

**THE DEVELOPMENT FROM A WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE OF AN
APPROPRIATE MODEL OF MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY, FROM
WITHIN A TRADITIONALLY MONO-CULTURAL METHODIST
CONGREGATION**

THESIS

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by

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“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour” (Isaiah 62: 1-3, NIV).

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INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

The intention of this thesis is to develop a model for multi-cultural ministry, and, in so doing, to enable Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein to provide a comprehensive and meaningful ministry to all people, one that is not limited by the constraints of language and culture but which transcends them. The fact that Trinity is a Methodist Church means that I will be establishing the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry" firmly within Wesleyan theology.

South Africa has undergone far-reaching political change since the general elections of April 1994. This political transformation has emphasised a need for the bringing together of people across the barriers of race, culture and religion. In this thesis I will be focusing my attention on the latter - the realm of religion - and specifically that of Christianity. Furthermore, I will be restricting my attention to a specific congregation within the denomination of Methodism, within the religion of Christianity, namely Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein¹. The "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry" developed in this thesis will therefore be 'congregation specific'.

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa² proclaims itself to be a Church "one and undivided" (Minutes: 1980: 65: para 1(a)), where people from all racial groups can

¹ I am one of the ordained ministers of Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein. The congregation of this church consists of: 2794 adult members, 2000 children and young people, sixty percent of the congregation are Afrikaans speaking and forty percent are English speaking. The Sunday church services are all presented in English, and each has a distinctive format. The service at 8:30 am is formal; a less formal service is held at 10:00 am; and a charismatic non-traditional service is held at 7:00 pm. The congregations of the morning services consist mainly of married couples whose children attend the Sunday Schools and elderly members. The evening service is attended by approximately 700 University and Technikon students. Trinity is experiencing a growth in membership in terms of black people (fifty adults, and thirty-five children have been received into membership in the past twelve months). At present, the ministry offered to the congregation is Western, Eurocentric and exclusive. The economic strata represented within the congregation is largely middle-class. The historical political conservatism of the city of Bloemfontein has resulted in few white people within the congregation ever having to deal with black people on an equal footing, either inside or outside the life of the church.

² Also referred to as the MCSA.

worship God together in a meaningful way. In many respects this is not the case. The years of political pressure that the (MCSA) has endured, in particular the years of legislated Apartheid (1948-1989), ensured that existing divisions between the Methodist congregations became entrenched along racial, cultural and religious lines (Thompson: 1990: 187ff). The Group Areas Act (1950) is but one such example where the National Party Government “divided urban areas into zones where members of one specified race alone could live and work” (Thompson: 1990: 194). The homeland policy (implemented from 1963, but legislated from 1971 in the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act), coupled with forced removals, was another. It is estimated that 3,548,900 people were removed from one geographical area and resettled in another (Thompson: 1990: 194). The introduction of “Whites Only” notices ensured the enforcement of segregation laws for “taxis, ambulances, hearses, buses, trains, elevators, benches, lavatories, parks, *church halls* [emphasis mine], town halls, cinemas, theatres, cafes, restaurants, and hotels, as well as schools and universities. It was also official policy to prevent interracial contacts in sport” (Thompson: 1990: 197).

Legislation such as that mentioned above made it increasingly difficult for churches of all denominations and especially the MCSA, to effectively minister to all its members. The result for the MCSA was the formation of an unofficial division within the church. The “White” church and the “Black” church each developed their own theological emphasis in terms of religious expression, an understanding of the nature of God, spirituality, and church discipline. The MCSA has repeatedly attempted to address these differences. The “Missionary Policy” of the 1980 Conference of the MCSA states: “The Conference declares its conviction that it is the will of God for the Methodist Church that it should be one and undivided, trusting to the leading of God *to bring this ideal to ultimate fruition* [italics mine], and that this be the general basis of our Missionary policy” (Minutes: 1980: 65 ff.). The Conference of 1992 echoed the same sentiments, reaffirming the intention of the MCSA to “[become] a one-and-undivided Church” (Minutes: 1958, quoted in Minutes: 1992: 131). This deliberate strategy for the bringing together of people across the divisions of culture and geographical boundaries, is evident in the call of the 1992 Conference, which states:

“Conference calls upon Districts and Circuits to cross racial and natural barriers where possible” (Minutes: 1992: 131).

I am of the opinion that the MCSA is “a very large institution with considerable potential for bringing about positive and wholesome change” beneficial not only for the denomination itself, but also for the country as a whole (Magoba: 1994: 3). A key to the unlocking of this potential lies in discovering ways to develop a ministry that transcends racial and cultural barriers thereby allowing aspects “of African culture and religious views [to give] Christianity a new flavour and dynamism” (Magoba: 1994: 5). This is the goal of a multi-cultural ministry.

For the purpose of this thesis, I propose to examine and develop a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, that will assist in achieving this goal. I realise that for the purposes of a Masters Thesis, such a study will have to be by necessity limited. I am aware that there are many areas within the MCSA that would need to be comprehensively examined for a detailed study of multi-cultural ministry, such as: polity, doctrine, and cultural heritage. However, the limited scope of this thesis prevents such a comprehensive study from taking place. I will therefore be limiting my research, and the development of a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” by researching one congregation of the MCSA only. This will be Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein. The model developed would then be specific to the needs of this church. However, the examination of basic tenets of Methodism will ensure that the model could also be of benefit to other Methodist congregations, if they made use of it.

Chapter One is an introduction to John Wesley, his life and his theology. The emphasis of the chapter will not be a chronological examination of his life but instead will deal with the following: Wesley was a clergyman, however he was spiritually unfulfilled, and the ministry he offered his congregations as a clergyman, was unsatisfactory. He longed to experience the assurance of his salvation. It was at

Aldersgate Street in 1738³ that Wesley received this assurance. He had at last personally experienced God's love and assurance within himself. It revolutionised his ministry. It was soon after this event that the movement of the Methodist people began to grow and develop. Wesley was then able to make use of his organisational and administrative abilities to co-ordinate this growing movement. He developed a system of small groups that became known as "Class Meetings", "Bands" and "Societies"⁴. The leaders of these small groups were lay people that had been trained by Wesley to spiritually nurture and guide all those in their care. The "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry"⁵ makes special use of this Wesleyan legacy of small groups, trained laity, the need for a personal experience of the love of God and the Methodist emphasis on ministering to all people, even to the poorest of the poor.

Chapter Two builds on this Wesleyan legacy by providing a scientific basis for the value of religious experience not only within the life of the individual, but for the well-being of society as a whole. Therefore, I will briefly present the sociological, psychological and theological perspectives on the relationship between religion, culture and religious experience⁶.

In Chapter Three I propose that the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry" must be based on the following three theological pillars: **Community**, **Discipleship** and **Mission**⁷. These pillars are consistent with Wesleyan theology and essential to the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry".

Chapter Four deals with the foundation stones of the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry"⁸, on which the pillars of the model must stand. The proposal in this chapter is that a dynamic system of small groups, led by well-trained lay people and co-ordinated by ordained ministers on the staff at Trinity Methodist Church is the key to

³ See para 1.7 page 22.

⁴ See para 1.10 page 31.

⁵ See Chapter 6, page 130.

⁶ Chapter 2 page 33.

⁷ Chapter 3 page 47.

⁸ Chapter 4 page 65.

the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”. This theory is supported by the studies of current church growth specialists⁹, an overview of which is presented in the chapter. These views are also compared to the strategies for small groups utilised by Wesley¹⁰.

Chapter Five identifies various models employed by churches in their strategies for ministering to the people of their communities¹¹. These models are compared to the model for ministry that I believe is utilised by Trinity Methodist Church. The objective of this chapter is to prove that the model for ministry at Trinity Methodist Church, while successful in facilitating numerical growth¹², has failed to minister to people in any significant manner across the boundaries of race and culture. Therefore, there is a need for another model to be developed and utilised, and that model is the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

Chapter Six contains the “Model For Multi-Cultural Ministry”. It is presented graphically and followed with a detailed explanation that presents its relevancy to Trinity Methodist Church. I furthermore discuss the implications of the model for the church and outline its benefits for multi-cultural ministry, and for the nurturing of the spiritual lives of the members of Trinity Methodist Church.

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed in this thesis enables a Methodist Church to rediscover the roots of her theology. In doing so Trinity Methodist Church finds the challenge to become a church that reaches into the lives of all those that have need, no matter what their race, creed, culture or position in society. Trinity is called to this, not because it is the “right thing to do”, but because it is by so doing that the invitation of the Holy Spirit to Trinity - to return to Community with God - can be realised.

⁹ See Para 4.4 page 76.

¹⁰ See para 4.3 page 74.

¹¹ Chapter 5 page 96.

¹² See “Diagram 4” page 103.

CHAPTER 1: A WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

John Wesley can be regarded as “one of the major figures of the eighteenth century, his impact being felt both in Great Britain and America” (Heitzenrater: 1984 (vol. 1): 15). Albert Outler concurs, stating that “John Wesley’s eminence is secure - as evangelist, reformer, practical genius. Few men in the eighteenth century have left a mark so clear and ineffaceable” (Outler: 1964: iii). As a clergyman, Wesley played a key role in the Evangelical revival in England¹³. He was furthermore a scholar and teacher who successfully published many literary works¹⁴. He read extensively, often using the insights and ideas of others in his writings to achieve his objectives. In this way he was able to increase the “the scope and force of his impact on the minds and hearts of his people” (Outler: 1964: vi).

The development of his theology was characterised by his need to be assured of his salvation¹⁵. There is, therefore, a tension within his theology. This stretches between the two extreme needs within himself: (a) his responsible development of his intellectual abilities¹⁶, (b) and his need to experience the love of God within himself. These personal areas were in turn influenced by the needs and forces shaping the society in which he lived, and Wesley’s desire to answer the call to serve God as a clergyman¹⁷. I will be examining these more extensively below.

¹³John Wesley’s work can be understood on various levels, “as a theologian: leader of the Revival, theological teacher in the Church of England, disputant in major doctrinal controversies” (Outler: 1964: vii).

¹⁴John Wesley can be regarded as “a prolific author, editor and publisher” (Outler: 1964: vii).

¹⁵ See para 1.6 page 20.

¹⁶ See para 1.5.4 page 18.

The objective of this chapter is not to present a detailed account of Wesleyan theology, neither do I intend to follow a biographical account of his life. The purpose of this thesis is to develop a model for Multi-Cultural ministry. This chapter will therefore highlight some of the important and shaping influences that John Wesley endured in his desire to *experience the love of God within himself* [italics mine]. I propose to show that it was once he *experienced* [italics mine] the warmth of the love of God within himself, that his theology truly began to develop. It is this developing theology, reflected in his preaching and social ministry, which spiritually ignited the society of which he was a part.

This chapter will provide then, a Wesleyan theological underpinning for the development of a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”¹⁸. This model’s point of departure will be an echo of Wesley’s struggle. The model will emphasise the need many Methodist people across cultural barriers have, to *experience* the assurance of salvation in their lives¹⁹. It will furthermore illustrate that this experience of the assurance of salvation, assists the individual in the quest to live a victorious Christian life²⁰. It is my intention that the model will reveal the ‘means to meet this end’. There are certain difficulties that need to be taken into account when examining the theology of John Wesley, and before a model for multi-cultural ministry can be developed. These will now be dealt with.

¹⁷ “We cannot give John Wesley a place among the great intellectual reformers of the Church: we cannot set him by the side of Wycliff or Luther, Calvin or Melancthon. But if we place what is purely spiritual above what is purely intellectual, if the elevation of philosophy is yet below the elevation of saintliness, then we can surely place him in the highest company of all. “I do indeed live by preaching,” he said. He was a great light, rising in a time of darkness and confusion, and showing men that a vital religion was the one thing which would give them happiness and security and peace” (Vulliamy: 1958: 359).

¹⁸ See Chapter 6 page 130.

¹⁹ “The vital teaching of Wesleyan Methodism is the necessity for religious experience. Wesley speaks of this as the *experimental knowledge of God*. A merely passive belief, or the formal subscription to dogma, is not religion. Without experimental knowledge no rational creature can be happy” (Vulliamy: 1958: 356).

²⁰ See para 1.9 page 25.

1.2 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WHEN STUDYING THE THEOLOGY OF WESLEY

Wesley was a prominent public figure, his lifestyle projected an image of a man of extraordinary ability. During his lifetime he travelled a total of 250 000 miles on horseback; preached approximately 40 000 sermons in sixty years; and published more than 400 books and articles on a wide range of subjects (Heitzenrater: 1984 (vol. 1): 21 ff.). He was a man of great determination and energy who also followed a strict personal regimen²¹. At times his abilities led to his followers inadvertently exaggerating his achievements; this added fuel to his critic's fire, the end result being an intense opposition to his ministry²². It is, therefore, difficult to separate Wesley's actual capabilities from those portrayed in accounts written of him²³.

He was a controversial figure who often faced enormous opposition from within the group called Methodist²⁴, as well as the wider "theological, political and social spectra" (Heitzenrater: 1984 (vol. 1): 26). A major contributory factor was that Wesley "faced issues as they arose, in the midst of an active ministry to the poor. His theology was hammered out on the anvil of controversy" (Heitzenrater: 1984 (vol. 1): 28). He was not unaccustomed to changing his theological opinion in an effort to minister to those within his divided and disillusioned society²⁵. Wesley's theological

²¹He rose at 4:00 am every morning. Discipline and hardship were part of the Christian calling. Wesley believed that "persecution was a necessary mark of a true Christian, and his Journal is in one sense a lengthy rehearsal of events that display in great detail the confirmation of that truth in his own life" (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 23).

²² "Just as there was a public image of Wesley that approached sainthood and was undergirded by a repertoire of appropriate anecdotes, there was also a public view of him that resembled a dangerous, ranting enthusiast and could believe the vilest of epithets" (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 24).

²³Wesley at times "adopted a self-perception that was based upon or contributed to, a heroic image. His writings often contain autobiographical recollections that reflect a somewhat magnified, or perhaps idealised view of his character or personality..." (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 22).

²⁴ "His brother Charles often disagreed with him on important matters of policy and procedure" (Heitzenrater: 1984 (vol. 1): 26).

²⁵Heitzenrater emphasises that Wesley's changing theological perspectives, developed in the way described above, make it difficult to define concisely what is meant by "Wesleyan Theology" (1984 (Vol. 1): 28 ff.).

development was organic. It changed and developed as he met the demands of his ministry.

This caused certain difficulties to arise. Firstly, Wesley often embodied ideals and qualities that could not always be easily held together or reconciled. He was an Oxford don, yet he spent the major portion of his life working among the poor and outcast members of his society. He “was a champion of the poor, yet a defender of the political establishment that had caused many of their problems” (Heitzenrater: 1984 (vol. 1): 28).

Secondly, Wesley was not static in his personal development but was himself maturing and changing as was the 18th Century society in which he lived²⁶. As the society at large faced crises and tensions²⁷, along with discovery and growth, so too did Wesley. He was part of this changing and developing landscape. His theological works and personal spiritual development reflect this intimate relationship. Wesley's importance as a theologian goes beyond the realms of literature and religion. His theological views embraced the crucial social needs of the society in which he lived, such as education (especially for those in the working class), prison reform, and the combating of poverty. At the same time he boldly proclaimed the need for all to be saved²⁸.

Thirdly, an investigation to discover the theology of Wesley is fraught with many difficulties. This is true from the one extreme of attempting to discover what Wesley looked like physically to the other extreme of trying to appreciate the way that Wesley

²⁶See (Heitzenrater: 1984 (vol. 1): 30 ff.).

²⁷Such as the impact and aftermath of the Industrial and Agrarian Revolutions, with the terrible social implications of unemployment, exploitation, alcoholism, and poverty.

²⁸ “Wesley’s genius, under God, lay in developing and maintaining a synthesis in doctrine and practice that kept biblical paradoxes paired and powerful. He held together faith and works, doctrine and experience, the individual and the social, the concerns of time and eternity” (Snyder: 1980: 143).

understood God and His calling on his life²⁹. This highlights the many problems faced by theologians and historians on a broader level -when they attempt to catch the essence of his thought- as expressed in his life and ministry³⁰. Heitzenrater comments that both his enemies and friends were attracted to him, “not only by who or what he *actually* was...but by what they (and he) *thought* he was” (1984: 19). All available sources must be critically examined. This is true of those reporting or commenting on Wesley’s work, as well as for those biographical accounts written by Wesley himself. This will enable the discovery of “the full range of thought and activity that characterise this remarkable man” (Heitzenrater (vol.1): 1984: 20) to be as accurate as possible.

Fourthly, Wesley must be regarded essentially as a “folk-theologian” (Outler: 1964: 119). A clergyman able to bring home theological truths with “the common touch” (Outler: 1964: 119). He was an evangelist who was able to evaluate and develop his own theological position in a creative way allowing him to apply this theology “in the renewal of the church” (Outler: 1964: 119)³¹. Wesley cannot be regarded as one of the great systematic theologians of the 18th Century. It was never his intention to produce a philosophical or theological treatise for the consumption of academics. His understanding of his call to the ministry was inextricably entwined with meeting the spiritual and social needs of a disillusioned people in a rapidly changing society.

A “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” will therefore need to embrace both the evangelical zeal of Wesleyan Theology, and it’s determination for effective and lasting mission to the poor. Wesley’s theology was organic³², therefore, the multi-

²⁹ “Among the dozens of paintings, drawings, busts, and other representations, there is little or no consensus as to Wesley’s facial features” (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 18).

³⁰This leads to the conclusion that there “is no consensus in either case, visual or interpretative with regards to Wesley as individual, or as theologian, and the variety of representations can be disconcerting” (Heitzenrater: 1984: 17).

³¹There are features of Wesley’s theology that are “derived from left-wing Protestantism - field preaching, lay preaching, the ‘witness of the Spirit’, extempore prayer in the congregation, etc. - and these greatly alarmed his fellow Anglicans, who saw in them the fatal flaw of ‘enthusiasm’” (Outler: 1964: 119).

³² See para 1.2 page 8.

cultural model to be developed must accommodate this flexibility in its attempt to guide the responsibilities of ministry in the present changing and developing South African environment.

What, then, is the emphasis of Wesleyan theology?

1.3 THE EMPHASIS OF WESLEYAN THEOLOGY

The Wesleyan theological emphasis is to be found in the proclamation of an evangelical theology, a *theology of salvation* presented within the realities of the pressures and heartaches of his contemporary world³³. Wesley was determined to deal emphatically with the social and political injustices and oppression that his parishioners were experiencing, while at the same time never losing his main objective - the saving of souls.

