came about with colonisation (Kangwa, 2016:135). While spreading the Gospel, European missionaries also spread western cultural values. Thus, the spreading of Christianity could be seen as an intensifying of western cultural dominance across the globe (Kangwa, 2016:135).

Due to the globalisation of religion, politics and economics communities previously isolated geographically and culturally are forced to live together or at the very least interact with each other. Coexisting despite differences may be difficult especially in the face of cultural, social, economic and political distinctions as well as a history of violence experienced by certain communities at the hands of others (Freeman, 2017:151). Religious disparities between white and other ethnic groups show that minorities tend to be more religious than their white counterparts (Pew Research Center, 2015). Moreover, religious differences between white and black Christians in America are often rooted in previous racial oppression which was often coupled with extreme violence (Williams, Irby & Warner, 2016:3). Similar factors are prevalent in the South African context due to its colonial and apartheid past which was historically violent and where in addition to segregation, human rights cruelties and the like, and religious differences were also acrimonious (Freeman, 2017:153).

Historical occurrences effect the religious experiences of people globally and often result in differences in the way people live out their faiths. In America these differences are evidenced within the religious lives of white and black Protestants where white Protestants tend to be more doctrinally orientated, whereas black Protestants' faith is more experiential and seen as critical to survival and coping with suffering from everyday hardships (Williams *et al.*, 2016:3). Similarly, Cilliers (2008:72) demonstrates that black African spirituality is also very experiential and expressive in comparison to their white counterparts in mainstream churches. In America black American teenagers tend to remain committed to the authority of their religious communities, whereas white teenagers tend to apply an individualised assessment of the benefits and costs to their faith. By using Smith and Denton's moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) theory Williams *et al.* (2016:3) note a significant variation between the two races. For white youth their general orientation of God is someone that helps them in their problems and makes them happy. Whereas for black youth God is someone who demands something from them and an authority that should be obeyed. Whilst, Anderson (2017:7) notes that millennials value a mix-and-match

approach to everything including religion, Williams *et al.* (2016:3) demonstrate that for black American youth the picking-and-choosing from within one's faith or across different religious traditions is unlikely. Further, for black Christians religion historically and now continues as a form of solidarity and a collective resource that can be both consoling and empowering. The rise of liberation theologies in African bears testament to how religion can be a source of comfort and encouragement for the marginalised.

South Africa is home to many different religious beliefs which have the potential for conflict (Freeman, 2017:159). Additionally, whilst approximately 80% of South African citizens identify as Christian they fall under various categories including mainline Christians (Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and orthodox churches), African Independent churches, Zionist churches, Pentecostal or Charismatic, or those from other denominations (Stats SA, 2001:24). Approximately 12% of South Africans are not religiously affiliated (Stats SA, 2001:24) in comparison to 15-20% of Americans without religious association (Rainwater, 2019:2).

While religious differences can cause conflict, common ground can be found. One commonality across religions is the recognition of a Supreme Deity or the divine. Another is the mystical experience of the divine found in all religions. Lastly, the suffering of the earth and its inhabitants is of concern for all religions (Freeman, 2017:158). Apart from their religious differences, young people in South Africa are also affected by many negative socio-economic developments that impact their daily lives, namely, family breakdown; HIV/AIDS; globalisation; poverty; and corruption (Baleke cited by Wyngaard, 2015:411). Additionally, Bosch (referenced by Wyngaard, 2015:412) shows that current social distresses are unlike those experienced before. However, this also presents the church with an unprecedented opportunity to do something about that need. So, for the marginalised, Christianity may stand as a beacon of hope for people who deal daily with unemployment, poverty, hardship, lack of proper housing and sanitation, and hunger. As such Christians are called to walk in a genuine relationship with the marginalised who in the South African context are often young people (Wyngaard, 2015:412). "For some young people, the seeking of God is first encountered in the care and concern offered by youth workers and the church community." The involvement of Christian leaders in the lives of the marginalised acts as a "prophetic sign of the God who desires relationship" (Ward cited by Wyngaard, 2015:412).

5.6.1 Religious globalisation and technology

Religion has benefited from technological advancements. Technology has played and continues to play a major role in how and to whom the religion and its doctrine extend. Advancements of globalisation through communication and transport technology have certainly been beneficial as knowledge dissemination tools (Golebiewski, 2014:1). The proliferation of religion and technology has always gone hand-in-hand (Kale, 2004:97). Technology has been responsible for the propagation of religion from its earliest times. Take for example the Roman highways or ships which afforded passage for the early missionaries to advance the Gospel during the first centuries (Blanco *et al.*, 2006:8). Additionally, the printing press was used to mass produce large quantities of the Bible. In contemporary culture, digital technologies such as broadcast satellites, online prayer groups, and the internet have been adopted by religious organisations to evangelise and disciple (Kale, 2004:97).

Even with the current trends of secularisation religions are making inroads globally. Religion has assumed growing public roles and visibility. While some religions have been averse to accepting technology, for example the Amish, others have accepted technologies which have accelerated their propagation (Kale, 2004:96). The intersection of religion and communication technologies has brought preachers and teachings from distant lands into local homes through live broadcasts; people have been able to connect to prayer groups through the use of cell phones etc.; websites provide information and explanations about various religious practices and beliefs; and television has provided a medium for religions to broadcast teachings and practices. Communication technologies have brought religious information into every home irrespective of global location.

5.6.2 Effect of de-territorialisation on globalised religion

The advances of globalisation have not been without criticism. Globalisation is credited with breaking down traditional communities and replacing them with larger, impersonal institutions (Golebiewski, 2014:3). Mass immigration results in uncertainties about work, status and other privileges (Golebiewski, 2014:3). Additionally, the creation of the global village dramatically altered how people perceived themselves in respect to citizenship, nationality, and immigration. The dissolution and porosity of national borders also pose a threat to the collective identities of many people (Kale, 2004:96). For instance, in the EU individuals are not referred to by their country of origin but as European citizens. Moreover, such organisations impose universal

standards on all its members creating angst amongst individuals (Golebiewski, 2014:3). These organisations have shattered the “protective cocoon” that previously shielded people and created identity uncertainties in the now. Consumerism associated with globalisation still leaves many unfulfilled and so they realise that inner peace can never be achieved through material possessions (Golebiewski, 2014:3). Psychological well-being and happiness are often positively associated with well-defined identity and thus people will often turn to religion for comfort and as a means to reclaim identity (Golebiewski, 2014:3).

Loss of identity results in the condition of feeling de-territorialised which may be understood as feelings of isolation and separation from the known (Kale, 2004:98). De-territorialisation through contemporary globalisation impacts cultural systems bringing about changes that often lead to feelings of powerlessness and alienation (Kale, 2004:98). For Casanova (2001:431) de-territorialisation is conceptualised in the loss of territorial state sovereignty and the formation of liberal secular states which decreases the influence of native dominant religions. But territories do not only refer to a geographical area over which a sovereign state exercises control, it also refers to a space assigned for special purposes: cultures, peoples, religion, sciences, markets, etc. (Casanova, 2001:428). De-territoriality eliminates geographical borders and time limitations and fuses varying influences which alter traditionally held beliefs, activities and territories (Brenner, 1999:40; 43). The nation-state exerts territorialisation by governing and policing geographical borders and controlling trans-border access and exchange (Brenner, 1999:43). Such territorialisation provides citizens with stability and security.

According to Kale (2004:98), there are increasing numbers of people who feel de-territorialised which is a direct result of the disruptions of geographical location through factors such as immigration and the dwindling role of the nation-state. But globalisation provides opportunities for people to re-territorialise themselves. Technological advances allow people to forge links with like-minded people globally. The de-territorialised can now use technology to establish relationships with others sharing a similar worldview. The growing trend that incorporates global religious networks through the internet, mailing lists or virtual communities can partially be explained as attempts at re-territorialisation (Kale, 2004:99). Globalisation disrupts traditional communities, causes economic marginalisation, and brings mental stress. Religion has the power to elicit security, stability and answers through stories and beliefs (Golebiewski, 2014:3).

In the face of rapid changes in the globalised world, religion provides the means to regain a sense of certainty and belonging. For instance, in pointing to moral decay in society, religions offer the solution by returning to traditional values and religious norms (Kale, 2004:199). Thus,

religion provides these individuals with a feeling of being part of a group that represents their interests and allows them to regain their traditional sense of who they are. Re-territorialisation efforts seek to foster a sense of community or to share information. Common identity may be forged through certain secular issues or interests, but often in the globalised society re-territorialisation is through religion (Kale, 2004:199).

Religion and nationhood are most often entrenched in geography (Kale, 2004:199). Therefore, with the loss of national culture many turn to religion as their primary source of identity. Similarly, religion has often served as a surrogate for nationhood (2004:99). However, there is also a potential dark-side when religion is used as a tool for re-territorialisation. Kale (2004:99) says this may manifest as religious fundamentalism or orthodoxy. Globalisation gave rise to conservative-traditionalist religious movements which are transnational and transcultural in character and often these are labelled as religious fundamentalism (Iqbal, 2016:216). Religious fundamentalism may be associated with aggressive attempts to stop the erosion of religious identity and reinforce the borders of the religious community (Emerson & Hartman, 2006:13). In a world that is eager for order and stability, many millennials are resistant to globalisation which may be conceptualised by youth involvement in fundamentalism and extremism says Perruci (2011:85).

For Golebiewski (2014:2) the potential for conflict arises as globalisation allows for religions previously isolated from each other to now have regular and unavoidable contact. Leading world religions teach similar values such as human dignity, equality, freedom, peace and solidarity (Golebiewski, 2014:1). These values engender greater tolerance in areas such as politics, economics, and society. On the one hand it can create greater religious tolerance but also has the capacity to create a backlash of religious parochialism. Parochialism is understood as the narrow view that one's personal religion is the only truth and holds all the answers (Tomaney, 2012: 658). Additionally, such sentiments are often attached to the homeland. Fundamentalism may be demonstrated in obsessive preoccupation with rituals, intolerance or even hatred to nonreligious observants (Pratt, 2007:2). While religions teach tolerance and benevolence, they frequently emphasise otherness and hostility which could result in global tensions through frenetic religious re-territorialisation where adherents work to strengthen resistance movements at home and abroad (Kale on Smart, 2004:99).

5.6.3 Religious pluralism

Globalisation creates a culture of religious pluralism that allows for the overlapping and intersecting of various religions (Golebiewski, 2014:2). Religious syncretism incorporates elements from different religious traditions into a new belief system (Kale, 2004:102). The information age has made it extremely easy to gain information regarding the teachings and practices of various cults and religions. This ease of access encourages exploration and experimentation. Similarly, the blending of faiths is facilitated by the worldwide mixture of peoples from differing faiths resulting in syncretism that is experienced on the individual as well as at the congregational level (Kale, 2004:102). For instance, some churches may offer yoga classes and teach meditation practices associated with non-western traditions (2004:102).

5.6.4 Influence of cultural differences on religion

Cultural differences have influenced religious beliefs and practices. Religion is inextricably wound up with culture and may even be described as a subset of culture. Culture itself embodies the language, traditions, familial systems, values and beliefs that define a society (Blanco *et al.*, 2006:3). It may also be understood as a particular worldview that distinguishes one community from another through their way of life, behaviours, beliefs and the like (Ugbam, Chukwu & Ogbo, 2014:64). For Iqbal (2016:21) religion under the cultural influences of globalisation is being eroded. For instance, Casanova (2001:430/1) believes the advancement of human rights ideologies and globalisation threatened religions such as Christianity especially that of Roman Catholicism. Globalising trends promote cultural integration which ultimately inculcates a sense of religious universality (Mikail & Abdulla, 2017:6). Religion is declining but it has developed new identities of hybridity (Iqbal, 2016:210). Whereas, religious institutions particularly in the West are losing power, the religious beliefs and practices of individuals still persist (Iqbal, 2016:214). Religious movements that are not encumbered by central leadership or historical traditions tend to fare better and advance in the globalised world.

5.6.5 Effect of economy on religion

Religious globalisation is closely related to economic globalisation. As the economies of countries have grown the major religions of these countries have also grown financially because its members have accumulated more wealth and are able to contribute more financially to the growth and development of the religious institutions (Blanco *et al.*, 2006:6). However, for

Inglehart (2000:224) globalisation in wealthy states has diminished the need for the assurance that religion provides. This is partly as a result that physical danger leads to a need for the belief in a higher power. But welfare states along with increased peace and prosperity have produced a sense of security thus eliminating the need for a higher power. Concomitantly most industrialised societies have seen a decrease in established religious organisations (Inglehart, 2000:224). The increase of religious presence is mainly in the global South through the export of religious practices from their countries of origin because of economic growth and the willingness to expand beyond the borders of their territories (Blanco *et al.*, 2006:8). The financial growth of religious institutions parallels the growth of world economies resulting in more financial resources available for religions to spread their beliefs (Golebiewski, 2014:2) thus benefiting missionary expansion as large churches are able to send more people out to evangelise (Blanco *et al.*, 2006:7).

5.6.6 Translatability and hybridisation of Christianity

Contemporary world church bodies that promote ecumenism are said to contribute to the cultural dominance of the West across the globe; a phenomenon which has mainly been one-sided. Whilst poorer nations have been on the receiving end of western theology, Kangwa (2016:136) asks if the West has attempted to understand and accept indigenous religion. Power dynamics between the West and the South are conceptualised by poorer churches such as those in Africa that are dependent on money from western churches, but these exert power and dictate the agenda for mission in Africa (Kangwa, 2016:136/7). However, for Hanciles (2014:210) the impact of religious globalisation is not just mono-directional. The viability of religious globalisation is dependent on localisation.

Localisation is the local adaptation of knowledge or culture which may be seen to augment the function and capacity of non-dominant players (Hanciles, 2013:210). For instance, the work of the foreign missionary requires the use of local translators or agents, which ultimately elevates the significance of the latter and potentially limits the authority of the former (Hanciles, 2014:211). There is a reciprocal socio-cultural change when foreign missionaries interact with local inhabitants. Likewise Muller (2014:3) demonstrates that Christianity has leading features that are recognisable in different contexts as it spreads across the world. One is the notion of universality where Christianity finds itself at home with indigenous religions through their claims

concerning the origin and destiny of humanity (Ramose, 2003:741). Additionally, the church has always had a hybrid character says Muller (2011:6); i.e. it has never existed as pure tradition.

Christian tradition has always involved various other traditions and ideologies with the passage through time. For instance, Constantine's introduction of Sunday as the Sabbath stemmed from his pre-Christian devotion which he never completely disavowed (Muller, 2011:3). Another example of Early Church hybridity involved the church of Antioch. Here, a group of Greek-speaking Jewish followers of Jesus made the decision to dispense with essential elements of their religious tradition for the purpose of inviting non-Jewish followers of Jesus into their community. In other words, the insiders deliberately contaminated their own tradition to practise missiological hospitality. This act of thoughtful pluralisation is where Christianity becomes Christianity and ceases to be a branch of Judaism (See Acts 11:26). For Muller (2011:4) Christianity's "openness to plurality and an ethic of hospitality also happens to be one of the key features that would eventually enable Christianity to cross multiple cultural borders that would transform it into the world religion that it is today."

The import of western values and systems and indeed religious practices into Africa during colonisation alongside western attitudes of superiority led to the denigration of local indigenous systems of knowledge (ISK) (Kayira, 2015:106). Further, western religious practices introduced by missionaries to Africa sought to dethrone and supplant ISK from its pervasive influence in Africa (Muller, 2014:5). From the 20th century the world has seen the emergence of a plurality of indigenous Christianities that are anti-essentialist. Prime examples are the African Initiated Christianity as found in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) (Muller, 2014:5) and Pentecostalism (Casanova, 2001:434). These will be explored further.

5.6.7 African Initiated Christianity in the Zion Christian Church

Although early missionary efforts sought to rid the locals of traditional beliefs that were seen as evil, there was a recognition of some elements of African Traditional Religion, such as the general belief in a Supreme Deity, as well as the existence of creation myths and other aspects of their moral and spiritual cosmologies, that were used as contact points for the Gospel (Muller, 2014:6). Thus, by allowing some of the traditionally held beliefs which were deemed instrumental in helping Africans adopt and adjust to the values purported by the missionaries as

Africans converted to Christianity, Africans also tended to convert the character of their faith. In other words, Muller (2014:6) states that a two-way process of Christianisation and Africanisation developed. A hybridisation of Christianity and AICs as it were. Thus, Christianity as a western export was not uniformly damaging to ISK. An example of this is the ZCC which seems to be resistant to the influences of globalisation, according to Muller (2015:183). Agreeing with Hanciles' notion of localisation, Muller (2014:7, 8) states that African religiosity has been far more successful at resisting the onslaughts of colonialism and globalisation and the market-orientated tendency to reduce everything to the level of utility than other forms of ISK.