It is my opinion that he believed that the Christian life “is empowered by the energy of grace: prevenient, saving, sanctifying, sacramental ... Grace is always experienced as actual influence - God’s love, immanent and active in human life” (Outler: 1964: 33)³⁴. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed in this thesis will promote this theological tension.

³³The overriding emphasis of Wesley’s theology is on the need for salvation. The individual must be born again. Therefore the primary responsibility of the people called Methodist was for the saving of souls. This theological bias developed out of John Wesley’s personal need for the assurance of his salvation. It is my opinion that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, divided along political and cultural lines for so long during the “apartheid years”, and of necessity emphasising the socio-political theology of liberation, has largely lost the vision, vitality and vigour of this powerful Wesleyan evangelical legacy. The Laws and Discipline of the MCSA reflects Wesley’s Evangelical Theology: “You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most” (1981: para 11: 379) and “It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care merely of this or that Society, but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord” (1982: para 12(c): 379).

³⁴ See para 1.9 page 25.

John Wesley believed that the theology he developed through discussion and debate had to be easily understood by the people for whom it was intended. He was designing a “plain truth for plain people” (Outler: 1964: 88) and, therefore, would “abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations, from all perplexed and intricate reasonings and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original scriptures” (Outler: 1964: 88-89).

It is evident that John Wesley was a man of his time, and that his theology developed as he struggled with the realities of life in his day.

1.4 JOHN WESLEY A MAN OF HIS TIME

Psychology and sociology are two scientific disciplines that emphasise how the mental and intellectual development of human beings are influenced and shaped by the experiences they undergo throughout life³⁵.

Religion, and more specifically religious experience as expressed by the society in which the person lives, also plays a key role in this personal development. Any attempt, therefore, to come to an understanding of the theology of John Wesley must

³⁵ In sociology this is referred to as “socialisation” defined by Giddens as “the process whereby, through contact with other human beings, the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable human being, skilled in the ways of the given culture and environment” (Sociology: 1989: 87). Henslin states that “Humans are born with the capacity to develop a self, but the self is socially constructed; its content depends on social interaction (Sociology: 1993: 63). According to Charles Horton Cooley’s concept of the looking-glass self, the self develops as the direct result of influences and reactions to *the other* [italics mine] (see Henslin: Sociology: 1993: 63 ff.). George Herbert Mead (see Henslin; Sociology: 1993: 64 ff.) identified the ability to “take the role of the other as essential to the development of the self” (Henslin: 1993: 85). I quote the above to illustrate that the concept of the individual being shaped by the forces of the society in which he/she lives is one that is widely accepted both in the fields of sociology and psychology. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to conclude that socialisation would also have a direct effect upon the theological development of an individual within society as well.

always take into account that he was a man living within a certain historical period, and within a particular culture.

His intellectual and theological development would have been influenced and shaped by the pressures that the society of his day was facing. It was while attempting to deal with these realities and their influences on his calling to serve God that his theology developed³⁶.

As stated above, the experiences that are encountered throughout life assist in the development and understanding of *self*³⁷ [italics mine]. I am of the opinion that theological development must take place within this framework as well. It is as the faith of the individual becomes tested and shaped by the experiences encountered in life, that authentic theological development occurs.

The theology of John Wesley, therefore, can only be responsibly examined if certain significant experiences and influences he met with during his life are identified, and then tested to ascertain as to what extent they contributed to his theological development³⁸. I will now identify and examine some of these areas.

1.5 SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES AND INFLUENCES IN WESLEY'S LIFE

1.5.1 John Wesley, the son of a Clergyman

John was born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley on June 17, 1703 and given the names John Benjamin (Hulley: 1987: 1)³⁹. His father was the Rector of the Epworth Parish. John's brother Charles was born four years later and would become one of the most prolific hymn writers of all time. John had an older brother Samuel. He was 13 years

³⁶ See page 9 third para "Secondly Wesley was not...".

³⁷ See para 3.3.6 page 59.

³⁸ I will not present a biographical survey of John Wesley's life, as I believe that it will serve no purpose in the supporting the objective of this thesis namely the development of a "Model for Multi Cultural Ministry". I will only present some of those events of his life, which I am of the opinion assisted in the shaping of his theological development.

older than John and had left for school in London (Westminster School) in the first year after John's birth. John had eight other brothers and sisters. At least one sister and five brothers died in infancy. John's mother gave birth to a total of 16 children in her lifetime!

The Church was in the blood of the Wesley family. Not only was John's father a parish priest, but so too were his grandfather and great-grandfather. Their association, however, with the Church was not always smooth, for example both Wesley's grandfather and great-grandfather were evicted from their parishes in 1662, and suffered harassment and persecution as a result. They had refused to accept the conditions laid down in the "Act of Uniformity of that year" (Hulley: 1987: 1)⁴⁰.

John Wesley was greatly influenced by his father. He, like Samuel Wesley, believed emphatically in the Church of England's teachings and traditions. He reflected the political attitude of his father which was "passive obedience and non-resistance to the king and his government" (Hulley: 1987: 2). John, like Samuel, regarded the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion as being of central importance to the faith of the church⁴¹.

As a child in a large clergy family, John Wesley experienced theological influences on his life from an early age in a way that other young boys in families from outside the ranks of the clergy would not have.

³⁹There is uncertainty as to whether John was the "thirteenth or fourteenth child in the family" (Hulley: 1987: 1)

⁴⁰The Act outlined certain beliefs and practices of the Anglican Church. However, many of the Anglican priests also had Presbyterian backgrounds; this meant a Bishop (one of the requirements of the Act) had never ordained them. They refused to be re-ordained, and also took exception to some of the contents of the 1662 Prayer Book. The old Order of Service for Communion in the MCSA is based on the Order of Service in the 1662 prayer book.

⁴¹ Baptism and "the Lord's Supper was in Wesley's view and practice, central to the life of the great congregation. In line with his insistence that to grow in grace requires regular attendance on all the means of grace, Wesley placed great emphasis on this sacrament and spoke of it as 'the grand channel whereby the grace of His Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God'" (Sermons 1, 440 quoted in; Williams: 1960: 158).

An example of this: His family had been forced to bear the consequences of theological controversy while still having to keep central to their lives, their belief in the established church. The Sacraments were the pinions around which all religious experience and understanding moved. **The ability to weather theological controversy, to remain faithful to the Church of England, and promote the fundamental importance of the Sacraments, were Christian theological influences that Wesley was introduced to as a child, and that he adhered to throughout his life. This had a direct influence on his theology.**

1.5.2 The influence of his mother

His mother, Susanna, was another significant figure that influenced his theological growth. Susanna's father was also a prominent priest, but of Presbyterian background⁴². Susanna frequently joined in the discussions and debates in her home, and as a result was able to hold her own when it came to theological discussions. This is evident in her decision to reject the Presbyterian Church and become an Anglican, which she did at the age of thirteen⁴³. **Susanna passed on to John Wesley the traits of "Loyalty to conscience, humility before God and boldness in the face of men, and zeal for practical godliness"** (Hulley: 1987: 3)⁴⁴.

Theology was important to Susanna. Many of the letters that she wrote to John throughout her life would briefly deal with family matters, and more comprehensively

⁴²Presbyterians were part of a group often referred to as the Non-Conformists. Susanna's father was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister during the time of Cromwell. The Non-Conformists were those who did not agree with the need to become Anglicans and were the forbears of what would become the Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists. Part of the problem was that they moved rapidly towards Unitarianism, which strongly emphasised the unity of God and, therefore, rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, which in turn by implication rejected the divinity of Christ (Hulley: 1987: pg. 2-3).

⁴³ "Although young Susanna had turned her back on the Presbyterian church of her father in favour of the Church of England, she took with her the puritan values and attitude to life in which she had been reared. These she adhered to for the rest of her life and passed many of them on to her children" (Hulley: 1987: 3).

⁴⁴(Newton: 1985: pg. 41) quoted in Hulley.

deal with theological issues. She, therefore, had a great influence not only on John's formative years as a child but also on his theological development throughout his life.

John's theological formation was also influenced by times of great personal crisis. It was while reflecting on these as well, that John became exceedingly convinced of the calling to the ministry.

1.5.3 John Wesley's early spiritual and academic development

On Wednesday night, the 9 February 1709⁴⁵, the family house caught fire. John's parents were able to rescue all the children from the house in time, except John. He was stranded in his bedroom. However, with the help of neighbours, he was rescued. Later in his life when looking back to this experience he often quoted the text from Amos 4:11 "a brand plucked out of the burning" (cf. also Zech 3:2). **John believed that he had been saved from death to fulfil a certain purpose and calling for God.** The idea of a "brand plucked out of the burning" (Heitzenrater: 1984: 40) was to be increasingly associated with John throughout his life as he wrestled with his calling to responsible ministry for God⁴⁶.

John Wesley, like his brothers and sisters, received his initial education from his mother. The sons then continued on to private schools and later Oxford. The moment the children turned five "they joined in the daily lessons which occupied from nine till twelve and two till five" (Hulley: 1987: 6). They soon became "competent readers and writers" (Hulley: 1987: 6). The children excelled in writing poetry to each other from an early age.

Wesley went to Oxford at the age of seventeen. He had to rely heavily on scholarships to fund his studies. He graduated in 1724 with a BA degree, receiving his Masters Degree in 1727⁴⁷. During this time he decided to enter the priesthood, and began his studies for ordination as a Deacon. He studied the Scriptures, biblical commentaries

⁴⁵John Wesley was then six years old.

⁴⁶He included this image in a "self-composed epitaph, written in 1753 when he thought death was imminent" (Heitzenrater: 1984: 40).

⁴⁷He was 24 years old.

and the Greek New Testament on a daily basis. He was ordained as a Deacon in 1725. **The initial purpose of this ordination was not for the parish ministry but rather to pursue an Academic career**⁴⁸. He had to be ordained as a Deacon to be accepted by the University as a Fellow and Tutor. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in Oxford on September 22, 1729 (Hulley: 1987: 7 ff.). John's intellectual abilities and bias are not only evident in his academic work, but also in the way he initially understood the process of spiritual growth and development⁴⁹.

It was of extreme importance to John that he live a life of discipline and piety. He kept a daily Journal, a practice he followed throughout his life⁵⁰. It was during the first decade of keeping a Journal [he was still at Oxford] that the "first rise of Methodism began" (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 51)⁵¹.

By the end of 1732 Wesley had attracted a group of like-minded young men around him. All were determined to live disciplined and committed Christian lives. They became known as "The Holy Club"⁵² - a derogatory term. Opposition to this small group increased. One of the original members [William Morgan] died. The critics of the Holy Club stated that Morgan had died "as a result of extreme ascetic practices encouraged by Wesley" (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 63). Wesley was forced to defend himself and the practices of the "Holy Club". **Theologically this was beneficial to John as it put him "into a defensive posture that forced him to both explain his ideas and activities to the public, and to satisfy himself about the**

⁴⁸He was obviously a man of intellect and academic ability.

⁴⁹ See para 1.3 page 11.

⁵⁰John Wesley believed that keeping a Journal would assist him in his quest to live a "holy life", by monitoring his daily progress. "His progress was to be both encouraged and measured by the strict 'care of time' entailed in keeping a diary" (Heitzenrater: 1984: 50-51).

⁵¹The theme of "holy living had begun to set the direction of his life, even though the specific agenda of his activities and the theological underpinnings would continue to experience some shifts through the coming years" (Heitzenrater: 1984: 51).

⁵²The club was formed by "men who were conscious of the poverty of their own spiritual lives and saddened by the low state of religion in the University at large" (Hulley: 1987: 8).

validity of his vocation as well as his state of salvation” (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 63).

1.5.4 JOHN WESLEY’S NEED TO BE ASSURED OF HIS SALVATION

It was ongoing pressure and criticism of the kind mentioned above that drove Wesley all the more to discover for himself whether or not he was a Christian. The resultant personal struggles greatly influenced his theological development. John Wesley accepted that struggle and persecution was a necessary part of the Christian faith⁵³. This is evident in the way he believed that the “hope of salvation rested on one’s sincerity, and that persecution was the necessary mark of a Christian” (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 71)⁵⁴.

The quest to discover the true meaning of Christian faith and personal assurance of salvation was behind his willingness to accept a missionary call to the Colony of Georgia in America. He boarded the ship and set sail for Georgia on the 14 October 1735⁵⁵.

John’s time in Georgia can only be described as a “disaster and fiasco” (Hulley: 1987: 12). He was bull-headed and tactless as a pastor and got on the wrong side of the frontier settlers there. He was eventually forced to flee America and returned to England⁵⁶ “dispirited and disillusioned” (Hulley: 1987: 12)⁵⁷.

⁵³ See para 1.2 page 8.

⁵⁴It was also during this turbulent time at Oxford that Wesley began to explore and develop what would become his doctrine of Christian Perfection. This doctrine in turn can be regarded as one of the central pillars of his theology.

⁵⁵His reason for accepting this call was in order to “learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ” through his ministry to those “unspoiled ‘Gentiles’” (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 75).

⁵⁶The year was 1738.

⁵⁷“It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; But what have I learned of myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected,) that I who went on to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God” (Works 1:76: quoted in Hulley: 1987: 12).

1.5.5 The Moravian influence

It was while on board ship on his journey to the Colony, that Wesley met a group of German speaking Moravians. Within days he had learnt German well enough to be able to communicate with them. He was impressed by the “humility and meekness of the Moravians who were prepared to serve their fellow passengers as an expression of their faith” (Hulley: 1987: 11).

The influence of the German Pietists challenged John about the fact that his own faith in times of stress and trouble was wholly inadequate, while that of the Moravians was characterised by a simplicity of faith and a confidence of salvation⁵⁸.

Theologically, for John Wesley, the question of salvation was still at this point in his life largely an intellectual problem. It is my opinion that he was searching for the correct answer or formula that would help him to understand that he was saved. The Moravians *knew* [italics mine] they were saved. John Wesley was at this point in his theological journey still unable to bridge the chasm between his need for both the intellectual and the experiential dimensions of his faith. The dramatic moment with the Moravians outlined above did not assist him to bridge his personal divide. The fact that his experiences in Georgia did not assist in this regard either, is evident in the intellectual struggles presented in his Journal during his return journey to England. “What must I do to be saved?”(Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 93) was the ongoing question he asked himself.

His subsequent reasoning followed sound philosophical principles. He concluded that salvation needed to be approached on the level of an understanding of the relationship

⁵⁸One day during the voyage while the passengers were holding a Sunday service, a huge wave washed over the ship. In the panic that ensued, Wesley noticed that the Moravians calmly carried on singing. “A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on, I asked one of them afterwards, ‘Was you not afraid?’ He answered, ‘I thank God, no.’ I asked, ‘But were not your women and children afraid?’ He replied mildly, ‘No; our woman and children are not afraid to die.’ From them I went to their crying trembling neighbours, and pointed out to them the difference in the hour of trial, between them that feareth God and him that feareth not” (Works 1:22: quoted in Hulley: 1987: 11).

between faith and good works (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 93). He was working on the assumption that his assurance of salvation “was a sort of intellectual confidence that depended upon holding a correct set of beliefs, grounded upon the appropriately ranked authorities (scripture, tradition, reason), and resulting in a proper set of actions. His hope for salvation was still laced in a trust that his own sincerity would suffice, that he was in fact ‘doing the best he could’... He had only recently been introduced to the idea that faith and hope might rest on a more personal appropriation of the atoning work of Christ, experienced through the Holy Spirit” (Heitzenrater (vol. 1): 1984: 93).

1.6 THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION RECEIVED AT ALDERSGATE STREET

Soon after his return to England Wesley made contact with a young Moravian named Peter Böhler⁵⁹. Böhler was to have a remarkable influence on both John’s life and theology. He confronted Wesley’s theological position on numerous occasions. He claimed that John’s intellectual dialogue in search of faith was hindering him: “My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away” (Tuttle: 1978: 182).

During this time John still determinedly confronted the social poverty within the community at large. His social ministry was one he had developed before his departure to Georgia⁶⁰. He spent many hours at the prison in Oxford preaching to the inmates. He furthermore continued to follow his strict regimen for spiritual discipline. During the weeks spent with Böhler, Wesley’s brother Charles became seriously ill and at one stage it was thought that he would die. Charles was cared for pastorally by Böhler, and it was often the case that when John was visiting his brother, Böhler would also be there. Theological debate and discussions followed. On one such

⁵⁹Wesley met Böhler and a group of his friends on 7 February 1738 at “the London house of a Dutch merchant, Mr Weinantz” (Tuttle: 1978: 181). Böhler was on his way to the colony of Georgia. Wesley describes this meeting as a “day much to be remembered” (Journal: vol. 1: 436 quoted in Tuttle: 1978: 161).

⁶⁰This was an emphasis of the “Holy Club” in his Oxford days. From 1730 he and his friends spent many hours “visiting the prisons, assisting the poor and sick in town, and doing what other good I could by my presence or my little fortune to the bodies and souls of all men” (quoted in Heitzenrater: 1984: 98).

occasion John believed that he should stop preaching and asked Böhler whether he agreed⁶¹. Böhler responded:

“By no means neglect the talent which God has given to you”. To which I replied: “But what can I preach?” His response: “Preach faith till you have it, and then because you have it, you will preach faith.” (Works 1:86 quoted in Tuttle: 1978: 184)⁶².

Wesley from this moment on began to develop his theological doctrine of “Salvation by faith alone”. The process was an ongoing one, often motivated from further discussions with Böhler⁶³. John continued his preaching but his spirit was not yet at peace. Theologically, he was still in a place of crisis. He longed to personally experience the certainty of salvation. He went with great reluctance, to a Moravian meeting on May 24, 1738. The gathering was in a Society in Aldersgate Street. John heard someone reading the following words from Luther’s Preface to his commentary on the “Epistle to the Romans”:

“Faith is a divine work in us, which changes us and makes us newly born of God, and kills the old Adam, makes us completely different men in heart, disposition, mind and every power, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. O faith is a lively, creative, active, powerful thing, so that it is impossible that it should not continually do good works. It does not even ask if good works are to be done, but before anyone asks, it has done them, and is always acting” (quoted in Tuttle: 1978: 194)

It was during the reading of this passage that John Wesley received the assurance that he was indeed saved:

“I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for *my* salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine* and saved *me* from the law of sin and death” (Journal: vol. 1: pg. 476 ff. quoted in Tuttle: 1978: 194).

⁶¹The dilemma for him was on the issue of faith. John felt that he could not preach about a faith that he himself did not have.

⁶²Journal vol. 1, pg. 442 quoted in Tuttle.

⁶³The mystics had “exhorted me to practice *blind* trust in God. Böhler promised me a *sure* trust in God” (Tuttle: 1978: 185).

John Wesley, from this moment on, began to fervently proclaim the evangelical message that was to epitomise his theology, and become a cornerstone of Methodism itself. **He wrote that he believed a Christian to be “one who so believed in Christ that sin hath no more dominion over him. And in this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian till May 24th last past”** (Baker 1980: 25: 575 quoted in Hulley: 1987: 15).

1.7 THE POWER OF SALVATION “EXPERIENCED”

Wesley’s emphasis was no longer on the purely intellectual need for acceptance of salvation, but had instead moved to include the realm of ‘experience’. The assurance of salvation was dependent on the ongoing experience of the gracious presence of God in the life of the believer. The believer needed to be aware that the love, forgiveness and reconciliation with God were an act of God, in the life of the believer, for the sake of the believer (Outler: 1964: 29 ff.). It was from this point of understanding that John Wesley’s theological development began to delicately balance his theological position with regard to justification and sanctification (Outler: 1964: 30).

Outler emphasises this with the following statement:

“... the righteousness of faith is designed by God to promote actual righteousness in Christian living. He [sic Wesley] would therefore never allow the primacy of faith to weaken his stress on human responsibility or his concern for the self-understanding of the Christian as ethical agent” (1964: 30).

The acceptance of the forgiving love of God, results in a profound *personal experience* [italics mine] of the love of God within the life of the convert. The evidence of the inner presence of God in turn influences the life, thoughts and actions

of the converted person⁶⁴. Wesley began to follow a hard theological line, stating that if the person claiming to have experienced God inwardly (i.e. had been converted), did not show evidence of this conversion in a changed lifestyle, then such a person had never truly experienced God's love in the first place⁶⁵.

John Wesley describes the encounter with the perfect love of God as “the conscious certainty, *in a present moment*, of the fullness of one's love for God and for neighbour, as this love has been initiated and fulfilled by God's gifts of faith, hope and love. This is not a state but a dynamic process: saving faith is its beginning; sanctification is its proper climax. As faith is in order to love, so love is in order to goodness - and so also goodness is in order to blessedness” (Outler: 1964: 31).

Wesley's experience at Aldersgate Street⁶⁶ had a profound effect on his theological development, and his ministry.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection⁶⁷ began to take shape. I will now deal with this doctrine very briefly.

1.8 CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AND SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

The inner experiences of the perfect love of God in the believer would give rise to changes in lifestyle. The more the believer experienced the grace of God within, the more determined and committed the believer would become to live a life more

⁶⁴ “Whether used in a scientific or a theological sense, the term conversion is appropriate; for what actually occurs as a result of the experience is a total change of mental outlook, with a corresponding re-arrangement of the entire personal complex. The moment of conversion may occur at any time in the life of the individual who is accessible to the influences which produce it, nor is it always religious in character. In the wider sense of the term, it simply implies a more or less permanent psychological or spiritual change, in which new groups of controlling ideas take charge of the mind, and govern the thought and behaviour of the transformed personality” (Vulliamy: 1958: 123).

⁶⁵ Wesley believed that the “only real test of conversion was the change of life” (Vulliamy: 1958: 137).

⁶⁶ See para 1.7 page 22.

⁶⁷ Also known as the doctrine of Scriptural Holiness.

reminiscent of that of Christ⁶⁸. The Christian should therefore be striving to become perfect, as Christ was perfect⁶⁹. Such a goal is philosophically speaking not impossible to attain, nevertheless this doctrine was the cause of much controversy during Wesley's time. This was evident among the Methodist preachers themselves as well as from his critics. It was Wesley's understanding that the people called Methodists had chiefly been raised up by God to spread Christian Perfection (Scriptural Holiness) throughout the land:

“This doctrine ... is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appears to have raised us up” (quoted in Telford (ed.): 1931: 238).

I do not intend to enter into a discourse on the advantages and disadvantages of a doctrine such as Christian Perfection. I merely note the thrust of the doctrine itself, as the theological emphasis it contains is central to an understanding of Wesleyan theology, and for the development of a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

Outler emphasises that “the chief interest and significance of Wesley as a theologian lie in the integrity and vitality of his doctrine as a whole. Within that whole, the most distinctive single element was the notion of ‘Christian Perfection’” (1964: 30).

John Wesley believed emphatically that there was no greater responsibility than the dual purpose of saving souls and spreading Scriptural Holiness throughout

⁶⁸ “I was early warned against laying, as the papists do, too much stress on outward works-or on faith without works; which, as it does not include, so will it never lead to, true hope or charity. Nor am I sensible that to this very hour I have laid too much stress on either; having from the very beginning valued both faith and the means of grace and good works, not on their own account, but as believing that God, who had appointed them, would by them bring me in due time to the mind that was in Christ” (Whaling et al: 1981: 101).

⁶⁹John Wesley referred to passages such as Galatians 2: 20, and 2 Timothy 3: 16-17 to substantiate his point of view.

the land. All else was to be used to facilitate this process⁷⁰. This perspective is evident in the way Wesley went about organising the Methodist movement. It was imperative for him that all those who converted to Christianity learn the spiritual and behavioural lessons necessary to live a life according to the demands of the Gospel. This approach is reflected in his organising of the Methodist converts into (i) societies (ii) bands and (iii) class meetings.

1.9 WESLEY AND SMALL GROUPS

Wesley was a man of great organisational ability and skill. This was recognised by George Whitefield. Whitefield had on his return from his mission work in America begun preaching in London. It was not long before he was banned from preaching in the pulpits of London. He, therefore, set off for Bristol and began preaching in the open air to coal miners from February 17, 1739. Within three weeks “the crowds had mushroomed to 10,000, and Whitefield called on Wesley for help” (Snyder: 1980: 31).

Bristol was a city in turmoil. The years of 1738-1740 were marked by “high corn prices, low wages and the oppressive poverty of the new class of urban workers” (Snyder: 1980: 32). Whitefield was immediately successful in his preaching to the

⁷⁰ “He that is, by faith, born of God, sinneth not (I) by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning; But sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor (ii) by any wilful sin; for his will, while he abideth in faith, is utterly set against all sin, and aboreth it as a deadly poison. Nor (iii) By any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God, and any tendency to an unholy desire, he, by the grace of God, stifleth at birth. Nor (iv) Doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence with his will, and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, ‘he that is born of God doth not commit sin:’ And though he cannot say, he hath not sinned, yet now ‘he sinneth not.’” (Wesley: Works (V): 11).

colliers. The response was so great that he sent for John Wesley “recognizing his preaching power and organizing skill” (Snyder: 1980: 32)⁷¹.

Wesley immediately began to use his administrative and organisational skills, and formed a number of societies and bands. Whitefield returned to America in August of 1739 and John Wesley was given complete responsibility of the “growing work” (Snyder: 1980: 33)⁷².

Within a few months of having begun field preaching during 1739 “Wesley had set up the basic structure that was to mark Methodism for over a century. The patterns he established formed the infrastructure of the movement and were crucial to its development and growth. They reveal something of Wesley’s understanding of the church and sense of priorities” (Snyder: 1980: 34). What developed was the system of (1) societies and (2) bands.

1.9.1 The society⁷³

Wesley had a large number of converts in London whom he needed to meet with regularly. The problem arose that as the numbers of converts grew, so it in turn became increasingly difficult for him to visit them individually and in their homes. Therefore, he organised to meet with them, as a group, for prayer and discussion every Thursday evening.

“Thus arose, without any previous design on either side, what was afterwards called a Society; a very innocent name, and very common in

⁷¹ It is interesting to note Wesley’s reaction to the open air preaching as contained in his Journal, Saturday March 31: “In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (until very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church” (Journal abridged by Nehemiah Curnock: 1952: 66).

⁷² “The Wesleyan revival had begun. From the beginning it was a movement largely for and among the poor, those whom “gentlemen” and “ladies” looked on simply as part of the machinery of the new industrial system. The Wesleys preached, the crowds responded and Methodism as a mass movement was born” (Snyder: 1980: 33).

⁷³ See (Snyder: 1980: 34 ff.).

London, for any number of people associating themselves together ... They therefore united themselves "in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation." There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into this society,-"a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins" (Works vol. VIII: page 250: quoted in Snyder: 1980: 35).

It was not long before dozens of societies were being organised by Wesley in both the London and Bristol areas. The various groups were collectively known as the "United Societies" (Snyder: 1980: 35). This pattern of management was not unique to the Methodist following, and was the common practice of the other religious societies. The "main difference between the Methodist societies and the many other religious societies then functioning was that these were directly under the supervision of Wesley and were united chiefly in his person" (Snyder: 1980: 35).

1.9.2 The band⁷⁴

The idea that Wesley instituted here was a result of the Moravian influence. The Moravians had numerous bands operational at Herrnhut and "on his return he [Wesley] "enthusiastically advocated the system of 'bands' for all the religious societies in London""(Snyder: 1980: 35). The bands consisted of small groups or cells of men or woman that were formed chiefly for pastoral care. This was an ideal way to support new converts who needed encouragement and a place for confession, while they attempted to forge new lives for themselves⁷⁵. The rules for the bands meetings were drawn up in December of 1738 and, therefore, the bands preceded "both the

⁷⁴ See (Snyder: 1980:35 ff.).

⁷⁵ "These therefore, wanted some means of closer union; they wanted to pour out their hearts without reserve, particularly with regard to the sin which did still easily beset them, and the temptations which were most apt to prevail over them. And they were the more desirous of this, when they observed it was the express advice of an inspired writer: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed." In compliance with their desire, I divided them into smaller companies, putting the married or single men, and married or single women together." (Works vol. VIII: page 258: in Snyder: 1980: 36).

organized Methodist societies and the class meetings” (Snyder: 1980: 36). Directions given to the bands by Wesley were as follows:

“You are supposed to have the faith that “overcometh the world.” To you, therefore, it is not grievous, -

I. Carefully to abstain from doing evil; in particular,-

1. Neither to buy nor sell anything at all on the Lord’s day.
2. To taste no spirituous liquor, no dram of any kind, unless prescribed by a Physician.
3. To be at a word both in buying and selling.
4. To pawn nothing, no, not to save life.
5. Not to mention the fault of any behind his back, and to stop those short that do.
6. To wear no needless ornaments, such as rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, ruffles.
7. To use no needless self-indulgence, such as taking snuff or tobacco, unless prescribed by a physician.

II. Zealously to maintain good works; in particular,-

1. To give alms of such things as you possess, and that to the utmost of your power.
2. To reprove all that sin in your sight, and that in love and meekness of wisdom.
3. To be patterns of discipline and frugality, of self-denial, and taking up the cross daily.

III. Constantly to attend on all the ordinances of God; in particular,-

1. To be at church and at the Lord’s table every week, and at every public meeting of the Bands.
2. To attend the ministry of the word every morning, unless distance, business, or sickness prevent.
3. To use private prayer every day; and family prayer, if you are the head of a family.
4. To read the Scriptures, and meditate therein, at every vacant hour.
And,-
5. To observe, as days of fasting or abstinence, all Fridays in the year” (Works VIII, pages 273-274 quoted in Burtner: 1982: 259).

1.9.3 The class meeting⁷⁶

The Wesleyan style of class meeting began in 1742. Wesley was perturbed that many Methodists did not appear to be living out the Gospel commands: “several grew cold, and gave way to the sins which had easily beset them”. Clearly some mechanism for exercising discipline was needed” (Wesley quoted in Snyder: 1980: 36). The Methodists had to repay a debt for the preaching house in Bristol. Wesley used this as an opportunity to do two things:

- (1) The society of just over 1000 people was divided into “classes” of approximately a dozen people in each group. Leaders⁷⁷ were then appointed with the task of securing weekly contributions from the members to meet the outstanding debt⁷⁸.
- (2) Wesley also requested the leaders to use this opportunity to check on the spiritual state of the “class” members and to enforce discipline.

“As soon as possible, the same method was used in London and all other places. Evil men were detected, and reprov'd. They were borne with for a season. If they forsook their sins, we received them gladly, if they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared that they were not of us. The rest mourned and prayed for them, and yet rejoiced, that, as far as in us lay, the scandal was rolled away from the society” (Works VIII, page 253: quoted in Snyder: 1980: 36-37)

⁷⁶ See (Snyder: 1980: 36 ff.).

⁷⁷ It was the Class Leader’s responsibility to “(1) To seek each person in his class once a week at least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor. (2) To meet the Minister and Stewards of the society once a week; in order to inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd; to pay the Stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding; and to show their account of what each person has contributed” (Burtner: 1982: 258).

⁷⁸ “The class meeting became the backbone of the Methodist financial system as well. A “penny a week and a shilling a quarter” became the rule. The considerable sums thus raised and handled by the stewards were used for the poor and later provided the main support for the Methodist travelling preachers” (Snyder: 1980: 55).

Initially, the class leaders met with each of the members of their class in their homes. However, this was a cumbersome and time-consuming system. It was therefore decided that each class would meet as a group; in this way the group began to take responsibility for the spiritual and behavioural state of each person. It is interesting to note the conclusions that Wesley drew from this new format for the class meetings:

“It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to “bear one another’s burdens,” and naturally to “care for each other.” As they had daily more intimate acquaintance with, so they had more endeared affection for, each other. And “speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even in Christ.” (Works V111, page 254: quoted in Snyder: 1980: 37)

It is clear from Wesley’s statement that the structure of the small groups or “class meeting” made it possible for the church to begin implementing a true Biblical model. Without the class meeting system, it had not been possible for the church to care for, and monitor, the spiritual and physical state of its members in any comprehensive way. As Snyder contends: “Without this intimate form of community, believers were not, in fact, bearing one another’s burdens; encouraging and exhorting one another; really coming to know each other; speaking the truth in love. The growth of the body was merely an abstract idea, as in so much contemporary Christianity (evangelical and otherwise). But once a structure and practice of community were instituted, the church began to function biblically as church, as body of Christ. Here is a lesson in the biblical reality of the church that has not been lost on those today who are calling for and experiencing true Christian community.” (1980: 37)

It must not be forgotten, however, that the chief function of the class meeting was for discipline. By-products of the class meetings were spiritual growth, inner healing through confession and koinonia. The bands were the primary “spiritual cell of Methodism” (Snyder: 1980: 38) while the class was the “disciplinary unit of the society” (Skevington in Snyder: 1980: 38).

Wesley successfully built a system for Methodism, but in doing so he had to at times ignore the structures of tradition within the church. His strong conviction and calling was to preach the gospel of good news to the poor. "Surveying the unshepherded crowds at Bristol, he determined 'preaching the gospel to the poor' must take precedence over custom and 'propriety'. And as awakened sheep flocked to him for guidance, he adopted and adapted forms to keep the sheep folded and growing. And Wesley saw, in surprise and confirmation, that this was 'the very thing' the New Testament church was all about." (Snyder: 1980: 38).

1.10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I stated in the introduction to this chapter that there is a tension within the theology of John Wesley⁷⁹. This came about as he attempted to bring together an intellectual understanding of God's love, with his personal desire to *experience* the certainty of salvation within himself.

This *experience* of salvation occurred at Aldersgate Street⁸⁰. The result of this experience of God's love within himself ignited his theological journey leading him to the formulation of doctrines such as that of Christian Perfection⁸¹.

I have shown that it was the experiencing of God within him that was life-changing for John Wesley. This is vital to understand the thrust in the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry" developed later in this thesis. The model is developed from the perspective of Wesleyan theology. The need for a personal experience of the love of God within the believer, reflected in the love for neighbour, is the focus of John Wesley's theology. The model developed will, therefore, need to facilitate the personal experiencing of God's love within the life of the believer, evident in the love shown for neighbour. It is the experiencing of these two theological truths, which is life changing, and also transcends the borders of culture.

⁷⁹ See para 1.1 page 6.

⁸⁰ See para 1.7 page 22.

⁸¹ See para 1.9 page 25.

Chapter Three of this thesis will examine the role and place of religious experience within the well being of the individual. The disciplines of sociology and psychology will be drawn on to facilitate this study. They will reveal that *religious experience* has a significant influence on the psychological and social well being of the individual, and is of vital importance for the individual's development of a sense of *self*⁸².

⁸² See footnote 35.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIOLOGICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND CULTURE, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF “RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE”

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will present the thesis that “religious experience” has a significant role to play in the individual’s desire to experience psychological and social well-being. In other words, “religious experience” and coming to an awareness of the import of such experience(s) is important for an understanding of self⁸³, and the place of self within the wider community. It is a vital component in the individual’s desire to experience fulfilment and meaning in life. This need for meaningful “religious experience” was the motivational factor in John Wesley’s spiritual and theological journey as explained in chapter two of this thesis⁸⁴.

The components of religious experience and the need for meaning and fulfilment, are all vital elements of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” to be developed in this thesis. The model must address them if it is to have any relevance in influencing the spiritual development and spiritual experience of the individual in a lasting way. To ensure that they are examined in a responsible way, I will now refer to the scientific disciplines of psychology and sociology in an attempt to glean what they regard as of value for the personal and social well being of the individual - from a spiritual perspective. I will end each brief examination with a preliminary summary of the main points discussed.

I will then follow those excursions by returning to the discipline of theology. This will reveal how theology is able to underpin the components mentioned above and provide the framework for an effective “model for multi-cultural” ministry that is able to transcend the barriers of religious tradition and culture.

⁸³ See footnote 35.

⁸⁴ See para 1.6 page 20.

2.2 RELIGION AND CULTURE: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Sociology is the study of “human social life, groups and societies ... having as its subject matter our own behaviour as social beings” (Giddens: 1989: 7). There are various theoretical divisions in sociology, each reflecting a different approach. The most important being “functionalism, structuralism, symbolic interactionism, and Marxism.” (Giddens: 1989: 695). I am not going to examine each of these divisions extensively but will only note those aspects necessary to illustrate the important influence religion (and specifically religious experience) has on shaping the individual person and society at large.

2.2.1 The Functionalist approach

“The functionalist perspective examines religion in terms of society’s needs. Functionalist analysis is primarily concerned with the contribution religion makes to meeting these needs. From this perspective, society requires a certain degree of social solidarity, value consensus, and harmony in integrating between its parts. The function of religion is the contribution it makes to meeting such functional prerequisites, for example, its contribution to social solidarity” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 446). Emile Durkheim provided “probably the most influential interpretation of religion from a functionalist perspective” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 446). He stated that all societies divide themselves into the following two categories; “the sacred and the profane, or more simply the sacred and the non-sacred. Religion is based upon this division. It is ‘a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say things set apart and forbidden’” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 447).