The ZCC seems impenetrable to the influences of most of the world and is able to create a world for its members where there is a sense of belonging, and feelings of peace and security that is unlike the harsh living realities of South Africa's urban townships and rural communities (Muller, 2015:182). Zionist and Apostolic churches in Southern Africa have been influenced by Pentecostalism in their formative years during the early 20th century (Muller, 2015:182). But unlike Pentecostals which are mainly urban and are deemed to aid the progression of modernism, ZCC maintains a strong connection to rurality and by implication with African indigenous/traditional concerns, even if the majority of its members are city-dwellers (Muller, 2015:183).

5.6.8 Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism has glocal appeal. Through its anti-essentialist nature, it has done well through globalisation. The advancement of this form of Christianity was due in part to its being highly decentralised, its lack of historical links to tradition, and having no territorial roots or identity, which makes it at home anywhere in the world (Casanova, 2001:434; Meyer (cited by Muller, 2015:183). Pentecostalism places emphasis on the charismatic gifts of the spirit which include gifts of healings, exorcism, prophecy, and speaking in tongues with emphasis on emotional and experiential expressions (Casanova, 2001:435). Thus, Pentecostalism finds itself at home in cultures that are indeed expressive and emotive such as traditional African religions.

The modern movement of Pentecostalism originated in the United States and has been transplanted mainly in the global south (India, Latin America and Africa) (Casanova, 2001:435). In the global south native religions were often usurped by Pentecostalism as these native

religious beliefs and practices were de-territorialised (Casanova, 2001:436). For instance, in Latin America the dominant religion was Roman Catholicism until the implantation of charismatic Pentecostalism. In Southern Africa African Independent Religions are often married with Christianity. Pentecostal churches in these parts are seen as “local expressions of a global culture, characterised by parallel invention, complex diffusion and international networks with multilateral flows” (Freston cited by Casanova, 2001:437).

Globalisation through organisations such as the UN, the WHO, regional organisations such as the EU, OIC, or AU is responsible for integrating cultural, ethnic, and religious differences that previously divided the world. By advocating common causes such as international peace and security, health issues, poverty, and environment, these organisations share many of the same basic commitments as religions do, mainly peace, human dignity, and human equality, as well as conflict resolution in which they actively engage in negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy (Golebiewski, 2014:2). In addition to these political organisations religious communities such as the Roman Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches, and the Jewish Diaspora also participate in international affairs such as efforts cancelling Third world debt and supporting agendas corresponding to the UN’s millennium Development goals (Golebiewski, 2014:2).

5.7 Political globalisation

Globalisation seeks to bring about a homogenisation throughout the world through the functioning of a specific idea or system of ideas (Golebiewski, 2014:1). Thus, organisations such as the UN through introduction of instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promoted notions of global universality (Ramose, 2003:740/1). Globalisation is represented by the grumbling of the Soviet bloc and the promotion in Africa of western democratic governance models says Okeke (2015:31). Political globalisation is reinforced by world institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), and other regional political institutions and non-political entities which may act as pressure groups compelling governments to enact policy changes (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:190). Policies changes in law, institutions, or practices facilitate various transactions in commodities, labour, services or capital (2003:190).

During colonialism, colonies were treated as extensions of their colonising nations. In post-independent states ties with the former colonising nations were not completely severed and democratic states gave their rights and sovereignty over to their citizens (Ramose, 2003:735).

Similarly, globalisation through the continued presence of multi-nationals; global media institutions; global political and financial institutions; the increasing mobility of products, people, and services through porous borders; and images from western globalising culture undermines the sovereignty of former colonies and other nation-states (Kangwa, 2016:134; Golebiewski, 2014:3).

The West through global institutions such as the UN is able to dictate policy in many nation-states. In addition, many poorer states such as those on the African continent rely on borrowing from international organisations such as the IMF which has resulted in huge debt. Borrowing often comes with preconditions that determine or influence local policies and agendas (Kangwa, 2016:134).

5.7.1 Human rights

Human rights are understood within the context of morality and justice which recognises that every individual may engage in activity to acquire and own necessities to stay alive (Ramose, 2003:744). The most basic of human rights is the right to life, and the right to food is the most fundamental right which gives meaning and context to the right to life (Ramose, 2003:744). Distributive justice presupposes that human beings are of equal worth with regard to their humanness and that no single human being has a more superior and exclusive right to life than all other human beings (Ramose, 2003:745). The actualisation of these rights results in in unimpeded access to food even though this is subject to specific rules (Ramose, 2003:745). Thus, the purpose of the state is to create and safeguard the conditions necessary for the peaceful exercise of the human right to life.

5.7.2 Politically active millennials

Millennials are empowered by education, technology, and new means of communication which allow them to participate in a globalised world where they are politically vocal (Perruci, 2011:83). They use media platforms such as Twitter to mobilise and demand regime changes e.g. Arab Spring and Fees must Fall movements in South Africa.

In a globalised world characterised by uncertainty, which has a dominant effect on millennials, the backlash in many countries has surfaced in domestic and international politics (Perruci on

Yerbury, 2011:85). On the domestic side, millennials have been called to adapt and thrive in an increasingly competitive environment. As the labour market is integrated at the global level, resentment erupts in many countries. Millennials may take on nationalist positions as a reflection on local frustrations. The very same globalisation of transportation and communication, which has made migration more fluid, has also brought different social groups into direct contact. Uncertainty related to globalisation is related to the rise in xenophobia (Inglehart, 2000:223). For many local populations, this contact has been explosive. Witness the recent massacre in Norway over the issue of multiculturalism (Perruci, 2011:85) or in South Africa the xenophobic attacks as recently as 2008 and 2019.

Internationally the backlash may be violent as well. Much of what is discussed in terms of globalisation is the perception that western cultural values are being exported worldwide. So, the West has become the source of resentment in non-western societies because of the ways through which trade and investment generates the spread of western capitalism. Violence has become a common mechanism to voice dissent against globalisation. Terrorist groups in the Middle East, for instance, have vowed to wage war against the West as a way to resurrect the old image of the caliphate some of which have been conceptualised in terror attacks such as 9/11. These attacks being carried out by young and educated professionals, give one pause to reflect on the ways terrorist networks benefit from globalisation (Perruci, 2011:85).

5.8 Cultural globalisation

Globalisation has led to the erosion and increased hybridisation of cultures (Kangwa, 2016:134). People around the world are increasingly being exposed to a myriad of cultures and ways of life through tourism, economic and other types of forced and unforced migration, ideas through the media, and capital (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019:171). Culture embodies the language, traditions, familial systems, values and beliefs that define a society (Blanco *et al*, 2006:3). There is a growing state of interdependence and interconnectedness globally (Muller, 2011:1) through combinations of processes (Buchholz *et al.*, 2009:54). One of these being the increase in international migration. Through western influences globalised states often adopt the culture of globalising forces. In Africa the adoption of culture is usually uni-directional where Africans, especially the youth, are influenced by global media and the internet portraying western values and practices (Okeke, 2015:32). Additionally, globalisation has resulted in a wide range of new social movements such as environmentalist and women's movements, to the new norms

concerning cultural diversity and the growing acceptance of alternate sexual lifestyles (Inglehart, 2000:224).

Most societies are witness to the increasing intensity and scope of cross-border collaboration which affects local job markets (Buchholz *et al.*, 2009:54). Uncertainties afforded by globalisation reinforce social inequalities especially amongst youth who are more affected by unemployment opportunities than other generations. Gainful employment increases the importance of the individual associated with growing market relevance and individual competition (Buchholz *et al.*, 2009:57). Conversely, employment uncertainties have consequences on familial decision processes. For instance, young people delay or forgo family formation (Buchholz *et al.*, 2009:57). Millennials are delaying adulthood for a myriad of reasons and have developed four behavioural and adaptive strategies as a reaction to growing uncertainties in the life course.