Emile Durkheim believed that there was an intimate relationship between religion and what he termed the collective conscience of society. He stated that “social life is impossible without the shared values and beliefs which form the collective conscience. In their absence there would be no social order, social control, social solidarity or co-operation there would be no society. Religion reinforces the collective conscience” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 447). The power of collective conscience is reinforced through collective worship. Here the “social group comes together in religious rituals full of drama and reverence. Together, its members

express their faith in common values or beliefs. In this highly charged atmosphere of collective worship, the integration of society is strengthened. Members of society express, communicate and understand the moral bonds which unite them” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 447)

Bronislaw Malinowski contributed to the functionalist perspective arguing that “religion promotes social solidarity by dealing with situations of emotional stress that threaten the stability of society” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 448). Talcott Parsons saw religion as “part of the cultural system. As such religious beliefs provide guidelines for human action and standards against which people’s conduct can be evaluated. In a Christian society the Ten Commandments operate in this way. They demonstrate how many of the norms of the social system can be integrated by religious beliefs” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 449).

Talcott Parsons proposed that “religious beliefs give meaning to life; they answer ‘man’s questions about himself and the world he lives in” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 449-450)⁸⁵. Parsons contends that religion “‘makes sense’ of these events in terms of an integrated and consistent pattern of meaning. This allows intellectual and emotional adjustment” (Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 449-450).

It is evident that the functionalist perspective regards religion as having a positive contribution to make to society in that religion (religious experience) provides the elements of meaning and stability to both the person and the community.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Examples of these questions: “Why should premature death occur?”, “Why must people suffer?”, “Why is there evil in the world?” (see Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 449 ff.).

⁸⁶ It must be noted that there are other social theorists who argue that religion must also be acknowledged as having destructive influences within society. Charles Glock and Rodney Stark state: “We find it difficult to reconcile the general theory with considerable evidence of religious conflict. On every side it would seem that religion threatens social integration as readily as it contributes to it. The history of Christianity, with its many schisms, manifests the great power of religion not merely to bind but to divide” (in Haralambos (4th ed.): 1995: 450).

2.2.2 The Marxist approach

The Marxist perspective on religion is an interesting contrast to that held by the Functionalists. Marx stated that “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (quoted in Haralambos (4 ed.): 1995: 450). In Marxist terms then religion acts as an addictive drug that stupefies and dulls the senses of the people assisting them to avoid the realities of life and oppression. Lenin claimed that “Religion is a kind of spiritual gin in which the slaves of capital drown their human shape and their claims to any decent life” (quoted in Haralambos (4 ed.): 1995: 450).

Most religions according to Marxist ideology originate amongst the oppressed classes, of those who are poor and deprived of all rights within their society. Furthermore religion does not only help to dull the effects of this oppression, but is also an instrument of the oppression itself (Haralambos (4 ed.): 1995: 451). Marxists therefore view religion as a system that distorts reality within society. The oppressed make use of religion as “an illusion of hope in a hopeless situation” (Haralambos (4 ed.): 1995: 451). Religion diverts the attention of the oppressed people from the reality of life. This distortion is accepted by the ruling class who make use of religion to justify their position of power to themselves and to others (Haralambos (4 ed.): 1995: 451).

2.2.3 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

The schools of thought of the Functionalists and the Conflict Theorists (illustrated by the Marxist Approach) discussed above, highlight the points of view of two of the three categories of thought within the field of sociology. They both “share a structural view of human society although, with respect to their main conclusion, they are poles apart” (Higgins: 1992: 154). Their approaches belong mostly to the “field of macro-sociology, that is, looking at the world at large against the backdrop of the interplay between collective institutional frameworks and groups - looking at society on a vast overall scale or level and concentrating on institutional imperatives, and structural components” (Higgins: 1992: 154).

The third school of thought in the field of sociology, Symbolic Interactionism, examines the social world from “the view point of its constituent individuals and where the focus is much more on immediate day-by-day interpersonal relationships and where much more attention is devoted to face-to-face situations and where there is considerable concern with the handful of individuals involved and where the tendency exists to shunt aside the institutional frameworks of society” (Higgins: 1992: 154).

This perspective emphasises the role of interaction between the individuals within society who are seen as “active creators of their social world” (Higgins: 1992: 154). The symbolic interactionists promote that interaction is always taking place between individuals within society and that this occurs “through and by means of symbols” (Higgins: 1992: 154)⁸⁷.

The major area of importance in this school of sociological thought is “the fact that meaning is primarily subjective; as they see it, definitions and symbols are subjective vis-à-vis the actors involved. For them, social life is largely a matter of the intentions and interpretations existing in the minds of actors, of people behaving, doing reacting, thinking, believing and defining. Nothing, so it is said, is more important than discovering the meaning that should be attached to the acts of groups, or more particularly, the behaviour of individual actors.” (Higgins: 1992: 156).

The perspective of the symbolic interactionist school of thought is of great relevance to the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”. It does not embrace the extreme positions of the functionalism and conflict theorists, but rather stresses the role of the individual’s quest within society to find purpose and meaning in life. This occurs through interaction with other individuals in that society. The “Model for Multi-

⁸⁷ “Consequently, in this school of thought, signs, gestures, shared rules and understanding as well as language assume great importance. There is something in this perspective which assumes, much more than any structuralist would, that man is the shaper of his destiny and that, as an actor, he can - and should - write many of the lines for his script and not leave it to society to dictate entirely his role to him” (Higgins: 1992: 154-155).

Cultural Ministry” focuses on the need for comprehensive individual interaction and facilitates this through a system of small groups⁸⁸.

2.3 RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Bryan Wilson examined religious sects and movements Methodist from a sociological perspective. He specifically looked at the rise of the early movement. He saw the rise of Methodism as the response of the urban working class to the “chaos and uncertainty of life in the newly settled industrial areas” as they had to “evolve new patterns of religious belief to accommodate themselves to their new situation” ... and offered “the support of a close knit community organisation, well defined and strongly sanctioned norms and values, and a promise of salvation” (quoted in Haralambos (4 ed.): 1995: 474). These needs were met so effectively that it gave rise to a Methodist movement that swept through Britain.

There are many other examples of the role that religion has played in the drive to implement social change. It has become more widely accepted that religion can no longer be regarded as an inhibiting factor to social change but rather as a catalyst. The best example of this would be the development of liberation theology. This branch of theology began to develop from the 1960’s onwards in Latin America. Some priests of the Roman Catholic Church argued that Christianity demanded the Church fight the oppression of right wing dictatorships, and free the oppressed from their suffering. Poland is another example where the Roman Catholic Church opposed the State. The church supported the attempts of the Free Trade Union and in 1989 the Communist power monopoly was broken in that country (Haralambos (4 ed.): 1995: 463).

Thompson in his study of South African history, claims that the Christian missionaries played a role, intentionally or otherwise, in the subjugating of the African people from 1870 onwards.

“The African societies of Southern Africa experienced intensified pressures after 1870. Although they differed in many other respects, white farmers and business people, traders and *missionaries* [italics mine], and

⁸⁸ See Chapter 6 page 130.

government officials had a common interest in subjugating the Africans, appropriating their land, harnessing their labor, dominating their markets, and winning their hearts and minds” (Thompson: 1990: 122).

Thompson contends that Afrikaner Christian leaders played a significant role in the shaping of a “pan-Afrikaner nationalist ideology” (Thompson: 1990: 135). S.J. Du Toit was a Dutch Reformed minister who claimed the Afrikaners “were a distinct people, occupying a distinct fatherland and endowed by God with the destiny to rule South Africa and civilise its heathen inhabitants” this “ideology initiated by Du Toit would ultimately triumph in the fateful general election of 1948” (Thompson: 1992: 135).

However, the latter half of the 20th Century witnessed the Christian Church in South Africa unite against the Nationalist Apartheid Government. Church leaders from various denominations became prominent anti-apartheid leaders such as Anglican Church archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, Beyers Naudé. This is clear in the following quotation from Thompson:

“Since most secular antiapartheid leaders were in exile, in prison, or banned, clergy were thrust into the fore of the struggle against apartheid. Especially prominent were Desmond Tutu, Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, Allan Boesak, moderator of the Dutch Reformed Mission church and president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and Beyers Naudé, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches from 1985 to 1987, and his successor in that office, Frank Chikane. In June 1988, they and twenty-two other clergy, representing sixteen denominations, openly defied the state of emergency regulations by calling on all Christians to boycott the elections of October 26 to segregated municipal councils. “The truth cannot be bound by unjust laws,” they declared. “By involving themselves in the elections, Christians would be participating in their oppression or the oppression of others.” No elections could be free and fair under the emergency and because “the structures of the constitutional

system in South Africa are based on racial and ethnic identity” (Thompson: 1992: 239).

2.3.1 Preliminary summary

These perspectives though divergent in opinion, all acknowledge that religion and religious experience have an influence on both the individual and wider society. This is true whether viewed from the negative Marxist perspective of assisting the maintenance of the oppressive status-quo, or whether it be according to the revolutionary theology of Latin America, or even as a stabilising influence (such as Methodism was in the Industrial Revolution of 18th Century Britain) within the chaos of modern society, or from within the historical context of South Africa’s political history. The consensus of the spectrum of these opinions is that religion influences the way individuals and societies function, sometimes profoundly so.

2.4 RELIGION AND CULTURE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

As is the case within sociology, so too psychological investigations of religion are fraught with difficulties and divergent opinions as “the religious life is essentially a mystery, and that in its very nature it can never be made completely clear and intelligible” (Watts: 1988: 3).

The challenge facing psychologists in their investigation lies in needing to find “ways of understanding better what committed religious people would see as the inner core of religious experience and understanding. However there are several obstacles to doing this. One obvious one is that religious experience, like all experience, is difficult to study in a systematic, reliable way. Another is that because religious experience is rather unpredictable, it may prove elusive when you try to study it” (Watts: 1988: 2). Groeschel echoes these sentiments with the following statement: “Perhaps the most perplexing question in the psychology of religion concerns the origin of faith and the process of belief that follows the experience of faith” (1992: 126).

With these among other difficulties in mind it is useful to examine the definition of religion as presented by W.H. Clark: Religion is "*the inner experience of the individual when he senses a Beyond, especially as evidenced by the effect of this experience on his behaviour when he actively attempts to harmonise his life with the Beyond*" (1958: 22). He acknowledges that this is not an exhaustive definition. However, it does facilitate an understanding that religion must be noted as first of all being "something inward" and secondly "that the essential experience partakes of mystical qualities" (Clark: 1958: 22). This definition also reveals that the believer's "reaction to inner religious experience is to please, by appropriate actions, the divine person with whom one feels he has been in contact during the experience, or at least to bring one's life into harmony with the essential reality apprehended through the experience" (Clark: 1958: 23).

The objective for the believer would be to attain a level of religious maturity which "will involve an awareness of God or some cosmic reality, an inward experience, and an outward expression" of that experience (Clark: 1958: 241)⁸⁹.

Jung also stressed the tension between the experience of the believer with God and the need for this experience to influence the life and actions of the believer. The focus for Jung was on the importance of "*experience*". He wrote, "Only that which acts upon me do I recognise as real and actual" (in Clift: 1986: 4).

In Jung's view if God had no effect on a person, then God might as well not exist. If God was simply absolute and beyond all human experience, then Jung was not interested. But if God was something to be experienced in the soul then Jung said, "at

⁸⁹ Clark describes worship from a psychological perspective as follows: "True worship is a state of being which envisages all of life and enables the individual, in part consciously and in part unconsciously, to bring all of his experience and concerns under survey and direct them toward an Object which integrates them and gives them meaning. This in turn yields perspective, the capacity to distinguish between values, and a reduction of tensions...In its more spontaneous, comprehensive form it may become an antidote for the unwholesome tensions which plague modern life and constitute a poignant milestone in the ascent of creative growth"(Clark: 1958: 241).

once I must concern myself with him, for then he can become important, even unpleasantly so, and can affect me in practical ways.” (Clift: 1986: 4).

2.4.1 Preliminary summary

The sociologists emphasise that religion influences society and the way it behaves⁹⁰. Psychology too acknowledges that religion has a role to play in the way that the individual comes to terms with an understanding of “self”. Watts emphasises this: “Religious knowing is a highly personal process that is both similar to, and intertwined with, knowledge of ourselves” (1988: 152). Therefore, from the perspectives of the studies of both society and personality, religion has an important place and function in ensuring the well being of the individual and the community.

2.5 RELIGION AND CULTURE: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Hans Küng in his book “On being a Christian” begins with the question “Why should one be a Christian?” (1977: 25 ff.) and answers his question later in the book by stating “In order to be truly human” (1977: 601). The argument he follows deals with the need for Christianity to be understood as a form of “Radical Humanism” (Küng: 1977: 31).

The reason Küng proposes this is that “Man today wants above all to be human. Not a superman, but equally not a sub-man. He wants to be completely man in a world as human as possible” (1977: 26). The determination to experience what it means to be “completely man” (Küng: 1977: 26) arises from within the reality of the pressures and disorientation brought to bear on the individual in the rapidly developing modern world of today⁹¹.

⁹⁰ See para 2.2 page 32.

⁹¹ “It has been observed that if the last 50 000 years of man’s existence were divided into lifetimes of approximately 62 years each, there have been about 800 such lifetimes. Of these 800, fully 650 were spent in caves. Only during the last 70 lifetimes has it been possible to communicate effectively from one lifetime to another— as writing made it possible to do. Only during the last 6 lifetimes did masses of men ever see a printed word. Only during the last four has it been possible to measure time with any precision. Only in the last two has anyone anywhere used an electric motor. And the overwhelming majority of all the material goods we use in daily life today have been developed within the present, the 800th, lifetime.” (Küng: 1977: 38-39).

According to Küng the meaning in life so desperately sought by the individual cannot be found in the realm of science and technology alone. Arnold Toynbee, the renowned historian, states: "For a true and lasting peace, a religious revolution is, I am sure, a sine qua non. By religion I mean the overcoming of self-centredness, in both individuals and communities, by getting into communion with the spiritual presence behind the universe and by bringing our wills into harmony with it. I think this is the only key to peace, but we are very far from picking up this key and using it, and until we do, the survival of the human race will continue to be in doubt" (quoted in Küng: 1977: 60).

Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker challenges the Christian Church to live the radical Christian truth in the following statement: "There is one thing I would like to tell the theologians: something which they and others should know. They hold the sole truth which goes deeper than the truth of science, on which the atomic age rests. They hold a knowledge of the nature of man that is more deeply rooted than the rationality of modern times. The moment always comes inevitably when our planning breaks down and we ask and will ask about this truth. The present bourgeois status of the church is no proof that men are really asking about Christian truth. This will be convincing when it is lived" (quoted in Küng: 1977: 83).

This living out of the radical Christian faith must be done in a rational way and not as a blind lashing out at the uncertainties of modern existence. "Faith must not be blind, but responsible. Man ought not to be mentally coerced, but rationally convinced, so that he can make a justifiable decision of faith. Faith must not be void of reality, but related to reality. Man ought not to have to believe simply, without verification. His statements should be proved and tested by contact with reality, within the present-day horizon of experience of man and society, and thus be covered by the concrete experience of reality." (Küng: 1977: 65).

The way that this can take place is through developing a changed awareness of God. As the awareness of God changes, the individual will discover startling truths not only

of God, but also of humanity's need to respond to this changed awareness of the love of God. Küng stresses that his understanding of Jesus and his teachings leads to the conclusion that "changed awareness" or "fundamental transformation" is "achieved through man's surrender to God's will ... Jesus expects no more and no less than a fundamental, *total orientation of man's life toward God*: an undivided heart, in the last resort serving not two masters but only one. Awaiting God's rule, in the midst of the world and amongst his fellow men, man should give his heart in the last resort simply and solely to God: not to money and possessions, not to rights and honour, nor even to parents and family ... Even the closest bonds must be set aside as of secondary importance beside this basic decision" (Küng: 1977: 249 ff.)⁹².

However, presenting the reality of this approach of Radical Humanism necessitates the revolutionising of existing theology and church practice. It is as this revolution takes place that the truth is uncovered. The truth is that God's will is "man's well being" (Küng: 1977: 251)⁹³.

This was the message and call of Jesus. Existing religious and political systems were not enough; they could not guarantee salvation. God instituted the Commandments "for man's sake and not man for the sake of the commandments. This means that service to man has priority over observance of the law. No norms or institutions can be made absolute"(Küng: 1977: 252). This is true also for the temple. Jesus "relativises the temple and this means the whole order of the cult, the liturgy, worship of God in the strict sense of the term. Even the temple is not the beginning and the end of all God's ways. Even the temple will have an end, it is not eternal ... This means that reconciliation and everyday service to our fellow man have priority over service to God and observance of the times of cult. Cult, liturgy, service to God, likewise cannot be made absolute. Man may never be sacrificed to an allegedly absolutely

⁹² Küng quotes the following Scripture passages in support of his argument: (Matt 6. 19-21, 24-34; Mk 10.17-27); (Mt. 5.38-42; Mk 10.42-44); (Lk. 14.26; Mt. 10.34-37).

⁹³ "God's will does not waver. Nor can it be manipulated ... God wills nothing for himself, nothing for his own advantage, for his greater glory. God wills nothing but man's advantage, man's true greatness and his ultimate dignity. This is then God's will: man's well being" (Küng: 1977: 251).

obligatory rite or pious custom ... all cult and all liturgy, rites and customs, practices and ceremonies, feasts and celebrations are to be judged by the criterion of whether they exist for man or not. Man is the measure even of service to God ... Humanity replaces formalism, ritualism, liturgism, sacramentalism. Service of man it is true, does not replace service of God. But service of God never excuses from service of man: it is in service to man that service to God is proved" (Küng: 1977: 253).

2.5.1 Preliminary summary

Theology stresses that the desire for fulfilment within the individual and society is only possible through a changed awareness of, or experience of, God. This experience of God must lead to radical action by the believer in the life of the community. Küng called this type of action - "Radical Humanism". Theology presents the scriptural paradox that it is only by giving that we receive, by dying to self that we live⁹⁴. Theology then proposes that the experience of the relationship with God must lead to dynamic and selfless action for the sake of "the other". This will then bring perspective and meaning to the life of the individual and society⁹⁵.

2.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented the argument that religion and specifically "religious experience" has an important role to play in the life of the individual and in society at large. I argued that the discipline of sociology, though containing divergent opinions acknowledges that religion influences people on an individual level which, in turn, has an effect on the way society understands itself and functions.

Psychology likewise has opposing views, yet each perspective acknowledges that "religious experience" has an important place in facilitating well being in the psyche.

⁹⁴ See the Scripture references used by Küng, in footnote 92.

⁹⁵ Books such as Freedom of Simplicity (1981) by Richard Foster, and Discipleship (1981) by David Watson deal with this spiritual reality in depth.

Theology, presuming the necessity for religious experience⁹⁶, stated that the meaning in life, the well being, so desperately sought in the chaos of the modern world, is to be found in a transformed or radical spirituality.

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” must then provide a vehicle that assists the individual’s quest for obtaining meaning in a relationship with God, as well as promoting radical Christian service within society. If these objectives are successfully attained, the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” will have enabled the barriers of culture, language, theology and tradition to be transcended.

One of the intentions of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, is to present these barriers, not as insurmountable obstacles, but rather as examples of richness and diversity to be enjoyed by all peoples in a relationship with each other and with God. I am of the opinion that this is the inherent treasure of a multi-cultural ministry. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed in this thesis must facilitate this discovery.

⁹⁶ Christian theology is by definition a study of religious or spiritual experience. This is in a relationship with God, through the salvific act of Jesus on the Cross, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The importance of the “religious experience” is presumed. How this “experience” influences the life of the believer and impacts on the wider community is of great importance.

CHAPTER 3: THE THREE PILLARS OF A “MODEL FOR MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY”

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters I have presented: (i) John Wesley’s struggle to find purpose and meaning in life. This, he believed, was only possible if he could be assured of his salvation. It was only after this experience that his dramatic theological development took place⁹⁷. (ii) The disciplines of sociology, psychology and theology all acknowledge the important place that religious experience holds in providing a personal sense of meaning and purpose in life⁹⁸. (iii) I also presented the challenge from theology that Christian religious experience is not only vital for the individual, but that it must have a dramatic influence on society at large - Küng termed this “radical humanism” which he stated was what it meant to be “truly human”⁹⁹.

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” will then need to ensure that these criteria are met. The objective of the model is to offer the individual the opportunity to experience God at both a personal and community level. The model will also need to go beyond the moment of “religious experience” to direct the individual, and the church to which he or she belongs, to “radical” action within the wider community itself.

How then can this need for a meaningful experience of God at a personal level, which when obtained, enables the individual and Christian community to “radical” action, be directed by the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”? In my opinion this is possible by implementing what I term the “Three Pillars for Multi-Cultural Ministry”. The pillars are: (i) discipleship (ii) community and (iii) mission.

⁹⁷ See para 1.8 page 23.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 2 page 33.

⁹⁹ See para 2.5 page 42.

I am aware that a first glance at these pillars leads to the conclusion that they are one and the same thing. I concur that they are interwoven and interdependent, however they are also analytically distinct. Therefore each pillar must be individually examined, yet cognisance must be taken within the examination itself, of the influence of the other two pillars on it. For example:

3.1.1 Discipleship

Discipleship has inherent within it - evangelism. Yet discipleship is also more than simply the proclamation of the 'good news' of salvation. It is about living out in word and deed the relationship with both God and neighbour. The love for God must be reflected in love for neighbour. The two cannot be separated¹⁰⁰. This spiritual truth places demands on the spirituality and morality of the disciple. Discipleship, therefore, has to do with being a follower of Jesus, with the evidence of that relationship being apparent in 'radical' service to the neighbour¹⁰¹.

3.1.2 Community

Those that become Christians are automatically part of the "family of God"¹⁰². The theological concept of community however, presents deeper challenges to the Christian than initial membership to the "family of God" might suggest. Community embraces the need for the members of the community to share the burdens of each other's suffering, to love and serve each other and those of the wider community¹⁰³. Watson states "The overwhelming emphasis is on our corporate life together in Christ. We belong to one another; we are to serve one another; we are to strengthen and encourage one another" (1981: 61).

Trevor Hudson writes: "We cannot be Christ-followers alone ... Clearly, the climate for growth and deepening in discipleship is community. We cannot become the persons God wants us to be without experiencing divine and human relationships" in the deepest way (1995: 71). The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth "Now

¹⁰⁰ Mark 12: 28-34 (NIV: 1983).

¹⁰¹ Luke 6: 27-38, Romans 12: 1-21 (NIV: 1983).

¹⁰² Romans 8: 12-17 (NIV: 1983).

¹⁰³ Acts 2: 42-47, 4: 32-37 (NIV: 1983).

you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it”, therefore, there “should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. *If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it*” (italics mine) (1 Cor 12:27, 25-26: NIV: 1983:).

3.1.3 Mission

Mission is intrinsic to Christianity. “This dimension of the Christian faith is not an optional extra: Christianity is missionary by its very nature, or it denies its very *raison d’être*.” (Bosch: 1991: 9)¹⁰⁴. It is, therefore, a vital element of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” as it “seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith ... Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world” (Bosch: 1991: 9).

Mission includes within it the areas of community and discipleship. Mission, for example, is understood to be “the whole church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world” (Bosch: 1991: 10). Therefore, mission is the participation by the church and its “engagement in respect of the realities of injustice, oppression, poverty, discrimination, and violence” (Bosch: 1991: 10). Mission also has evangelism “as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing the forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ’s earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Bosch: 1991: 10).

It is clear that discipleship, community and mission are individually vital areas of Christian ministry. Their strength is to be found not only in their separate objectives for ministry - but largely in how each pillar complements the objectives of the other.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 28: 19-20 (NIV: 1983).

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” incorporates each of the pillars to provide a platform for ministry within the church that is able to transcend cultural boundaries such as the differences in language, tradition and cultural expression. Before I am able to present how the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” achieves this, I must first present an in depth discussion of each of the “pillars” of the model.

3.2 THE PILLAR OF DISCIPLESHIP

David Watson defines a disciple as “a follower of Jesus. He has committed himself to Christ, to walking Christ’s way, to living Christ’s life and to sharing Christ’s love and truth with others” (Watson: 1981: 66). Bonhoeffer states that discipleship means “adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 50). Both of these definitions have at their heart the spiritual reality that a disciple is a follower of Jesus, a follower who attempts to live out his/her life as Christ would. This in turn implies a radical obedience and adherence to the person and ministry of Jesus. Without the relationship with Jesus, and the call to obedient following that such a relationship demands, there can be no discipleship. “Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 50).

Stinnette affirms these perspectives when stating “the Church must make it clear that the Christian life is a life for *now*. It is a life which bears the message of Christ by its daily *living into* the redeeming events of God in history, whose presence *now* in its corporate life is the occasion for its joy. In the Christian Year the Church proclaims not only by word but also by action, that ... its life is one of promise and fulfilment wherein torn humanity is healed and the prodigal is restored to his father’s mansion” (1959: 143).

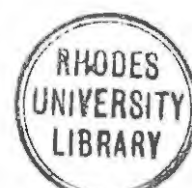
Watson and Bonhoeffer emphasise that being a disciple of Christ, and answering the call to discipleship are one and the same thing. “Discipleship involves a life of realism and sharing. We are called to share our lives both with Jesus and with other disciples” (Watson: 1981: 48).

However, the reality of being a true follower of Christ in the way described here causes deep personal and community conflict, for as Bonhoeffer said “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 7). The cost of being a disciple causes many Christians (and therefore by implication the Church) to avoid discipleship¹⁰⁵.

The Christian and Church that attempt to follow Jesus and yet at the same time attempt to avoid involvement in bearing the pain of ‘the other’ are guilty of dispensing “cheap grace” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 35 ff.). Bonhoeffer describes cheap grace as follows:

“Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjack’s wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices ... Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian ‘conception’ of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins. The church which holds the correct doctrine of grace, has it is supposed, *ipso facto* a part in that grace. In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin.

¹⁰⁵ There are many examples of Christian South Africans, in the history of South Africa, who had to live with the consequences of opposing government policy as a result of their faith. Beyers Naudé is one such person: “Soon after the election of 1948, leaders of all the white South African churches except the Dutch Reformed churches issued statements criticizing apartheid. In following years, many clergy came into conflict with the government. In 1968, The South African Council of Churches labeled apartheid a pseudo-gospel in conflict with Christian principles. Initially, nearly all the Afrikaner clergy were united in support of apartheid. But in 1962, C.F. Beyers Naudé, a leading Broederbond and former moderator of the principle Dutch Reformed church in the Transvaal, broke ranks and founded the Christian Institute, which brought black and white Christians of various denominations together, launched a Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPROCAS), and espoused increasingly radical response to official policies. The government banned Naudé and the institute in 1977” (Thompson: 1990 :205).



Cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God" (1959: 35).

Watson states that there are certain failures evident in the Church today, that I am of the opinion, can be attributed to being the consequences of dispensing "cheap grace" (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 35ff): (i) The lack of "doctrinal and moral discipline within the church" (Watson: 1981: 67); (ii) The "desperate lack of commitment on the part of numerous professing Christians, and a corresponding reluctance in Christian preaching to speak about the cost of following Jesus. Little reference is made of self-denial and the cross" (Watson: 1981: 67)¹⁰⁶; (iii) The "depressing lack of direction in numerous churches" (Watson: 1981: 68); (iv) The lack of "firm leadership and wise pastoral control" resulting in many Christians looking "elsewhere for spiritual guidance" (Watson: 1981: 69); (v) The "gross neglect in the area of evangelism, or an over-dependence on the big-time evangelist to do the job committed to the church" (Watson: 1981: 69). He concludes by quoting a sobering warning given by Carl Wilson - "Unless disciples are adequately built, there will not be enough competent leadership to carry on the work of the church" (Watson: 1981: 69)¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁶ "We may rejoice that Jesus has died on the cross for us; but what about taking up our cross daily to follow him? For too long the church has endorsed the 'club' mentality of church membership. A 'good' church member, reveals Juan Carlos Ortiz, is 'like a good club member; he attends the club, pays his dues, and tries not to embarrass the club.' Where, however, does the New Testament speak about church-club membership? Nowhere! We are members of the body of Christ, and members of one another, both ideas stressing our total commitment to Christ and each other. Lack of commitment is marked by shallowness of fellowship, flabbiness in evangelism, absence of body ministry, neglect of spiritual gifts, sterility in worship, feebleness in prayer, and general lack of love" (Watson: 1981: 68).

¹⁰⁷The dispensing of 'cheap grace' prevents spiritual growth from taking place. Spiritual growth needs to occur for the call to discipleship to be answered. Nee discusses this dilemma: "What then are the reasons for not growing? Perhaps there are two. On the one hand, it may be due to the negligence of those who, watching over the souls of the younger believers, may only speak to them of the grace of God and of their position in Christ but neglect to encourage them to seek spiritual experience. (Nay, those who watch over others may themselves be ignorant of life in the Spirit. How then could such ones ever lead others in more abundant life?) On the other hand, it may be because the believers themselves are not keen on spiritual affairs. Either they assume that it is sufficient enough merely to be saved or they have no spiritual appetite or they are simply unwilling to pay the price for advancement. As a deplorable consequence the church is over-stuffed with big babes"(1968: 85).

Discipleship has inherent within it a cost that the disciple must bear - in order to be a disciple of Jesus. The starting point for the disciple is to ask questions of himself or herself such as the following:

“Does my relationship with God cost me? Does it cost me in terms of emotional and spiritual energy as I share the pain of those around me and invite them to share my pain with me? Does it cost me in terms of my physical resources such as time and money? Am I willing to be used in the service of others? Am I willing to forgive others?”¹⁰⁸.

The term “discipleship”, however, has within it various aspects that need to be addressed to understand what discipleship entails. Bosch deals with these in his discussion of the “Great Commission”¹⁰⁹ (Bosch: 1991: 73 ff.). He explains the differences inherent in the terms: “disciple” and “make disciples”. Taken together they explain the concept of “discipleship”.

3.2.1 Make disciples

Bosch explains that the verb *matheteuein* means “to make disciples”. This verb “occurs only four times in the New Testament, three of these in Matthew (13:52, 27:57, 28:19) and one in Acts (14:21)” (Bosch: 1991: 73). It is used in the ‘Great Commission’ of Matthew in the imperative sense: “*matheteusate*, ‘make disciples’” (Bosch: 1991: 73). It is the “principle verb in the “Great Commission” and the heart of the commissioning. The two participles “baptising” and “teaching” are clearly subordinate to “make disciples” and describe the form the disciple-making is to take ... the overall aim ... is the winning of all people to the status of being true Christians” (Bosch: 1991: 73).

3.2.2 Disciple

The noun ‘disciple’ “(*mathetes*) is common, at least in the four gospels and Acts, for it is not found anywhere else in the New Testament” (Bosch: 1991: 73). It is the only

¹⁰⁸ Watson asks questions such as these to help those wanting to begin the life of discipleship to have a place to begin. See (Watson: 1981: 75ff).

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 28: 19-20 (NIV: 1983).

name used in the gospels to refer to the followers of Christ. “The verb that most commonly goes with “disciple” is the verb *akolouthēin*, “to follow (after)” (Bosch: 1991: 74).

3.2.3 Discipleship

Discipleship is then a combination of the above two concepts. It entails a following after Jesus, and a teaching of others to do the same. The word that Matthew used to link the followers of “Jesus’ own time and the time of Matthew’s community is, in fact, given in the command “Make disciples!” (28:19). In other words, those that “follow (after)” (Bosch: 1991: 74) the earthly Jesus have to make others into what they themselves are: disciples ... There is, for Matthew, no break, no discontinuity between the history of Jesus and the era of the church ... The past relation between the Master and his first disciples is being transformed into something *more* than history - it aims at nourishing and challenging the present hour” (Bosch: 1991: 74)¹¹⁰.

Groff explains discipleship as follows: “Discipleship is a primary term for spirituality, especially in Reformed, evangelical and Wesleyan traditions, shaping disciples according to the pattern of the Master Teacher, yet in a creative way so that each becomes a unique self” (Groff: 1993: 115). Discipleship brings with it certain challenges. The disciple is to model himself or herself on Jesus¹¹¹, and as a disciple to also belong to the wider community of disciples. “Every disciple follows the Master, but never alone; every disciple is a member of the fellowship of disciples, the body, or no disciple at all” (Bosch: 1991: 74). The challenge of discipleship is “living out the teachings of Jesus ... It is unthinkable to divorce the Christian life of love and justice

¹¹⁰ Thomas Merton emphasises that the challenge facing Christians lies in needing to “consent that we live not for ourselves but for others” (Merton: 1955 : xx).

¹¹¹ Discipleship is a “call to be like children-imitators, malleable, inquisitive” accepting the invitation of the “Master Teacher” to come and learn” (Groff: 1993: 115).

from being a disciple. Discipleship involves a commitment to God's reign, to justice and love, and to obedience to the entire will of God" (Bosch: 1991: 81)¹¹².

Bosch illustrates his argument by quoting Jacques Matthey:

"According to Matthew's 'Great Commission', it is not possible to make disciples without telling them to practice God's call of justice for the poor."(in Bosch: 1991: 81).

The Apostle Matthew emphasises the reality that discipleship is costly. In "Matthew's understanding the church is only to be found where disciples live in community with one another and their Lord and where they seek to live according to the 'will of the Father'" (Bosch: 1991: 82-83).

This dualistic existence needs a transformed awareness¹¹³ within the disciple to take place that, in turn, will lead to the "radical" action necessary to challenge the world¹¹⁴. This is a costly process¹¹⁵, however it is a spiritual journey that the disciple cannot embark on alone. He or she will need the nurturing and guidance of the "community".

¹¹² "Genuine spiritual knowledge lies not in wonderful and mysterious thoughts but in actual spiritual experience through union of the believers life with truth. Cleverness is useless here, while eagerness for truth is insufficient too; the *sine qua non* is a path of perfect obedience to the Holy Spirit Who alone truly teaches us. All else is merely the transmission of knowledge from one mind to another ... What he needs is not increased spiritual teaching but an obedient heart which is willing to yield his life to the Holy Spirit and go the way of the Cross according to the Spirit's command" (Nee: 1968: 86).

¹¹³ "The truth I must love in my brother is God Himself, living in him. I must seek the life of the Spirit of God breathing in him. And I can only discern and follow that mysterious life by the action of the same Holy Spirit living and acting in the depths of my own heart" (Merton: 1955: 4-5).

¹¹⁴ See (Küng: 1977: 31 ff.). Here he proposes that Christianity must be a form of "Radical Humanism" to be effective in the world.

¹¹⁵ The cost must not inhibit us from being obedient to the call for discipleship for as Küng reminds us "The vast problems of present and future will scarcely dissolve in the air if we turn our back on them. We must accept the challenge. Wistfulness is no substitute for daring" (1977: 54).

3.3 THE PILLAR OF COMMUNITY

3.3.1 The need to develop an understanding of the concept of “community”

An examination of the “pillar” of community first necessitates developing an understanding of what is “meant by the word *community*?” (Stinnette: 1959: 23). In the language of everyday - community - would appear to refer to people that live in the same geographical area or that share a common interest or religion. It may be said for example, that I belong to the Methodist community of Bloemfontein as I am a member of Trinity Methodist Church.

Theologically however, “community” means far more than a group of people living in the same geographical area as others, or who share a common interest. While the concept of “community” does consist of meeting “common needs, goals and desires which cannot be reached alone ... *community* is closely linked in its origins with the words *communion* and *communication*, which imply something more by the way of interpersonal relationships than is conveyed by mere proximity or, even, common need. Community therefore is more than a connection of individuals who happen to be gathered in one place”(Stinnette: 1959: 24).

3.3.2 The understanding of “community” from a New Testament perspective

“Community” is referred to in the New Testament by the word *koinoneo* which “conveys having, giving, or sharing something in common, but the **predominant emphasis is upon the communion and the community which man shares in Christ. The manifest expression of that community is oneness in love, mutual forbearance and service to one another**” (Stinnette: 1959: 24ff)¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁶ This “community” [koinoneo] expression among disciples will only take place when “sincere love” is expressed. Thomas Merton explains it in this way: “Our ability to be sincere with ourselves, with God, and with other men is really proportionate to our capacity for sincere love. And the sincerity of our love depends in large measure upon our capacity to believe ourselves loved. Most of the moral and mental and even religious complexities of our time go back to our desperate fear that we are not and can never be loved by anyone” (Merton: 1955: 177).