1. They increasingly postpone decisions requiring long-term commitment.
2. They switch increasingly to alternate roles instead of employment (e.g. they spend longer in education).
3. They are increasingly forming more flexible forms of romantic partnerships that permit an adaptation to rising uncertainty without having to make long-term commitments.
4. Particularly in the family orientated welfare states they have developed gender-specific strategies to deal with uncertainty. As a result of globalisation men are increasingly less able to guarantee long-term income and security therefore they delay family formation. In contrast many unqualified women turn to the security of the family and the traditional roles of mother and housewife as a strategy to reduce uncertainty. Conversely, highly qualified women delay having children until they have certainty that having children will not jeopardise their careers (Buchholz, 2009:59). A consequence of globalisation in family-orientated societies, is the declining birth rate in response to employment uncertainties for young men and the incompatibility of family and career for qualified women (Buchholz, 2009:59).

5.8.1 Consumerism

People in capitalist societies interact with other people from multiple world regions through various avenues such as travel, media, products and ideas. The global age has resulted in the increase in the identity of self which is particularly evident amongst millennials (Ozer &

Schwartz, 2016:11). The formation of identity is through familial as well as societal influences (Levine, 2009:194). Globalisation effects self-identity and multinational and multicultural influences mould individual perceptions especially around consumption (Arnould & Thompson, 2005:871; Sundar Chintha & George, 2012:42). Globalisation exerts homogenising as well as heterogenising influences on consumer culture (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019:174). These forces are enacted through materialism and ethnocentrism.

Since millennials grew up in a marketplace characterised by internationalisation of products and brands, a consumer culture permeates their life and Perruci (2011:85) shows that millennials play a key role in the globalisation of western norms and values through their consumption patterns. People in consumer societies demonstrate a high degree of possession centrality as they tend to give symbolic value to the goods they own or consume, using these possessions to maintain a positive self-image and build their identities (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019:170). Contemporary consumer identity development sees cultural identities that can be bought, sold, and utilised as needed (Rani, 2014:54). Culture shapes consumer attitudes and perceptions, significantly influencing their emotions, thought processes, and actions, and helping them develop their identities by attributing additional meaning to their possessions (Akpan, 2016:12; Arnould & Thompson, 2005: 876).

Consumption is a key aspect of the daily experience of most millennials who demonstrate a high degree of possession centrality common in consumer societies (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019:171). In response, markets provide the means for individuals to construct narratives about themselves (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019:171). Millennial culture tends to be more experiential and materialistic. Materialism may be understood as the importance people give to material possessions that accompany major life goals (Bevan-Dye, Garnett & De Klerk, 2011:5579). Thus, the individual places importance on owning and acquiring possessions, derives happiness and fulfilment from these possessions, and uses them to signal personal and social achievements (Okeke, 2015: 32). Additionally, exposure to global culture via mass social media promotes materialism, while more ethnocentric consumers could use this to assert their distinctiveness (Gonzalez-Fuentes, 2019:174).

Millennials also tend to display ethnocentrism which is the tendency to consume products originating from the culture considered as one's own (Bevan-Dye *et al.*, 2011:558). Thus,

consumers will have a favourable assessment of domestic rather than foreign products (Karoui & Khemakhem, 2019:2). They may feel that purchasing foreign products may hurt the domestic economy. In a globalised environment where environmental politics take centre stage, locally produced goods are favoured since they limit environmental impact. Millennials may use certain goods to also assert their uniqueness by incorporating elements and practices in their interactions with the marketplace (Bevan-Dye, 2011:5579).

Consumerism places emphasis on consumption over production as a driver of identity formation. Thus, identity is related to what you own (*you are what you buy*), as opposed to work (*you are what you do*) (Todd, 2012:48). Often social perception of a brand or retailer informs purchasing decisions of the consumer (Rani, 2014:54). Consumerist culture results in status consumption where purchasing behaviour is motivated by the desire for prestige (Bevan-Dye, *et al.*, 2011:5579). Millennials strive to improve their social standing with conspicuous products that confer and symbolise status both for the individual and surrounding significant others (Eastman *et al.* cited by Bevan-Dye *et al.*, 2011:5580). Additionally, Okeke (2015:33) sees a rise in competition where consumers attempt to emulate those of higher economic and social standing. Advertising has seduced consumers into their purchasing role (Bevan-Dye *et al.*, 2011:5579). Unfortunately, the poor are marginalised as flawed consumers (Bauman, 2005:1) which results in widening the gap the between *the haves and the have nots* (Chinta & George, 2012:44). Consumerism economically and socially disenfranchises and excludes the poor (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2002:783).

Post-apartheid South African elites joined the hysteria of the globalised economy wanting to emulate the richer first world nations' purchasing ideologies (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2002:785). Mass media promoted globetrotting models and heroes whose lifestyles were to be emulated. These elites derive their identity from the places they visit and the lifestyles they lead (Smith, 1999:152). Their lives become the pattern of existence for millions of people. Such a lifestyle provides freedom and choice for some but restricts others. The average South African let alone the poor are excluded from this "perfect" lifestyle. Additionally, African youth are indoctrinated by the imagery that purports this fallacy.

5.8.2 Morals

Globalising trends have warred against traditional values and behaviours resulting in moral decline (Barrera, 2008:290). The formulation of morals is not straightforward. According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2016), morality may refer to, “certain codes of conduct put forward by society or a group or accepted by an individual for his/her own behaviour,” or “a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons”. Most conceptions of morality centre on justice and equality (McKenzie, 2016:5). Morals are inherently cultural and may signify the difference between right and wrong and between good and bad (Ugbam *et al.*, 2014: 66). They are deeply personal as the individual alone can know whether they are being true to themselves (Wong, 2013:3). Personal truth is relative which guides behaviour through personal beliefs and values that are formed by the individual’s lived experience (Losee, 2014:91; Brogaard, 2007:2).

Values give meaning to human life but these are being eroded by the current climate with the emphasis on self (Mason, 2001:50). Globalised trends see a rejection of standards and traditional values (Mikail & Abdullah, 2017:6). The individual lives according to his/her own personal moral belief with a focus on “self” There is emphasis on personal interests and lack of empathy with others. Self-interest can be understood as the responsibility of the individual for his/her life and happiness (Verhoef & Rathbone, 2013:103). The morals of the contemporary individual, especially that of youth, are influenced by rapid changes in society, politics, economy and technology (Berzonsky, 2009:133). Historically there was a socially based public consensus about moral character and how youth should behave. The current globalised climate results in youth questioning the validity of traditional value bases (Berzonsky, 2009:134). Concomitantly, lifestyle variations and options have increased. Moral responsibility is associated with well-founded identity and with a commitment to significant others (Mason, 2001:50). The development of moral responsibility is through an ethics of integrity and religion has a positive effect on the moral compass of people by providing guidance, direction, and crystallising their sense of right and wrong (Brittian *et al.*, 2013: 8/9).

5.9 Technological globalisation

Global networks of people and institutions are in direct contact as a consequence of their being linked by information communication technologies (ICTs) (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:190). ICTs together with modern mass media are able to transmit messages and images instantaneously from one part of the globe to the smallest, remotest village in another part of the world (Fatima,

2017:731). This allows for extremely high speeds of information and knowledge diffusion over vast distances (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:190). ICTs allow people to share and receive information instantaneously and modern technological advances have rendered physical space and distance irrelevant (Fatima, 2017:747). Recent ICTs have fundamentally altered the scope (widening reach of networks of social activity and power), intensity (regularised connections), velocity (speeding up of interactions and processes), and impact (local impacts global) of transformations (Mills & Blossfeld, 2003:191).

According to Bauman, Marchal, McLain, O'Connell and Patterson (2014:301), millennials are constantly connected to information, online social networks, and people and places around the globe via increasingly customisable technology resulting in an identity peculiar to them. Technology is extremely valuable as a means of education and now due to the Covid-19 pandemic is being employed more thoroughly to facilitate and continue learning as children are kept at home. In South Africa various portals are being used to deliver content: live streaming through the internet and television broadcasts; dedicated radio channels; apps such as Zoom that facilitate live interactions between teacher and students; messaging apps such as WhatsApp for communication, and of course traditional emails.