Bonhoeffer, like Stinnette, emphasises that “*koinoneo*” must be at the heart of any Christian community (Stinnette: 1959: 24) . **Bonhoeffer claims that the Christian community is to be the visible presence of the Son of God on the earth** - “The body of the exalted Lord is also a visible body in the shape of the Church” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 224). The body of Christ is visible today in the church through the proclamation of the Word, that “Word is the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit This teaching creates for itself a visible Church” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 225)¹¹⁷. However, it is not the aspect of teaching alone that makes the body of Christ visible to the world but also “the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper, both of which flow from the true humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 225). The fact that the community of believers is to reflect Jesus in a visible way to the world confirmed for Bonhoeffer that in “the Christian life the individual disciple and the body of Jesus belong inseparably together” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 228-229). Therefore, the challenge to the church today is to recapture the truth that community should be thought of not “as an institution, but as a *person*, though of course a person in a unique sense. The Church is One Man. All who are baptized are ‘one in Christ’ (Gal. 3.28; Rom. 12.5; 1Cor. 10.17). The Church is ‘Man’, the ‘New Man’ ... The new man is both Christ and the Church. Christ is the new humanity in the new man. Christ is the Church” (Bonhoeffer: 1959: 217). Downey explains his understanding of the “community” of the disciples being the visible presence of Jesus in the following way:

“From a New Testament perspective, the avant-garde of the new creation wrought in Christ is the community of disciples, baptized in his name and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Following the death and the resurrection of Jesus, **it is the community of disciples, the church, which forms his Body, living and breathing by the power of his Spirit.** Christ’s Spirit extends the salvific action and re-creative presence of Jesus by raising up a community of witnesses, faithful service, prayer and worship, holiness of

¹¹⁷ This perspective is also true of Downey who writes “human life and activity, events and history, are capable of disclosing the presence and action of God, that is, God’s grace. Indeed all these can communicate the very life of God, whose nature is to express and communicate love in and through creation, and above all through human beings” (Downey: 1997: 33).

life, and discernment of God's continuing self-disclosure in creation and history"(Downey: 1997: 37)

3.3.3 Who are members of the "community?"

The members of the "community" are those who have experienced "a conversion of heart and life. It entails a willingness to take part in the life and practice of this community, and to abide by the words and work of Jesus as expressed in the teaching of the community. It also calls for participation in the life of faith and worship of the community, especially fidelity to the breaking of the bread and the taking up of the cup in which Christ's mysteries are celebrated in memory and in hope" (Downey: 1997: 37).

3.3.4 Community is a "gift of grace"

"Community" as a pillar of the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry" is only possible through the influence and work of the Holy Spirit. This guidance of the Holy Spirit is evidenced in the way that the hearts, minds and lives of the members have changed to reflect the presence of Jesus. "Community" is, therefore, not something that can simply be established by a group of people - but is in fact a gift of grace from God¹¹⁸.

It is when "community" is regarded as a divine gift from God to us that the power of the Holy Spirit within the gift is released enabling community to be: a "community of sharing - for there, *all things are yours and you are Christ's*" (Stinnette: 1959: 15).

3.3.5 Community is "real meeting"

"Community" is then what Stinnette refers to as 'Real Meeting'. "Real Meeting is gift-giving. Truly to meet another is to give and receive something of what it is to be a person. Indeed, we cannot even become persons without the gift of real meeting. Apart and alone, we remain solitary individuals who possess no more community or humanity than pebbles collected in a box" (Stinnette: 1959: 15).

¹¹⁸ See (Stinnette: 1959: 14 ff.).

The concept of “Real Meeting”(Stinnette: 1959: 15) reminds us that “community” is not something simply attained but is a search. It is a search under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for “community” which “embraces both the unity between man and man and yet provides for the unique difference between I and thou” (Stinnette: 1959: 16). It is an indictment on the Church that its meetings are seldom expressions of “Community” where “Real Meeting” takes place (Stinnette: 1959: 15). Business tasks are dealt with, church services conducted and attended yet many are often left with a sense of “fatigue and an empty feeling” as “Real Meeting”(Stinnette: 1959: 16) has not taken place. Real meeting involves the giving and receiving of the “gift” enabling each to suffer and rejoice with the other. “The gift of oneself in real meeting and the response of the other establishes that communion”¹¹⁹ which is so essential to “Community” (Stinnette: 1959: 17).

3.3.6 Community is about “the development of personhood”¹²⁰

Real meeting entails the giving of the gift of oneself. However, the wonder of this is that “we receive ourselves in return. One enters as an individual and finds himself in the relation as a person” (Stinnette: 1959: 17). It is this that I understand “personhood” to be. It is in only in relationships with others in “community” that I and ‘the other’ are able to develop and become ‘persons’ - “Christianity is all about relationships: our relationship with God and our relationship with others” (Watson: 1981: 50).

¹¹⁹ “where there is real encounter, each person reveals to the other something of the ultimate mystery of life - the thou of God. This is the high wisdom of the Bible: ‘Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.’(1 John 4:7 RSV)”(Stinnette: 1959: 17).

¹²⁰ I understand “personhood” to be, and present it in this thesis as the following: The unique process of growth I endure throughout life that enables me to become a person. I have based this on Stinnette’s explanation see (Stinnette: 1959: 17).

This approach, then, demands that relationships within the community are based on honesty and not hypocrisy. When the relationships are governed by openness and honesty with each other that personhood is possible as it can only take place “in a community whose heart is communion” (Stinnette: 1959: 17). Watson stresses this fact:

“Jesus calls his disciples today to a life of realism, openness and honesty. We are to take off our masks. We are to be real with one another. We are to walk in the light, as He is the light; only in this way can we have fellowship with Him and with each other ... In fact it is as we bear one another’s sins and burdens, learning to forgive and accept each other, that the love of Christ will grow within us more and more”(Watson: 1981: 49).

The “Pillar of community” encourages the honest sharing of oneself, and accepting the honest sharing of the other - in a relationship with God and each other. It is due to this determination to embrace both the place of rejoicing and suffering - honestly with each other that ensures “community” can never be narcissistic and inward-looking, but that it always has the focus on “the other”.

This is the result, not of the deliberate actions of the community, but of the working of the Holy Spirit. David Power writes: “The locus of God’s power is the community itself, for the reality of power is the Spirit of Christ poured forth into our hearts. The symbols of the presence of the Spirit are those which signify interaction between the members in mutual charity and service”(Power: 1990: 120). Kent Ira Groff echoes this sentiment:

“The community of believers is the place where we learn the language of faith, hope, and love. The speech and gestures of worship beckon us to a dance between our woundings and the edge of adventure and experiences of bliss at the still centre, a rhythm of journeying and homecoming. These awakenings quietly prod us to move out from a purely personal believing to belonging. The discipline of community provides the betrothal ceremony where the private *longings* that gave birth to our believing can be wed as our *be-longing* to God-and neighbour” (Groff: 1993: 47).

The “Pillar of community” is therefore also orientated toward Mission, the third pillar of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

3.4 THE PILLAR OF MISSION

Bosch states that “mission” finds itself in a place of crisis, and that this is evident from an examination of the following three areas: “the *foundation*, the *motives and aim*, and the *nature* of mission”(Bosch: 1991: 4).

He discusses this current dilemma by presenting the argument of Schütz¹²¹ who located the “problem” not outside, on the mission field, but in the heart of the Western church itself. So he calls the church back from the mission field where it did not proclaim the gospel, but individualism and the values of the West, back to become what it was not but should be: church of Jesus Christ in the midst of the peoples of the earth. “*Intra muros!*” he shouted, “the outcome is determined by what happens inside the church, not outside, on the mission field”(Bosch: 1993: 5-6).

I will not enter into the debate as to whether “mission” is in a place of crisis or not. That is not the scope of this thesis. I have noted the argument as presented by Bosch to emphasise that as a “pillar” of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” I will be presenting “mission” as, that which must happen from within the spiritual life and experience of the individual and the church.

I therefore, will not be presenting “mission” as a list of “social action events” (such as soup kitchens, distribution of second-hand clothes etc.) that the church must embark on - to be ‘doing’ mission - but rather will examine how as a pillar of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, mission reflects the inner spiritual life of the believer and the church.

¹²¹ See (Bosch: 1991: 5 ff.).

3.4.1 A working definition of mission

I am again indebted to Bosch and will now paraphrase a list of aspects of mission that can be incorporated into a basic definition of what I understand “mission”¹²² to be:

“The Christian faith is intrinsically missionary ... it sees ‘all generations of the earth’ as objects of God’s salvific will and plan of salvation”. Mission, therefore, “seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith ... Ultimately mission remains undefinable”. Nevertheless “Christian” mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world ... God’s self-communication in Jesus Christ.” The mission of the church must always be referred to Scripture and the result of sound exegesis. “The church begins to be missionary not through its universal proclamation of the gospel, but through the universality of the gospel it proclaims” its missionary “task is as coherent, broad and deep, as the need and exigencies of human life The church-in-mission .. may be described in terms of sacrament and sign”(Bosch: 1993: 8-11).

As stated previously in the introduction to this chapter, each of the pillars for the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” -while examined separately- are, in fact, inclusive of each other. The above working definition highlights this as it includes within it the areas of evangelism and discipleship. It, therefore, must be acknowledged that mission is a “multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization and much more” (Bosch: 1993: 512).

3.4.2 Mission as a reflection of the spiritual life within

The broad outline for mission hammers home the truth that “Christian mission” is only possible as a reflection of the nature and person of God, as revealed in the life,

¹²² I again wish to emphasise that the definition outlined here is not an exhaustive one. I do not wish to presume in with any arrogance that I am going to develop a complete definition of “Mission” in this thesis. My sole objective here is to outline my personal and limited understanding of “Mission” that must be presupposed in order to understand my objective with developing the pillar of “mission” in the next chapter of this thesis.

ministry, teaching, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus which is present in the world through the lives and actions of the followers of Christ and the church. Mission is then a reflection of that spiritual life within, and not simply social action. This is vital for an understanding of the place of the “pillar of mission” in the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”. This broad base for an understanding of mission allows the incorporation of views from other theological disciplines to take place such as aspects from - ‘spirituality’.

Spirituality attempts to provide a dynamic understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer. This ‘work’ enables the believer to draw closer to God in his or her personal relationship with [Him], and at the same time educates the believer to allow his or her changed relationship with God to influence thought and action. This personal development is then the result of God’s ongoing revelation in the life of the believer - that encourages the believer to discover more of the nature and purpose of God.

To illustrate this - Trevor Hudson makes the following comment in his book Signposts to Spirituality: Hudson decided that the life and ministry of Jesus can be summarised by the words “People matter” (Hudson: 1995: 135). He states that to be “*a disciple of Jesus is to grow into Christlikeness*”(Hudson: 1995: 135). The drive by Jesus to minister to people because they matter, is due to Jesus’ recognition of “the image of God in every human being. With uncanny double-vision he sees people as they are and as they can become. Seeing people through these kinds of eyes he both enfleshes the heart of the Holy One and demonstrates the intended outcome of his transforming work in our lives”(Hudson: 1995: 135).

The Christian, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, becoming Christ like - will begin to see “people as they are, and what they can become ...” (Hudson: 1995: 135) while

carrying out the ministry of Jesus in the world¹²³. Mission, therefore, is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus by his disciples of today, as a reflection of the divine within them and within those that they serve.

3.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this chapter I stated that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” would need to meet certain criteria that would enable the individual to meaningfully experience God at both a personal and community level. This experiencing of the salvific action in the life of the believer must be evident in ministry to others in the wider community. I proposed that this was possible by the implementation of the “Three Pillars for Multi-Cultural Ministry” namely: (i) discipleship (ii) community and (iii) mission.

I have discussed each of these pillars, revealing how they have an individual character, yet at the same time are interdependent on each other. Each pillar can only be understood in relationship with the other two. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” will illustrate how these pillars assist in providing a ministry that transcends the barriers of race and culture.

¹²³ There are many publications on the subject of Spirituality that reflect the close relationship between Mission and the inner spiritual life, such as (Foster: Celebration of Discipline: 1989: Hodder and Stoughton), (Groff: Active Spirituality : 1993: Alban Press), (Watson: Discipleship: 1981: Hodder and Stoughton).

CHAPTER 4: THE FOUNDATION STONES OF A “MODEL FOR MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY”

4.1 INTRODUCTION

I stated in Chapter One of this thesis that Wesley was a man of great administrative and organisational ability¹²⁴. His overriding objective was the saving of souls. Once the person had been converted they needed to be spiritually nurtured and cared for, thereby ensuring healthy spiritual growth and development.

The “class meeting” and “bands” were formed to facilitate this need. Williams states it this way:

“Their purpose was to allow full freedom in speaking their deepest concerns so that they could exercise their mutual priesthood and build each other up in their most holy faith” (Williams: 1960: 137)¹²⁵.

¹²⁴ See para 1.10. page 24.

¹²⁵ Wesley believed that the ability to grow spiritually, to draw closer to God, was a gift of grace from God to the believer. He described the means of grace as being “prudential” or “instituted”. The “instituted means of grace” is offered through the observance of prayer, studying the scriptures, reading, meditating on the word of God, taking of the Lord’s Supper etc. They are the means of grace available to assist the believer’s individual spiritual growth and development. The “prudential means of grace” was more directed at the grace of God, offered to the members of the Church as a body and essential for the life of Christian fellowship. The means of grace whether instituted or prudential, are there for the sake of spiritual growth and maturity. See (Burtner: 1982: 229-231) and (Williams: 1960: 132-140).

Therefore, the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed in this thesis, must encapsulate the following Wesleyan Principles¹²⁶:

- (a) That all people are sinners and need to be saved;
- (b) The saving grace of God within the life of the believer must be evident in a changed lifestyle. This lifestyle is centred on “love for God” and the “love of Neighbour”¹²⁷. To this end the believer must be attempting to reach spiritual maturity through the “instituted means of grace”;
- (c) The Church has the responsibility in turn of nurturing the fellowship of believers, and this must be apparent through the exercising of the “prudential means of grace”. Wesley ensured the work of the church to take place by training and equipping the laity for the tasks of ministry;

¹²⁶ The model will also be in accordance with the MCSA’s “Journey to the New Land” policy contained in the following Resolution of the Executive Committee of the MCSA 1997, which reads as follows: “1.1 THE SIX CALLS OF OUR JOURNEY TO THE NEW LAND. The Executive affirmed the Six Calls as the Mission Call and Goal of the Church. We believe the Church is called to - 1.1.1 A deepened spirituality in the life of our Church. 1.1.2 An assurance that our life is guided by God’s mission. 1.1.3 A rediscovery of ‘every member ministry’, or the priesthood of all believers. 1.1.4 An engagement of what it means ‘to be one so that the world may believe’. 1.1.5 A re-emphasis on servant-leadership and discernment as our model for ministry. 1.1.6 A redefinition and authentication of the role of the clergy in our Church.” (MCSA Yearbook: 1997: 4). The intention of the “Journey to the New Land” policy is to return the MCSA to its Wesleyan roots.

¹²⁷ “And loving God, he *loves his neighbour as himself*, he loves every man as his own soul. He loves his enemies, yea, and the enemies of God. And if it be not in his power to *do good to them that hate him*, yet he ceases not to *pray for them*, tho’ they spurn his love, and still *despitefully use him and persecute him*” (Whaling et al: 1981: 304).

- (d) The above requirements are most effectively put in place through the working of small groups, as found with the “class meeting” and the “bands”¹²⁸;
- (e) All believers have the responsibility of being a disciple of Jesus, and fulfilment of this task must be evident in the corporate mission of the Church in the caring for the poor, the needy and the outcast.

Chapter Two of this thesis briefly presented the relationship that exists between religious experience and culture. This was examined from the perspectives of the impact of religious experience on wider society (sociological), and on the individual’s psychological well being (psychological). The theological perspective stated that religious experience is vital for an understanding of what it means to be a truly human person.

In Chapter Three, I proposed that a meaningful personal experience of God must in a collective way propel not only the individual concerned, but also the Church to radical action within the wider community. This is possible if the “Three Pillars of a Model For Multi-Cultural Ministry” (i) discipleship (ii) community and (iii) mission are implemented.

¹²⁸See page 23, number 1.10.ff. also - The “Bands” had a prerequisite for membership. They were “restricted to persons who had the assurance of the remission of sins” (Snyder: 1980: 60). The members applying for placement in a band were to be “closely examined” by Wesley’s travelling preachers and assistants (Snyder: 1980: 60). These strict requirements meant that there were fewer band members than class members amongst the Methodist people. It seems as if “about twenty per cent of the Methodist people met in bands, whereas all were class members. Since the bands averaged about six members and the classes about twelve, this means that there were probably about two or three classes for every band” (Snyder: 1980: 60). The emphasis on small groups placed within the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” will be from the perspective of the class meeting, rather than the bands system.

The “Three Pillars of a Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” in turn stand on the foundation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” itself. These foundation stones are given their shape, solidity, and purpose by a network of dynamic small groups. In fact the foundation stones of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” are a system of dynamic small groups. As I stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter, Wesleyan theology is essentially a theology developed within the reality of small groups meeting. Wesley did proclaim the Gospel to large gatherings of people, and many were converted in these public meetings. However, the true work of the Methodist movement, the nurturing and growing of the converted souls, the caring for the sick and the dying, the feeding of the poor, the educating of the illiterate etc. was coordinated and implemented by the network of bands and class meetings. It is as a result of this careful management and co-ordination of the needs for ministry that the Methodist movement grew and developed.

“One of Wesley’s strategies for the movement’s expansion was ‘Start as many classes as you can.’ Indeed, Wesley regarded the teaching, accountability, and nurture of the class as so essential for seekers that he advised against ‘awakening’ a spiritual quest within people without involving people in classes. Why? Because ‘the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again.’ Wesley and his people learned, the hard way, that awakening religious interest in people without bringing them into group life was ‘only begetting children for the murderer.’” (Hunter: 1996: 85).

It is due to this Wesleyan heritage that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed in this thesis has as its foundation stone the small group system. I will therefore first of all discuss the concept of “small groups”. The other issues such as the “equipping of the laity”, the “institutional means of grace”, the “prudential means of grace”, and “evangelism”; I will deal with at the relevant stages in the actual presentation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” itself.

4.2 SMALL GROUPS

The concept of small groups and their utilisation in churches has become a focal point in the present strategies employed by church growth specialists such as: G.W. Icenogle, Thom S. Rainer, Carl F. George, George G. Hunter III, Joseph M. Stowell, Julie A. Gorman, Jeffrey Arnold and Michael C. Armour¹²⁹.

I will be making direct references to them in the course of this chapter. They contend that it is only within the interaction and environment of a small group that deep individual spiritual growth can take place. The following definitions of what constitutes a small group illustrate this:

4.2.1 What is a small group?

- “A small group is *an intentional gathering of three to twelve people who commit themselves to work together to become better disciples of Jesus Christ ...* Within the broad context of this definition, small groups assume a variety of formats and focuses. There may be prayer circles, Bible studies, mission fellowships, sharing and caring groups, evangelistic teams, church ministry committees, new member classes, house churches, covenant groups, as well as a number of other groups. All are good examples of small groups to the extent that they are marked by a commitment to share the process of growth as disciples” (Arnold: 1992: 9)
- “A small group is a collection of individuals, from three to fifteen in number, who meet in face-to-face interaction over a period of time, generally with an assigned or assumed leader, who possess at least one common characteristic, and who meet with a purpose in mind” (Barker and Wahlers: in Gorman:1993: 122)
- “A Christian small group is an intentional face-to-face encounter of no more than twelve people who meet on a regular basis with the purpose of growing in the knowledge and likeness of Jesus Christ” (Hestenes and Gorman: in Gorman: 1993: 122).