According to Beyers (2009:218), South African schools, particularly more affluent private schools, have long adopted technology as a mode of instruction. Interestingly most of these schools have also invested in teaching children how to make use of this technology. With the current global pandemic, the marginalised continue to be marginalised. For Bauman *et al.* (2014:303) economic disparities result in digital disparities. Access to digital technology influences various factors of the social mobility of the majority from education to employment. Within education these factors are drivers of/will be in how learning and teaching will be changed (Bauman *et al.*, 2014:304). Whilst the South African government has been proactive in trying to ensure the continuation of education delivery many poor students lack access to these technologies. Numerous issues such as high data costs, lack of devices (computers, laptops, tablets), and poor infrastructure limit the poor from receiving education. In comparison to first world countries, children in developing countries lag behind children who grew up on a "digital diet" and who have the skills to navigate and operate in a technological world (Beyers, 2009:219).

Irrespective of the limitations currently experienced in developing nations such as South Africa, access to the internet in schools has become fundamentally necessary. Whilst social and political pressures have forced major network providers to reduce data costs during this period, the real cost of the internet should be brought down and consistently maintained at an affordable level to try to level the playing fields in the information gap between the rich and the poor locally as well as between developing and first world nations. Additionally, Beyers (2009:226) sees benefits in mass adoption of ICTs in South African schools which historically have large sized classes. These could be alleviated by placing a computer in the hands of each learner who can then learn from the comfort of their homes.

However, like any tool proper guidance and skill should be taught to all children making use of these. For instance, the internet can be a minefield of inappropriate information that can easily and ignorantly be accessed through pop-ups. Additionally, trolls can infect computers with viruses through users' clicking on unverified links. Recently apps such as Zoom were hacked which allowed hackers to gain users' personal information as well as unknowingly participate in private meetings. For Mikail and Abdullah (2017:11) digital content portraying mainly a westernised way of life is potentially dangerous and degrading to traditional African cultures. The ease of access and accessibility of information is especially problematic for developing youth who spend lots of time on the internet.

One of the effects of technological globalisation is how young adults in South Africa are constantly connected to the global world through electronic media. Emerging adults in South Africa develop strong social media attachments that are potentially harmful to traditional relationships. Important human relationships are those with God, neighbour and creation (Knoetze, 2020:2), but can often be replaced by the relationships millennials develop through and with social media. Numerous negative psychological impacts such as depression, anxiety and loneliness are experienced with constant connections (Brown & Kuss, 2020:2). Other undesirable psychological influences include FoMO- the fear of missing out. FoMO is defined as the apprehension that others may be experiencing something exciting or interesting in one's absence (Przybylski cited by Saavedra & Bautista, 2020:106). For Knoetze (2020:2) FoMO is characterised by the need to stay connected electronically but produces adverse effects of disconnecting from deep relations with the immediate environment (Knoetze, 2020:2). In addition, to the millennial preoccupation with self, online posing and objectification with the desire to present the most attractive self-possible is increasing especially amongst the youth.

Young people seek the approval of their peers with regards their appearance which magnifies their identity struggles. This is especially prevalent amongst females (Russell, 2017:40). Adjunct to this, young people often compare their appearances with their peers leading to rising levels of dissatisfaction of one's appearance. Then in order to gain status, approval, and attention, young people resort to posting seductive, provocative or explicit photos of themselves. The sexualised images on social media have led to revenge pornography in which sexual images are distributed without the person's consent (Russell, 2017:41).

Another recently identified negative psychological effect associated with social media is phubbing which is closely associated with increasing levels of electronic and social media addiction. The term is derived from the words "phone" and "snubbing". It refers to individuals checking their smartphone in the middle of a real-life conversation and escaping from interpersonal communication (Karadag *et al.* cited by Balta, Emirtekin, Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2020:629). Such behaviour is often perceived as disrespectful and has the potential to be damaging to real-life social relationships. Some of the associated negative consequences are reduced relationship satisfaction and rising levels of jealousy (Balta *et al.,* 2020:629).

Technological use is ever increasing amongst the youth bringing with it both positive and negative effects. In this regard the role of the church is to positively engage with social media platforms and millennials to bring about transforming discipleship that will see millennials walk out their faith in "Christ-connectedness" (Knoetze, 2020:9). This can be achieved through parents, guardians and the church engaging millennials and teaching them about responsible social media usage (Brown and Kuss, 2020:14) encouraging them in certain aspects to limit such usage which is found to decrease levels of anxiety, FoMO and the like. Additionally, for Smith (cited by Russell, 2017:43-44), the well-being of young adults can be improved by parents and elders setting guidelines on what can be posted and shared; helping teens understand and develop a healthy self-image; showing young adults that they are valued for their character and worth in God's eyes.

5.10 Conclusion

Globalisation effects all spheres of life: political, religious, economic, cultural, technological, social and the like. It brings people and cultures of different regions into close proximity and has

resulted in the escalation of uncertainty. For instance, whilst the benefits of globalisation abound, not all benefit equally. The wealthier tend to benefit more from globalisation whilst the poor are increasingly disenfranchised. South African millennials are especially impacted by globalisation. Economically, South African millennials experience uncertainty in job markets that often favour more educated youth. The marginalised, poor and black female, often receives the brunt of employment inequalities. In addition, poverty is often associated with loss of dignity. Lack of employment has a negative impact on society where unemployment is associated with crime, divorce, suicide, and child-maltreatment.

Globalisation has the potential to undermine traditional values and beliefs and espouse ideas that undermine Christian principles. Particular examples include religious fundamentalism that often results in violent outbursts against those whose religious views differ from the perpetrators. For millennials who espouse tolerance and acceptance, different religious views can be accepted and adopted and can result in syncretism. Whilst the increase in migration opens doors to foreigners and positively allows the learning and blending of cultures, in economically distressed countries such as South Africa migration results in competition for jobs that can result in discrimination conceptualised in xenophobia.

Politically globalisation has influenced nation states to adopt a more westernised approach sometimes instead of what is locally relevant. This is especially true in the case of poorer countries where through westernised funding the country had to assume terms that favour the West. Technologically globalisation opens the youth to opportunities of learning that can be the means of levelling the playing fields in education. However, on the flip side technology has the ability to produce negative psychosocial and physical impacts such as addiction, pornography, and cognitive and impaired mental functioning.

While globalisation has both positive and negative benefits the church should be poised to address negative issues such as unemployment and other social ills which demand responses from government and civil society as well. The church serves as a spiritual and physical incubator in a distressed world where people are crying out to be led and to be heard, and where even in the midst of their own suffering they want to offer humanity to their neighbour. The next chapter will examine how the church can be this vehicle that addresses the societal and spiritual problems that affect many millennials today.

CHAPTER 6

TO WHICH EXTENT ARE HOUSE CHURCHES BETTER EQUIPPED FOR DISCIPLING AND FAITH FORMATION OF MILLENNIALS IN A GLOBALISED ENVIRONMENT?

6.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this study the researcher set out to prove/disprove that the characteristics of house churches in South Africa make them best placed agents for discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults in a globalised South Africa. This was undertaken through the study and critical evaluation of the characteristics of the church in the Bible and how these characteristics related to house churches. Additionally, a theological understanding of discipleship and faith formation for emerging adults was explored. Next, the characteristics of South African emerging adults which function as contact points for house churches were identified and evaluated. Lastly, the influence of globalisation on South African emerging adults was evaluated. The culmination of the preceding chapters led the research to answer the central theoretical argument and to demonstrate that because of their particular characteristics house churches in South Africa are indeed the best placed agents for discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults in a globalised South Africa.

6.2 Background

Although millennials are less religious than previous generations, they want to belong to a church and be a part of a community where they can grow in faith. This means that they are willing to join a church that addresses their needs and expectations and which is also a place where they can contribute. This chapter demonstrates that house churches can provide this “ideal” environment. Certain characteristics pertaining to house churches are appealing to millennials. Additionally, discipleship and faith formation programmes fail in a “one-size-fits-all” approach where many church faith formation plans and structures overlook the importance of providing authentic and unique programmes targeted at specific age groups or at those of a particular worldview. These faith formation plans and discipleship strategies may appeal to one and not another because of different spirituality preferences, for example hand, heart, and head

spirituality types. Some faith formation programmes may be perceived as being irrelevant since they do not “speak” to all involved. Modes of delivery and participation are important for millennials and house churches provide an alternative for discipleship and faith formation for millennials who very often view institutionalised churches with scepticism and disdain.

Millennials desire spirituality but avoid local churches. Moreover there are particular desires of millennials such as wanting to be heard, to contribute, and to be accepted (Anderson, 2017:2) which can be met in house church environments because of their character. Millennials also demand greater collaboration and connectedness (Andalas, 2018:55). Sandeen (2008:18) finds that millennials are achievement focussed and are thus driven to seek out new learning opportunities (to advance their career prospects). They prefer to work in small companies where they are more hands-on and feel they can make a bigger impact. They are willing to move jobs if they feel their contributions do not matter (DeVaney, 2015:13). They enjoy working in teams (Smith & Nichols, 2000:40) and are family focused and therefore demand a better work/life balance (DeVaney, 2015:13). Millennials tend to be motivated by their personal relationships and human connections as well as their technological skills and social media (DeVaney, 2015:13). Millennials are also social beings and derive their identity from their social connections. The church is in competition for the millennials time where the emerging adult years are so fraught with disruptions and distractions from work, tertiary education, and finding their way as adults that they may have little time for church attendance (Cohen-Zada & Sander, 2011:895).

The desires of millennials can be met by house church models and concepts derived from them. The faith of emerging adults flourishes where they are valued and taken seriously (Mitchell *et al.*, 2016:37). Additionally, whether young adults thrive spirituality or merely survive is dependent on factors such as the availability and accessibility of teachers, coaches, pastors, friends and mentors who are committed to investing in their spiritual lives (Dunn & Sundene cited by Mitchell *et al.*, 2016:38). House churches are suited to the millennial because they provide the opportunity for intimate and accountable fellowship, which results in personal growth, and through which long-lasting and trusting relationships can be experienced (Gehring, referenced by Anderson 2017:8). Additionally, participation and taking ownership within the (house) church advances the Kingdom of God and also results in personal spiritual maturity says Anderson (2017:14).

The main research question asked, “What are the positive and negative characteristics that house churches offer as discipleship and faith formation platforms for the emerging adult in a globalised South Africa?” This is answered in the following ways:

6.3 House churches are valid expressions of God’s church and thus ideal for faith formation and discipleship of emerging adults in a globalised world

In chapter 2 the similarities between the church of the New Testament and the house church are noted. The modern house church draws validation from multiple factors such as the strong biblical tradition of the church meeting in homes during the first few centuries, events and teachings around the Reformation of the 16th century, and that house churches have continued throughout the centuries support the notion that they are a valid expression of the church of God. As such, the house church is recognised as an alternative to the institutionalised church. The house church model is able to work under any circumstance, in any culture, geographical area, political climate, in urban and rural areas, and in any economic condition. It functions in centralising and disseminating mission work and in aspects of intimacy and relationship better than the institutionalised church which ideally positions it for discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults in a globalised world.

As a valid expression of the church, house churches demonstrate the same attributes of the New Testament notion of the church and as an alternative to the institutionalised church, house churches function in aspects that may be appealing to millennials.

Because of its small size and household setting house churches provide a more personally focused catechesis and discipleship experience for millennials (Atkinson & Comiskey, 2014:83). In addition, this small size supports a more thorough communal lifestyle experience and thus encourages transparency and accountability. The relational and familial pattern influences the character of house churches such as their leadership styles.

6.3.1 Leadership

Leadership within the house church is not patterned after the world’s hierarchical and authoritarian models that pursue status and power, but is based on servanthood and love (Jeong, 2018:31). Godly leaders are expected to be relational, modelling Christ’s example of servanthood and humility. This appeals to millennials who are averse to authoritarian models of leadership. In addition, the household setting encourages the participation of all believers within

the house church. This is attractive to millennials who often view the institutionalised church as being too authoritarian; where they are not taken seriously; and where they are excluded from leadership positions (Mitchell *et al.,* 2016:37). The perceived authoritarianism of the institutionalised church is in opposition to the views of millennials who feel that the church should operate as a family, where the environment is one of authenticity and relational leadership and where all have an equal opportunity to contribute (1 Cor 14:26) and to minister to each other (Eph 5:19) (Anderson, 2017:44). This model of ministry facilitates transformative encounters with God. Additionally, through the participation of everyone the church helps discipling millennials. Here the cry of millennials to be included, to be a part of something larger than themselves by contributing to a mission and to have a voice that is recognised and heard helps to bring about positive changes contributing to a healthy and strong body (Anderson, 2017:48). In addition, learnership is greatly enhanced by relational leadership. In these ways the house church empowers and challenges millennials to share their faith and talents within and outside the church.

In most institutionalised churches governance is through pastors and leaders who are viewed as the only ones qualified to do the work of ministering to the Body of Christ (Anderson, 2017:42). Conversely, in house churches the responsibilities of church members are elevated and what it means for them to be involved in ministry (Simson, 2007:89). Accordingly, most house churches promote an atmosphere where every member is a minister with Christ as the head, and thus all are required to use their gifts to serve the body (Krupp, 2003:65). In addition, the character of the home setting of the house church encourages informality and wide participation and because of the context it would render it impossible for a single person to lead everything and do most of the verbal work, hence encouraging the participation of all (Giles, 2010:3) which appeals to the millennial desire to contribute.

Leaders in house churches are elders who are spiritually mature and who are able to teach. Small group and household settings afford millennials close proximity to leaders and other mature Christians who they ordinarily would not have access to in larger institutionalised church settings. Such close proximity affords millennials the means to observe spiritually mature lives in action. The house church also provides safe familial and non-judgemental environments for millennials to safely practise their own leadership talents and skills. This appeals to the millennial desire of wanting to be heard. In addition, millennials desire intergenerational mentorship and learnership which come from participating in and contributing to the lives of others from different age groups (Jones & Cox, 2011). In this way millennials teach others and in like manner learn from them and thus fulfil their desires to be heard, to contribute, and for collaboration.

6.3.2 House church community is relational and familial

Christianity is relational where one enters into a relationship with God and fellow believers (Last, 2016:400). Additionally, the notion of family dominates Scripture (Jeong, 2018:11). Believers are no longer separated by race, creed or gender and the church becomes a fellowship through their shared commonality in Christ (Ferguson, 1996:369). Through Christ Jesus all peoples of the earth are given the opportunity to be adopted into the family of God (Krupp, 2003:21). Through the adoption as sons of God, believers have become joint heirs with the Son (Rom 8:17) and as children, the church belongs to the household of faith (Gal 6:10). This new identity as family affects how Christians engage with one another. The bonds that hold a family together are to be the same bonds shared by the church. Just as an earthly family loves, honours, protects, encourages, and cares for one another, the church is to do likewise and genuine fellowship and nurturing relationships become a normal part of church membership (Payne, 2007:30; 41). The familial setting provides transparency and accountability that encourage bearing one another's burdens, the confession of sins, and church discipline (Krupp, 2003: 38). The home provides an atmosphere for the triune values of love, community, and family transformation.

That house churches provide familial and relational fellowship appeals to millennials who desire to be accepted. Millennials are eager for community and acceptance which is demonstrated by their online presence. As many of 75% of millennials have at least one social networking profile (Pew Research, 2010). Millennials attempt to find a place of belonging through various avenues such as social media. Thus, house churches are a great way to reach them. Acceptance is no longer on the basis of nationality, race, or gender but through the adoption into the family of God, and as a family each member needs and is dependent on the others (Payne, 2007:30; 37). The familial and relational patterns of house churches also make it ideal for reaching millennials who tend to be team-orientated and desiring to be a part of something greater than themselves. Small group settings such as the house church are potentially more of value for millennials since they can provide coaching, mentoring, Bible study, spiritual disciplines and devotional reading. Anderson (2017:56) finds that without community connections through small or discipleship groups, many millennials are unlikely to apply anything that was taught before. Additionally, millennials tend to grow and learn through group discussions more than through lectures. Putting practice to the knowledge they have received is by seeing these practices lived out in the community of faith where spiritually mature members become role models from which they learn to imitate Christ. Thus house churches can be essential in drawing and maintaining millennial involvement in church (Anderson, 2017:56).

Additionally, the notion of family within the house church structure provides a healthy level of accountability for each other and reinstates a healthy and natural form of church discipline since people living closely to each other cannot hide when something is wrong (Simson, 2009:42).