¹²⁹ Titles of their works consulted are listed in the Bibliography section of this thesis.

- The “small group is a face-to-face gathering of a few (three to twenty) persons to be, share and to act for the betterment of one another and the wider good of others” (Icenogle: 1994: 14).

4.2.2 Small groups and their historical presence in the Church

It must be noted that the value and worth of the small group to the life of the Church is not a new discovery. Rather, the current emphasis on the place of small groups - and church growth - is a rediscovery of a church model used by the early church, as depicted in the book of Acts itself¹³⁰. Howard Clinebell states; “Small groups are a natural and time-tested methodology in the church. Church historians have noted that the use of small groups has been a dynamic factor in every major surge of new spiritual vitality in the church¹³¹. Christianity grew through the spread of its “network of new and tough groups”” (Clinebell: 1988: 349).

Clinebell is of the view that small groups are vital to the spiritual and psychological well being of individuals in our modern depersonalised societies of today’s world:

¹³⁰ “Christians can look deep into our faith roots and discover small groups are not new. Small groups are reflective of the very nature of God and humanity. They are both a demand of creation and a need of human culture. In this shifting period we are returning to our human and faith origins in search of community” (Icenogle: 1994: 10).

¹³¹ “In Korea-many Methodist churches are seeking to relate each member to a small ‘class meeting’, a contemporary version of the small groups created by John and Charles Wesley as the Methodist Church was being born in eighteenth-century England. These groups engage in Bible study, prayer, mutual caring, and service to the community.” (Clinebell: 1988 : 351)

“Small groups are particularly important in our period of history. It is psychologically true as in John Donne’s familiar line, that “No [one] is an island, entire of itself.” But the fact is that millions of persons experience themselves as islands, cut off from the continent of humanity. Many are not aware of the depth of their loneliness ... Cut off from real communication with others, they feel like grains of sand, washed back and forth by the waves of impersonal forces, having friction with others but no organic relatedness. In this kind of society, small, lively groups in a church offer sorely needed opportunities for persons to drink from the fresh springs of relationship, discovering the reality of the New Testament experience of being “members of one another.” (Clinebell: 1988: 351-352)¹³².

4.2.3 A theological motivation for the place of the small group

In the past few years the subject of small groups has become increasingly popular within business and church circles. Some churches have increased their membership rolls dramatically, and become very large congregations as a result of making the small group system “the core focus of their ministry strategy (like the meta-church model)” (Icenogle: 1994: 11)¹³³.

However, there is a need for the small group system to return to “the roots of the very nature of what God created humanity to be. Most of the current small group activity in the church is not organic but technical and curricular. Churches do groups because they work. Deeper theological exploration is long past due in a church charging off

¹³² Clinebell also quotes statistics furnished by Robert Leslie, on his identification of the existence of small groups, and the significant roles they played in the life of the Church throughout history: “Christ and his disciples, the Apostolic church, Montanism, monasticism, the Waldenses, the Franciscans, the Friends of God, the Brethren of the Common Life, German pietism, the Anabaptists, the Society of Friends, the Wesleyan revival, the Great Awakening, the Iona Community, the Emmanuel Movement, the Oxford Group Movement (from which AA came)” (in Clinebell: 1988: 349-350).

¹³³ The book: (Prepare your Church for the Future: Carl F. George: 1992: Fleming H. Revell Publishers) deals comprehensively with the Meta-Church concept.

into small group platoons without a declaration of war or a battle plan.” (Icenogle: 1994: 11).

It is important for the development of a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” in this thesis that I now firmly establish the theological foundation of the small groups role in the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” itself. The intention of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” is not going to be to increase the numerical strength of the church. If numerical growth occurs as a result of the implementation of the model, then that is a by-product of the work of the Holy Spirit. The intention of the model is to develop disciples for the kingdom of God, who are nurtured in a community of believers and who do the work of mission¹³⁴.

My purposes then, are in line with that of Icenogle and his explanation of what “community” is, and of the role of the small group within this community. He states that God is community. The very nature of the Godhead is one of community. Father-Son-Holy Spirit is a relationship of community. This community does not remain within the Godhead alone but also includes humanity. The invitation from God to each and every one of us is to enter into community with the Godhead and with the rest of humanity.

¹³⁴ In Chapter Three of this thesis, I discussed this when I outlined the three pillars of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” - discipleship, community and mission.

In this way we reflect nature of the Divine Being:

“...‘community’ should be understood as the movement between persons to experience ‘common’ life. Bonhoeffer called this ‘life together’. God said, ‘The two shall be one flesh’. Community is about the interpersonal connections between two or more beings. God exists in community. Community implies that persons with differences come together for a common life. God also exists as different persons with a common, intimate and interconnected life. God created human beings to be unique, separate and different, but also to have a common life. Community is the process of individual persons coming together into unity (com + unity). God is separate and very different from humanity, but Scripture teaches us God’s great creation desire is to be in community with humanity. The search for community is a very important reason for the existence of the Bible. Community is the reason for creation. Community is the purpose for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, being born, living among us, dying and being raised from the dead. Community, then, is the common life between God and humanity, *and small groups are the most visible and frequent form of this community* (italics mine)” (Icenogle: 1994: 10-11).

Jürgen Moltmann also explains the concept of God as community, through the suffering creative love of the Divine.

It is the “suffering of God with the world, the suffering of God from the world, and the suffering of God for the world” that “are the highest forms of his creative love, which desires free fellowship with the world and free response in the world.... This means that the creation of the world and human beings for freedom and fellowship is always bound up with the process of God’s deliverance from the sufferings of his love ... the deliverance or redemption of the world is bound up with the self-deliverance of God from his sufferings. In this sense, not only does God suffer with and for the world; liberated men and women suffer with God and for him ... between these two movements lies the history of the profound fellowship between God and man in suffering - in

compassionate suffering with one another, and in passionate love for one another” (Moltmann: 1981: 60).

Love, a suffering and liberating love define the community of the Godhead. All human beings are created in the image of God, and need to rediscover the God image within them. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross makes this possible. It is as the liberated enter into a relationship with the suffering God that they also enter into a relationship of suffering with each other. They, therefore, in community with each other share the indwelling presence of the suffering and liberating God, with God and with each other. This is the divine intention of community, and the theological objective of the small group ministry.

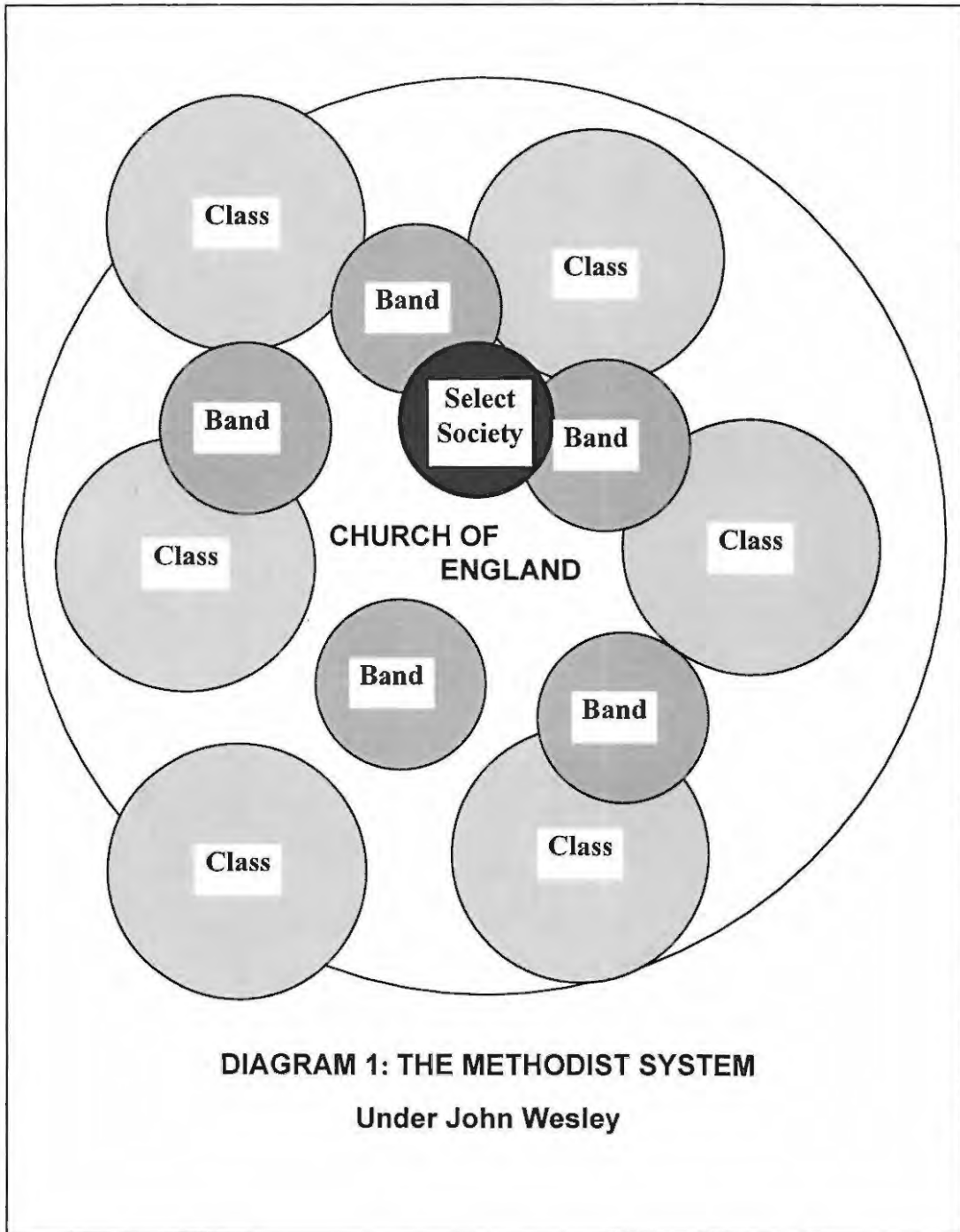
I have presented Methodism, in this thesis, as being a movement that proclaimed the forgiving love of God to all people, but most especially to the suffering and the outcast of Wesley’s day. John Wesley was determined that all should come to know the saving grace of God, and then to live according to the commands of scripture. He realised that it was not possible for the converted to succeed in this on their own; they needed support and nurturing. He, therefore, instituted the formation of small groups. These groups facilitated the growth of community, discipleship, and mission, as the group members learnt to embrace the suffering love of God at work in their own lives, and witness this love of God at work in the lives of those around them, through their obedient service to all in need.

4.3 WESLEY AND SMALL GROUPS

The Methodist societies were divided into classes and bands. “Perhaps it would be more accurate to say the societies were the sum total of class and band members, since the primary point of belonging was the more intimate level of community and membership in a class was required before one could join the society. The system functioned much as does the ‘mission groups’ structure today in the Church of the Saviour in Washington D.C. The class meeting was the cornerstone of the whole edifice. The classes were in effect house churches ... meeting in the various neighbourhoods where people lived. The class leaders (men and women) were pastors

and discipled ... the class system became the established Methodist pattern throughout England by 1746” (Snyder: 1980: 54 ff.).

Diagram 1, illustrates the way the small group system functioned under Wesley’s management¹³⁵:



¹³⁵ Adapted from the diagram by Snyder (1980: 61).

Diagram 1, schematically illustrates the way that the class and band system worked. The classes consisted of more members per group than the bands, therefore the circles depicting the classes are larger than those of the bands. The large circle labelled “Church of England” depicts that Wesley was not intent on forming a new religious movement outside the Church of England. His intention was always that there needed to be a spiritual revival within the Church of England itself. The classes and bands were intended as vehicles for this revival in as much as they encouraged personal conversion, and the need to grow into mature spirituality. The circle labelled “Select Society” was a cell group provided by Wesley that was even more intimate than either the classes or the bands. This group “was for those who appeared to be making marked progress toward inward and outward holiness, and also instituted separate groups for penitents. These group structures were all functioning by 1744” (Snyder: 1980: 61).¹³⁶

4.4 SMALL GROUPS AND THE CHURCH TODAY - PERSPECTIVES FROM CHURCH GROWTH SPECIALISTS

4.4.1 George G Hunter III

Wesley’s ability to organise small groups in this way, did not only make a profound impact upon the lives of the individual members of those groups - but has been a source of inspiration to many of the latter 20th Century Church Growth Specialists. George G. Hunter III proposes in his book Church for the Unchurched¹³⁷ that John Wesley offers the modern Church today, a key to the development of a model for effective ministry that transcends the boundaries of culture, and that assists the Church in its objective to provide relevant ministry. Hunter acknowledges that Wesley’s sermon “The character of a Methodist” provided the catalyst for his theories. The

¹³⁶ “Wesley explained in the 1744 Conference Minutes that the “United Societies,” divided into classes, “consist of awakened persons. Part of these, who are supposed to have remission of sins, are more closely united in the Bands. Those in the Bands, who seem to walk in the light of God, compose the Select Societies. Those of them that have made shipwreck of the faith, meet apart as penitents” (John Bennet’s Copy of the Minutes of the Conferences ... page 14: quoted in Snyder: 1980: 62).

¹³⁷ (1996: Abingdon Press).

model he developed uses the analogy of the formation of the “pins” for ten-pin bowling:

“Standing on Mr. Wesley’s shoulders, I have developed a model that reproduces several of his “pins,” but which also interfaces afresh with the Scriptures, and with the wider Reformation tradition, and also with my observation of apostolic congregations and my interviews with first generation converts out of secularity. In the model I now commend, each of the ten pins is named, and each row of pins is also named. The one pin in the first row deals with what most modern secular people need to **Discover** before they can effectively begin the Christian pilgrimage. The second row, with two pins, features what God wants all people to **Experience**. The third row, with three pins, identifies the essential features of the **New Life** in Christ. The fourth row, with four pins, focuses on the **New Lifestyle** to which Christ calls us” (Hunter: 1996: 44-45).

To illustrate how Hunter’s church growth principles are based on the theology of John Wesley and how he then justifies the urgent formation of small groups in any church that wishes, not only to grow spiritually and numerically, but in a way that nurtures community and mission, and that transcends the boundaries of culture, I will now briefly expand on each of the rows described by Hunter above.

4.4.1.1 First row -The discovery

The starting point needs to be the **Discovery** that we “matter to God” (Hunter: 1996: 45). The beginning of a relationship with God offered in Jesus Christ can be approached from either one of two perspectives:

(i) The Discovery that “I matter to God” - It makes no difference to God as to who “I” am, or what “I” have done in this life, “I” matter to God and He loves me. Luke 15 and the following parables of Jesus: The lost sheep, The lost coin and, The lost son, are of great value here. They all emphasise that “(1) Something of great value is lost. (2) In response to this loss, there is an all-out search, or an anguished vigil. (3) When the lost is found, there is a great celebration. (4) God searches like the shepherd, the

woman and the father. (5) He does this because, like the sheep, the coin, and the son, we matter supremely to the Searcher” (Hunter: 1996: 46).

He further illustrates his argument with references to Augustine and his exhortation “God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love” and Kierkegaard “read the Bible as though it were a letter from God with your personal address on it.”(Hunter: 1996: 46).

(ii) There are many that as a result of deep personal crisis, tragedy, or disillusionment due to the presence of suffering and pain in the world at large, are unable to entertain the notion of God. Hunter proposes that the Discovery that needs to be made here, is that of the Incarnation. The “God to whom we matter does not care for us from a safe distance - like a general at headquarters is concerned for his troops under siege. He is “Emmanuel” - “God is with us” - who paces the floor with us, suffers with us, and shares in the struggles of our lives” (Hunter: 1996: 46)

Hunter admits that the above perspectives are not the “whole gospel” (Hunter: 1996” 46) but are a necessary starting point from which the person can be led into a relationship with God. His point of departure - “I matter to God” - supports strongly the determination of Wesley to work with the poor and the outcast of English society. Wesley worked tirelessly to assist them in their personal search to discover that they are important and valuable in the sight of God. Therefore, they especially, had need

not only of salvation (Wesley's primary focus), but also of clothes, food, and a decent wage as well as for education, justice and equality before the law¹³⁸.

4.4.1.2 Second row -The new relationship

Hunter emphasises that the experience of becoming a Christian has two normative experiences contained within it: (i) A new relationship with God and (ii) A new relationship with the people of God - the Church:

(i) It is clear that Hunter enforces Wesley's theological position of Prevenient Grace¹³⁹ in his own thinking. He puts it this way:

“This faith relationship with God comes to us by sheer grace; we can never deserve it or earn it because we are sinners ... But, in the death of Jesus on a cross, ‘God showed his love for us’ - a greater love than even our love of ourselves - and this greater love pulls us out of ourselves and invites us to respond to God in faith” (Hunter: 1996: 47).

(ii) Hunter quotes Wesley directly in the following statement: “In Wesley's words, “Christianity is not a solitary religion, but a social religion”” (Hunter: 1996: 48). Hunter points out that for many the experiencing of the Church, and the people that

¹³⁸ “Has poverty nothing worse in it than this, that it *makes men liable to be laughed at?*...Is not want of food something worse than this? God pronounced it as a curse upon man, that he should earn it “by the sweat of his brow.” But how many are there in this Christian country, that toil, and labour, and sweat, and have it not at last, but struggle with weariness and hunger together? Is it not worse for one, after a hard day's labour, to come back to a poor, cold, dirty, uncomfortable lodging, and to find not even the food which is needful to repair his wasted strength? You that live at ease in the earth, that want nothing but eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand how well God hath dealt with you, is it not worse to seek bread day by day, and find none? Perhaps to find the comfort also of five or six children crying for what he has not to give! Were it not that he is restrained by an unseen hand, would he not soon “curse God and die”? O want of bread! Want of bread! Who can tell what this means, unless he hath felt it himself? I am astonished it occasions no more than heaviness even in them that believe” (Excerpt from Wesley's sermon; “Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations” quoted in Burtner: 1982: 240).

¹³⁹ See the quote inserted from (Whaling et al: 1981: 310 -311) on page 158.

make up the church, comes before any personal experience of, or relationship with, God¹⁴⁰.

Hunter promotes that a fulfilling experience “in the Church necessarily requires involvement in two structures. Wesley called his version of these two structures the society and the class meeting; most people experience these two structures as the worshipping congregation and the small group” (Hunter: 1996: 48).