6.3.3 House churches provide authentic relationships

The most authentic relationships are developed in community groups where people are encouraged to be transparent, to study the Word of God together, and to seek God together. Additionally, millennials want to be connected to multi-generations where they are exposed to and learn from the experiences of elders (Williams *et al.*, 2016:6). Barna Research Group demonstrates that almost two-thirds of millennials who remain in church have a deep, influential friendship with an adult at church and the percentage is even higher for those who have a mentor in the church (Anderson, 2017:15).

Millennials desire relationships which are bi-directional. They want to listen but also want to be heard. They want to receive but also want to give. While they celebrate the gifts and talents of others they also want the opportunity to demonstrate the talents they have (Wyngaard, 2015:14). Millennials demand more than instruction, they want examples and desire for someone to walk the road with them (Andalas, 2018:53). The millennial's needs of intergenerational instruction and learning, of authentic relationships, of contributing, and collaboration are ideally met in small settings such as the house church.

As Wyngaard (2015:412) demonstrates, the key to building relationships with youth is for leaders to be genuine in relating to people and taking the time to unearth their talents. While it is important to attend to the needs (traditional needs-based approach) of the youth, it is equally important to help uncover their talents (asset-based approach) (Wyngaard, 2015:412). The traditional needs-based approach may produce dependency especially in lower income environments where people see their needs being met only by outsiders. The church, by adopting an asset-based approach, is able to teach and equip people to be self-sufficient. Rather than provide top-down instruction, members in house churches can offer one-on-one and hands-on training that appeals to millennials.

6.3.4 House churches foster interdependence

House churches function within the biblical concept of interdependence (Jeong, 2018:47). Traditional societies such as those in South Africa value cohesion and solidarity which are in contrast to the independence, self-sufficiency and assertiveness highly prized in the West. In Africa interdependence is especially important because of the notion of *ubuntu.* Traditionally, Africans are a religious people whose religious practices permeate their whole lives (Marumo, 2013:1). According to Tutu (referenced by Banda, 2019:7), *ubuntu* as it pertains to religion is important because it teaches reliance and interdependence on each other for the fulfilment of the common good which is only achieved through mutual participation and contribution. Similarly, the biblical concept of interdependence places importance on relationships between those of a particular house church and with other churches for sake of the global mission (Payne, 2007:63). Although individual house churches are autonomous they come together for missionary work, benevolence, leader training, accountability and fellowship (Payne, 2007:63). The close association or network between house churches allows for the travelling of the five-fold ministry between house churches. In this way members are exposed to all facets of ministry which may more common in larger institutionalised churches. The concept of interdependence speaks to the desire of millennials to be heard, to contribute and to be accepted.

Through participating in the house church's evangelistic outreaches, millennials' desire to contribute, to make a difference and to be hands-on are met. They get to demonstrate the love of God alongside others in the family of faith through hands-on participation of feeding the poor and witnessing the Gospel message of hope.

6.3.5 A lesson to be learned from black churches in America

Research conducted by Williams *et al.* (2016:4) demonstrated that church life in black Protestant churches in America emphasises collective and familial dimensions of personal religiosity which is often manifested in the ways they organise different ministries. The black church as well as the families associated with it are both responsible for the care of black youth (Lincoln & Mamiya cited by Williams *et al.*, 2016:4). Black and white Protestant youth in America differ on how they view their churches. White Protestants approach their church more as clients interested in what services, meanings, and experiences they could obtain. In comparison, black young adults viewed their churches as a type of "home" or "family" that operated as an integral part of their self, even when they were not actively involved in the church (Williams *et al.,* 2016:4). Black youth are integrated into the congregational community across generations

where they are and remain part of a larger community just as they would stay connected to the extended family. White youth on the other hand are often treated as a distinct group from other generations, with a focus on the development of their personal autonomy (Williams *et al.*, 2016:6). Ministries in black churches are consistently intergenerational where there are no isolated ministries and where youth and adults mutually participate in various ministries (Williams *et al.*, 2016:9). Black churches tend to function as an extended family participating and sharing responsibilities across generations, status and gender. The theme of family and community that predominates these churches allows them to retain higher emergent adult numbers than those of white Protestant churches. This intergenerational and participatory pattern of ministry that involves all and that matures and retains millennials should be a model that all churches should consider adopting. Such a model of inclusive participation is a key of house churches and as such an ideal for the faith development of emerging adults.

6.4 House churches are agents of discipleship and faith formation of emerging adults in a globalised world

In chapter 3 it was asked, “What is understood by discipleship and faith formation amongst emerging adults?” with a view towards a theological understanding of these concepts and how they pertained to emerging adults. The research supported the notion of house churches as agents in discipleship and faith formation of emerging adults in the following ways:

Millennials leave the church for various reasons, some of which are poorly designed faith formation and discipleship plans and strategies. But millennials are interested in God, they are just less interested in church (Simson, 2009:1). An attempt towards faith development may be through providing more biblical knowledge. However, Folmsbee (2007:39) is against just increasing biblical knowledge since it does not significantly impact the spiritual lives of millennials. Human formulas are inadequate in addressing spiritual lives if there is no engagement with God (Yount, 2019:56) and thus to produce lasting change and spiritual maturity millennials need encounters with God (Dean & Foster, 1998:12) which occur through faith formation and discipleship and entail more than learning about God, but learning how to “live one’s life to glorify God” (Nel, 2015:10).

Lack of discipleship results in spiritually deficient Christians whose relationship with Christ is shallow and superficial. In order for Christians to mature in their faith and walk with Christ they need to pursue the lifelong process of developing as followers of Christ (Folmsbee, 2007:18) through participating in the Christian community and through serving others. Discipleship

involves the worship of and the imitation of Christ (Bosch, 2014:82). It involves being taught to obey all that Christ instructed (Wight, 2010:285) and thus teaching is an essential component of discipling. However, teaching should never be just an intellectual endeavour; it is based on Scripture and submitting to the will of God. Thus, systematic biblical learning (knowledge) should be in tandem with a faith relationship with God.

The responsibility of the church is equipping youth on their faith formation journeys of spiritual discovery and growth through more than just knowledge (Christian & Kilgour, 2014:22). Verbal instruction is good but there is a danger of a teacher-student mode of instruction where this one-sided teaching may be seen as authoritarian and therefore lacking in authentic interest in people's actual faith formation (Knoetze, 2015: 6). This may be especially problematic for millennials who value participation and who want to feel as if they are contributing to theirs as well as the development of those around them (Anderson, 2017:8). Faith formation occurs through verbal instruction but above all through authentic examples of mature faith (Christian & Kilgour, 2104:21). Hence, it is said that spiritual transformation is caught rather than taught (Knoetze, 2015:7). House churches thus provide the important avenues for millennials to witness first-hand how mature believers live out their faiths.

6.4.1 Discipleship and faith formation in house churches occur through participatory instruction

In the contemporary house church learning takes on the form of hearing and also through seeing, doing, and teaching the learnt concept to others (Simson, 2009:37). Additionally, teaching is through dialogue which facilitates learning and increases participation (Krupp, 2003:42). Teaching in the institutionalised church takes on a more static form, where the many listen to the few. House churches on the other hand adopt a more kinetic participatory style of teaching which involves the topic of discussion moving around from person to person where everyone gets involved. This circle-format encourages everyone to share in ministry and ensures that the group can function as a body. Participatory models of instruction are more effective in changing opinions and values than the static models (Simson, 2009:37). The most effective teaching tool is by example of the truth in the way that believers live. The circle-style of teaching adopted by house churches appeals to millennials since it allows them to voice their own views and also have their voices heard. Learnership in the house church appeals to the

millennials who are always seeking out new learning opportunities where they feel that they can contribute and where they feel that their contributions matter.

6.4.2 Discipleship through God's justice

As citizens of God's Kingdom believers strive for righteousness of self and for society through seeking out God's justice (Bosch, 2014:72). Thus, the reign of God is found in those who understand their mission, to make peace, to do good, and to proclaim God's salvation (Wright, 2006:306). This biblical petition for justice appeals to millennials who are socially and civically active wanting to be a part of something bigger than themselves and to contribute to a wholly better society. The house church by being involved in social causes within their immediate community can offer millennials this avenue to be involved and to contribute.

6.4.3 House churches provide the avenues for millennial disciples to make disciples

The process of discipleship unfurls through living in a relationship with people and the Triune God and therefore discipling is located in the church and also in the world (Knoetze, 2017a:1, 2). The process of making disciples can only ensue as true disciples make disciples who in turn will make other disciples (Nel, 2015:6). This is ideally located within small groups. One of the reasons discipleship has experienced a decline is because the role of discipling has been left to programmes and not relationships since it involves too much personal investment and time. Millennials are perfectly positioned to step into this gap as they are relational by nature and demand relational leadership. Because of their worldview millennials want to be mentored and to mentor as well and so the house church provides the perfect opportunity for the cross- or intergenerational mentorship that millennials are passionate about. Another reason for the lack of discipleship in the institutionalised church is that larger numbers prevent one-on-one discipling and mentoring. This is avoided in small groups where mentors can give more quality time to smaller numbers.

True discipleship occurs when Christians are involved in "highly accountable, relational, multiplying discipleship units" that are ideally located within small home group settings (Ogden referenced by Nel, 2015:2) and where enduring relationships occur thus causing millennials to mature in Christ (Nel, 2015:3). While the institutionalised church may have the financial means and resources to implement discipleship programmes, true discipleship finds expression in relationships and not in programmes, buildings, or creeds (Nel, 2015:7). The process involves

the discipler and disciplee continually learning how to live faithfully for Christ. This practice can only truly happen within a community provided by small groups such as the house church. Spiritual transformation is a continuous process that occurs within the context of relationships and it is within this fellowship of faith that the believer is strengthened and encouraged in their walk with the Lord. This cannot happen in a single Sunday service; rather, this is organically outworked in environments that foster deep relationships such as the house church. The strong focus on relationships in house churches mirrors the Triune God's nature and interactions with humanity. Thus, significant relationships with other Christians matter because they teach something about what God is like (Dean & Foster, 1998:30) and in this way millennials are discipled towards becoming more like Christ. This format of discipleship is appealing to millennials who desire deep personal relationships and human connections.

6.5 Characteristics of house churches that attract millennials

In chapter 4 it was asked, "What are the characteristics of South African emerging adults that can function as contact points for house churches?" This question probed the specific traits that related to millennials and house churches that provided common ground. It was found that there are certain attributes of house churches that are appealing and necessary in the spiritual lives of millennials.

Previously it was noted that millennials are sceptical of and feel ignored by the church. One of the reasons they feel ignored is because most churches do not have a ministry that focuses on the emerging adult group (Mitchell *et al.*, 2016:36). Additionally, young adults feel as if religious institutions don't take them seriously. While educational systems and jobs afford them unprecedented levels of responsibility, churches tend to exclude them from leadership positions. Emerging adults feel that churches tend to be hierarchical which may influence their perceptions that religious institutions are too authoritarian (2016:37). This is in opposition to the views of millennials who feel that the church should operate as a family, where the environment is one of authenticity and relational leadership (Nicholson, 2019).

Additionally, the church has neglected overcoming the sharp divide between clergy and laity, causing millennials to disengage from ecclesial life, as they continue to feel there is little room for them to exercise their gifts and talents (Mitchel *et al.*, 2016:37).

An appealing characteristic of the house church is its informality for busy millennials who may not have the time to attend formal church meetings. The house church notion of continuous relationship rather than the focus on meetings is appealing because discipleship and faith formation do not necessarily occur in meetings but through relationships formed in the faith community. House churches can adopt technology to keep connected with millennials by posting words of encouragement and short messages that can be accessed online by the always-connected millennial. Having relationships with mature believers means that millennials who do not have access to formalised meetings still have access to a mentor to run life and faith questions by.

Additionally, millennials find house churches appealing because they provide a sense of community and belonging and have created opportunities for millennials to serve and become part of something bigger than themselves (Jones & Cox, 2011). House churches may provide experiential worship environments that facilitate deep spiritual encounters with God that millennials find attractive. House churches also provide authentic, transparent, conversational and relational communication (Payne, 2007:36) which millennials value. In addition, another appealing characteristic of house churches is its team-orientation and unity.

Additionally, millennials were identified to prefer to work in small companies where they are more hands-on and where they feel they can make a bigger impact. House churches are thus ideal because of the small group setting they afford millennials. This close environment gives millennials the opportunity to be as hands-on as they wish. The intimate setting allows every voice to be heard and every idea to be considered thus validating the millennial desire to have their contributions valued.

Because millennials live through so much change and transition, they avoid long-term commitments and place a high value on flexibility. As a result, many millennials lack a sense of confidence concerning the direction and purpose of their lives due to the instability of the economy, unemployment, and changing cultural values. This provides the church with the opportunity to engage millennials in discussions about the meaning and purpose of life.

That millennials are family-focussed suggests that they would place value on institutions that encourage and allow for family participation. In this regard the house church is ideally placed for millennials and their families to be involved in the ecclesial life of the church.

6.6 Globalisation impacts emerging adults unlike other generations

In chapter 5 it was asked, “What is the influence of globalisation on South African emerging adults?” The question was answered in the following way:

Globalisation has impacted various aspects of the lives of millennials including the political, economic, social and religious spheres. Often the effects of globalisation are not equally shared; certain groups benefiting, whilst others not. Within the South African context globalisation effects are often negative resulting in social ills that are often associated with poverty. This requires collective action to ensure proper economic justice.

In a globalised world of uncertainty riddled by poverty and insecurity, the house church in South Africa provides the emerging adult with a place of acceptance. It provides a welcoming environment that facilitates personal relationships and intimate connections that overcome social and economic barriers. In disadvantaged and low income communities, the local house churches can share a meal with those less fortunate.

6.7 Conclusion

Millennials desire to be heard, to contribute and to be accepted. They desire a sense of community and to serve. They desire greater collaboration and connectedness. They desire to make an impact through their social connections. They desire personal relationships and deep human connections. If these desires are not met many millennials leave the church seeking fulfilment elsewhere such as through secular organisations where they are valued, recognised and celebrated.

The church should be the place where people can contribute and participate and have these needs fulfilled. Whilst in some regards the institutionalised church has ignored the desires of millennials, on the other hand their large size and rigid structures may be too cumbersome to address the needs of their millennial members as these needs arise. The formalised structures of the institutionalised church may seem too cold and distant for millennials who feel that the church as the household of faith should be more familial and relational. House churches provide

an alternative to the institutionalised forms of church and are ideally positioned to address the needs of millennials through their organic and flexible structure. It is within this structure that millennials are able to freely participate in each other's lives. The church is meant to foster accountability, community, and maintaining church discipline (Krupp, 2003:38). These ideals are best accomplished in smaller groups such as the organic house church where people know and love each other and where they are free to learn and grow and make mistakes without judgement (Simson, 2009:43). Additionally, the house church functions in aspects of intimacy and relationship better than formalised church structures and is ideally positioned for discipleship and faith formation in the emerging adult (Jeong, 2018:38). Small intimate groups which are often team-orientated afford the space necessary for all members to participate, contribute, and grow. Multi-generational participation encourages a lifelong journey of learnership and appreciation. Finally, due to the nature of its size and relational focus, house churches strengthen relationships and create a welcoming space that millennials value.

6.8 Study limitations and future research

There are a number of interrelated issues that this study cannot address and that call for further research. This study was also limited due to its nature as a comparative scholarship review which used available data that were mainly from a Western viewpoint. As such the characteristics of South African emergent adults were treated much in the same way as their Western counterparts. Where local opinion existed emerging adults were also treated as a homogenised group. The homogenising treatment of emerging adults is problematic for multiple reasons. Because of South Africa's historical and socio-political past certain characteristics of emerging adults should be dissimilar from their Western counterparts. Additionally, even within the local context the lived experiences of emerging adults would be different due to economic, social, cultural and religious factors. The experiences of youth also differ dependent on their rural or urban contexts. In addition, the treatment of house churches followed the same vein where available research is from abroad and may not relate specifically to the local context. The context of the study is also limited to the available literature, which means that there may still other relevant research currently in process that might oppose the findings and relevance of this study. Despite these limitations, the study lays an informed basis for future study. Areas for possible future research include:

1. Evaluate and define the local emerging adult and possibly further distinguish these characteristics between race groups, urban and rural settings, socio-economic factors etc.

2. Study and evaluate house churches as they pertain to South African emerging adults

3. Empirical study and evaluation of the role that house churches play in the spiritual lives of South African emerging adults

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