It is for this reason that Hunter stresses the importance of the role of the small group in the Church. The person who only worships, for example, on a Sunday morning and experiences there the “proclamational, sacramental, and liturgical” life of the church, but not the small group or cell group, only experiences half of what the church has to offer. It is chiefly in the small group that the deep pastoral care and the building of meaningful relationships take place (Hunter: 1996: 48)¹⁴¹.

4.4.1.3 Third row - The new life

This row has contained within it three elements that are basic to the Christian life that we must live, they are (i) doing the will of God, (ii) learning to love other people and (iii) freedom in Christ.

¹⁴⁰ “Many people experience the Church, in some form, before they experience the faith relationship with God; that is natural, because the faith is “more than taught,” and one’s experiences in the Church should be more stacked on the side of faith than one’s experiences in a fallen world ... Christianity is a communal faith” (Hunter: 1996: 48).

¹⁴¹ “Only in the church’s redemptive cells do we really know each other, and support each other, and pull for each other, and draw strength from each other, and weep with each other, and rejoice with each other, and hold each other accountable, and identify with each other’s gifts, and experience what it means to be “members of one another” (Hunter: 1996: 48).

(i) The Christian must learn that as a child of God, he\she is no longer his\her own but the Lord's bought with a price. Hunter again draws from the theology of John Wesley:

As "Wesley explained, 'The one design of the Christian's life is to do God's will, not his or her own will; the Christian's one intention now is to please God'. Wesley explains that doing God's will means, first, obedience to God's commandments, 'from the least to the greatest.' Wesley explains that doing God's will also involves devoting our talents to God's purposes. So, the faith in which we live is an 'obedient faith'" (Hunter: 1996: 49).

The obedience that the Christian must hold to in a relationship with God, is not from the place of subservience - but motivated by loving gratitude for the new life received. The drive for the Christian is the attempt to live out this life in tune with the purpose of God so that God's love may be revealed to all, through the loving service of the Christian to all those who are in need.

(ii) The need to learn to love other people originates in the commandment of Jesus to "love your neighbour as yourself" (NIV: 1991: Matthew 22: 38b). This commandment follows the directive to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (NIV: 1991: Matthew 22: 37b). Hunter stresses that this is *agape* love for all people and, in fact, for all of creation itself. John Wesley "observed that the true Christian 'loves every man as his own soul. His heart is full of love for all mankind'" (Hunter: 1996: 49). It is this Love which must be the motivation for any mission of the church, for any feeding of the poor and ministry to the sick, for the pursuit of justice and equality for all people.

(iii) Freedom in Christ - There are many different themes in the Bible that represent God as the God who comes to set his people free. There are the narratives of the escape from Egypt and the Exodus of the liberated Hebrew slaves to the promised land in Canaan. The New Testament offers as its "central event ... the resurrection of Jesus" (Hunter: 1996: 50) thereby liberating all the children of God from the power of sin and eternal death. While it is still possible for us to sin, we can be freed from the

compulsion to sin” (Hunter: 1996: 50)¹⁴², in the words of John Wesley “God takes away ‘our bent to sinning’” (in Hunter: 1996: 51).

4.4.1.4 Fourth row – The new lifestyle

Hunter identifies four “pins” that shape the Christian lifestyle:

(i) Live in the world but not of it: He refers to this as having to learn to live according to “Kingdom values, rather than the values of Hollywood, or Madison Avenue, or the ideologies in our culture. Wesley explained that the faithful Christian does not let the idols of this world distract her, nor keep the Christian from running her race. ‘Vice, even if it is fashionable, is still vice’” (Hunter: 1996: 52).

(ii) Service and ministry: The challenge put to the Church by God’s love within it, is to do “good for all people” (Wesley, quoted in Hunter: 1996: 52). The call is to live for others rather than for ‘ourselves’. Therefore, the hungry must be fed, the naked clothed, the sick and those in prison visited¹⁴³.

(iii) Witness and mission: Wesley urged that as the “Christian does good to people’s bodies, ‘much more does he labor to do good to their souls’” (quoted in Hunter: 1996: 52). The Great Commission¹⁴⁴ reminds us that “every person has the inalienable right to discover that he or she matters to God, to have the opportunity to covenant with God and with God’s people, to experience the new life and to live the new lifestyle” (Hunter: 1996: 52).

(iv) The discovery of our new identity: Hunter suggests that it is only as we become followers of Jesus Christ that “we discover our identity and we begin to become our true selves. As Wesley emphasised, the image of God is restored within us” (Hunter: 1996: 52). This does not mean the Christian life takes away all sense of individuality, forcing all believers to become an amorphous mass, but, rather, the discovery of the new identity in Christ allows the gift of life offered to each of us, as His children and created in his image, to be released.

¹⁴² See also Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection para 1.9 page 25.

¹⁴³ See (NIV: 1991: Matthew 25: 31-46)

4.4.1.5 Preliminary summary

Hunter has proposed that the small group is the most effective and dynamic organism within the church for enabling people to enter into the presence of God. It is when they are in God's presence in this way, that people are able to: (i) discover a new identity as a child of God, and (ii) that "I" matter to God, (iii) that God shares all of "my" life with me, especially "my" brokenness and suffering. (iv) This new relationship with God, enables the development of new relationship with other people, evident in (v) dedicated service and mission.

These emphases are also evident in the study that Gareth Icenogle has made into the "Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry"¹⁴⁵.

4.4.2 Gareth Icenogle

Icenogle states that there are two primary reasons for small groups to meet, and they are (i) Building relationships and (ii) Accomplishing mission or tasks (Icenogle: 1994: 25).

4.4.2.1 The model of Christ in the group¹⁴⁶

These foundational priorities must be maintained within the experience of a 'biblical' community; in other words, the group must be centred around the guiding presence of Jesus¹⁴⁷. In the days of Jesus, the group that gathered around him were to become a model for later groups to come.

However, these "communities gathered around Jesus were not models because of their perfection, power or charisma, but because of their curiosity, ordinariness, brokenness, diversity and willingness to stay together and follow Jesus [italics mine].

¹⁴⁴ See (NIV: 1991: Matthew 28: 16-20)

¹⁴⁵ (1994: Intersity Press).

¹⁴⁶ See (Icenogle: 1994: 142-145).

¹⁴⁷ "The motley nature and heritage of the Twelve was foundational to the unique development of the group's character. He defined the essential quality and nature and pattern of the group. Jesus' presence formed the life of the group. While the Twelve often wondered at his teaching and disagreed with his values, Jesus' charismatic presence and intimate relationship with Abba God was too powerful to ignore or to suppress" (Icenogle: 1994: 142).

These were voluntary communities. They shared every aspect of life, but had only Jesus in common. Jesus' personal presence and teaching moved them to live together in ways not prevalent to the world in which they lived. Jesus called the women to live in dignity and self-awareness. He showed the men how to treat the women with respect. The women were free to support the men financially (Lk 8: 3). The men were free to learn new ways of relating to the women. Both groups were called to experience life from God's viewpoint, as part of the kingdom" (Icenogle: 1994: 142).

It must be remembered that in the group dynamics of this small group of Jesus followers, honesty and openness played a very significant part in their successful emotional and spiritual growth. This was true in the way that the followers were allowed to voice their fears and tensions, their views and scepticism, and in the way Jesus was able to call them to something beyond themselves, to "a new way of life, a new dimension of life. He called them to change. He became more than their teacher and Lord; he became their friend and brother, and gave them direct access to God. As they watched and listened and imitated, the Twelve began to understand Jesus as their new and ultimate model of humanity and godly life" (Icenogle: 1994: 143-144). Therefore Icenogle regards the group of disciples as the ideal model of a small group¹⁴⁸.

Jesus was the role model of one making the kingdom of God a present reality on earth. Through Jesus, his work and teaching, the disciples were able to come into the presence of God. Similarly, the Twelve were the role model group to make the kingdom of God visible and a reality on this earth through being a community. The diversity of the group, and the fact that they had never before travelled together, meant that they had to deal with moments of great tension within the group. It was as they (i) learnt to overcome the obstacles that were separating them, and (ii) learnt to accept the challenges of the teaching of Jesus to their thinking and their learning, that they discovered what it meant to be the community of God present on earth.

¹⁴⁸ See (Icenogle: 1994: 145-146)

“This model of character development - this process of discipleship - was a small group process. Jesus did not isolate his encounters with twelve individual disciples. There are few accounts of Jesus focusing one on one with individual disciples. The experiences and healings, the arguments and confrontations, were in the presence of the group of disciples. Jesus’ call to discipleship was a call to be part of a small group. Their character formation took place in community, in their life together (Mk 8: 27-38)” (Icenogle: 1994: 146).

The intention of Icenogle in this section is to present the small group as a place where community, discipleship and mission are not only possible - but realised - as ordinary, fallible, disillusioned, “fully human and openly flawed ... motley men” journeyed with Jesus (Icenogle: 1994: 146).

Icenogle therefore also regards the small group of twelve disciples as a model among other groups¹⁴⁹. The ministry of Jesus to the Twelve was not for their sake alone. Jesus ministered to the disciples, and ministered with them, “to the multitude” (Icenogle: 1994: 146). The Twelve were drawn into the presence of God by Jesus, in order for them as the Twelve, “to be present as the realm of God among the other groups of people” (Icenogle: 1994: 146). Icenogle refers to David Prior as a source when he suggests that the ministry of Jesus can best be explained as a number of “concentric circles of persons” living in “increasing levels of intimacy with him” (Icenogle: 1994: 147).

These small groups which gathered around Jesus, became the models of the new life of the Kingdom of God as presented by Jesus. Those outside these groups, observing and witnessing the life of those within the small groups, were challenged to “repent and become part of the realm of God” (Icenogle: 1994: 147).

However, it is interesting to note the comparison that Icenogle makes when comparing the small group of the Twelve, to the large group - the multitude - who follow Jesus and the Twelve around. The multitudes are there to witness the ministry of Jesus.

They do not understand Jesus' invitation to them to enter into the realm of God. They follow Jesus around often to the irritation and chagrin of the Twelve. Jesus not only welcomes the multitudes but also frequently expects the Twelve to be there to serve the needs for ministry that the multitudes have.

Many of the teachings of Jesus suggest that the kingdom of God "was a reality for the Twelve, but could be (and often would be) missed by the multitude" (Icenogle: 1994: 147). The life with Jesus gave the disciples the experience they needed of "being and working in the reality (realm) of God. The Twelve with Jesus were God's kingdom come into being in the midst of the earth's kingdoms" (Icenogle: 1994: 148)¹⁵⁰.

This being the case, the crowd is still not the place where the deep spiritual growth can take place. Even in the presence of Jesus, the crowd is still easily swayed to manipulative and deviant perspectives of earthly power. It is the crowd that ultimately condemns Jesus to die, and who mock him as he suffers on the cross. Furthermore, the crowd pressures become so great on the disciples after the death of Jesus, that "the remaining eleven disciples deserted Jesus and went into hiding. The crowd will never be the arena in which the realm of God is seen. The crowd will not be the arena where Jesus transforms people. Only the small group is where Jesus' 'power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Cor 12: 9) (Icenogle: 1994: 148).

4.4.2.3 Preliminary Summary

It becomes apparent that the few "Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry" outlined by Icenogle are of great importance for the development of any "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry". However, the ten points contained in para. 4.4.2.3.1 serve not only as a brief summary of what has been discussed from Icenogle's perspective thus far, but also to illustrate the relevance of his emphasis to a Wesleyan "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry". In this way the theological focus points for Wesley in his

¹⁴⁹ See (Icenogle: 1994: 146-147).

¹⁵⁰ "In describing how Jesus taught the Twelve to pray, Luke implies that God's realm will come where Jesus is in the midst of specially gathered human groups" (Icenogle: 1994: 148).

institution of the classes and bands become evident in Icenogle's "Biblical Foundations".

It was as the Twelve journeyed with Jesus, as they witnessed him teach and perform miracles, care for the poor and the outcast - and as they attempted to imitate in their own lives these 'realities' of the kingdom of God among them - that they began to exhibit certain emerging values that were "important and integral to their life together as a small group who was the new family of God.

These are key concerns for all future groups that meet "in the name of Jesus" (Icenogle: 1994: 203). This discipleship model given to that early group, must become the foundational model for every small group that meets today and that professes Jesus as Lord (Icenogle: 1994: 203).

4.4.2.3.1 The ten key Biblical values intrinsic for small group development

1. The central focus of the group must always be Jesus.

Jesus called the disciples to follow him. In doing so the followers were being called to "focus on the centrality of Jesus' relationship with Abba God. Every group that calls itself *Christian* must be formed with Jesus and Abba God through the Spirit as the centre of the community." (Icenogle: 1994: 203).

2. The group of disciples was heterogeneous in culture.

The Twelve were not called together because they held common interests, nor because they had a common culture. They had very little in common with each other besides "their common humanity" and the leadership of Jesus (Icenogle: 1994: 204). Small groups that come together in the name of Jesus cannot come together primarily out of a common cultural bond. Their motivation must be the centrality of Jesus and a focus on him.

All other common values are "of secondary importance and can become idolatrous blocks to the centrality of Jesus and the common bond. Each person, when called by Christ, brings his or her own personal culture to the group ... Jesus is the

common relationship, the new culture and the bonding presence of the group” (Icenogle: 1994: 204).

3. The group must accept the invitation to ministry and to mission.

At the outset of Jesus giving the call to “Follow me” to the first disciples, the call was to ministry and to mission. The invitation was then for them to enter into a relationship with Jesus as God present on this earth, and to a life of ministry and mission. “Christian small groups are on the way with Christ and are called into ministry along the way. The small group is not “in Christ” if it is not in mission or in ministry” (Icenogle: 1994: 204). This often leads the group in its life into areas of work that can be frightening and cause disillusionment. However, if the group prayerfully focus on Jesus, and are nourished by the presence of God through the work of the Holy Spirit they will grow into a more “cohesive community” (Icenogle: 1994: 204).

4. There must be a sharing of life together in the group.

The group of the Twelve learnt that the life with Jesus, was a shared life. They shared their life with him, yet at the same time they were being called by Jesus to share life with the crowds that followed them. The more they attempted to draw Jesus aside for themselves, so the more the demands were made on them to share themselves with others. “The life together of the small group was under constant mandate to be a life *shared* with all who would come and ask to be fed. The group lived in constant tension of life for itself and life for others. The group was a training ground where they learned to live life together so they could have the freedom and power to share life with others” (Icenogle: 1994: 205).

5. The group must be a positive community for others.

The small group under the leadership of Jesus existed amongst many other organisational and group structures. In comparison to them, Jesus was able to develop a healthy community system, while they in turn propagated and perpetuated systems of abuse. Jesus transformed the understanding of what it meant to belong to a small group. The small group was to give “human beings,

both men and women, a new way to live life together. He gave them a radical new framework for human community ... that was a radical recall to the origins of God and humanity” (Icenogle: 1994: 205-206).

6. The group must be seen as a counter-model to the structures of the world.

The way that Jesus lived with the small group of followers helped them to develop a structure and culture within the group that was positive and obedient to the commands of the Creator. This often meant the group was in direct opposition to the “religio-political human structures” of the day (Icenogle: 1994: 207). The group must be, as the disciples were, Christ’s “Yes” “as a model of community”, opposed to those systems which are destructive to the values of the Kingdom (Icenogle: 1994: 207).

7. The group must be an invitation for men and women to live life together.

The church in South Africa today still has many areas of prejudice that it must combat and eradicate. These range from continued racist practices within the church - white on black - and - black on white - to sexism, homophobia, the propagating of unjust economic and class systems amongst many others.

Jesus demanded by means of his relationship with the disciples that they radically transform their cultural perspectives. Jesus achieved this as he “drew the disciples into the intimate circle of community between himself and the Father. The Twelve, and even more so, the Three had unique access to this new male familial intimacy. Their close proximity as men to this new kind of Father-Son relationship had a profound impact upon their relationships with one another, with women, with Gentiles, with children, with family and with organisational systems. They learned in their small group with Jesus to be men with new values, new skills, new characters, new intentions, new purposes and new patterns of relationships” (Icenogle: 1994: 210).

8. The group must be a demonstration of new and eternal family.

The new family of community established by Jesus was to learn and practice the will of God “on earth as it is in heaven”. They “were not to be defined by biological or cultural relationships, but by the intimacy of God’s presence and direction. And in this way it was an eternal family, for it had been established by the eternal God whom, Jesus knew intimately as Abba (Daddy)” (Icenogle: 1994: 211).

The shift that needs to be made by the group is that in Jesus the focus must no longer be on biological and cultural ties that divide the people of God, but on the spiritual ties that bind the children of God together.

9. The group must be a space for human empowerment.

The disciples had to learn a valuable lesson after the death of Jesus. They had to discover that they could not “make the group work on their own initiative and power. But only through a new experience of God’s power exercised out of their brokenness and powerlessness was the group given the mutual courage to regather” (Icenogle: 1994: 211). The ability to live as a community of the Kingdom, happened once they had accepted the Holy Spirit as the “higher power” of their lives personally and corporately” (Icenogle: 1994: 211). The higher power taught them that the love of the Kingdom was one willing to suffer and die for the sake of life for the other.

10. The group must live as a broken and resurrected community.

This is the challenge given to the group to live according to both “earthly and heavenly dimensions” (Icenogle: 1994: 213). The disciples had to discover that life on this earth would “be lived in a kind of scattering and brokenness” while the “heavenly life would be lived in eternal togetherness” (Icenogle: 1994: 213). The call them was to go out and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28: 16 ff.), to make “small communities of believers who would be disciples together” (Icenogle: 1994: 213).

4.4.3 Jeffrey Arnold¹⁵¹

Arnold echoes a number of the points made by Icenogle and Hunter in his exploration of “the “why” of small group ministry” (Arnold: 1992: 10). He states that the place of small groups in the life of the Church is essential for the development of (a) discipleship, (b) leadership and (c) community.

The overriding emphasis for Arnold is on the making of disciples in accordance with the command given by Jesus in Matthew 28: 18-20¹⁵². He acknowledges that effective small group ministry depends on the quality of the small group leaders. Therefore, there needs to be effective training of small group leaders to ensure that the potential for discipleship making is realised. The spiritual growth of the members in the small groups, is also dependent on their experience of community within the group itself. The establishment of community within the groups is vital: “Community is not one aspect of group life, it is the very structure within which the group operates. A healthy community will produce healthy disciples” (Arnold: 1992: 11).

He, therefore, states that “the goal of small group ministry is discipleship; the foundation is leadership, and the structure of small group ministry is community” (Arnold: 1992: 11). These three steps, discipleship, training of leaders and establishing community are to be found in Christ’s call to the disciples. The call was in effect a challenge for them “to *live with him, to learn how to live as his disciples, and to prepare others to hear the Good News*” (Arnold: 1992: 16)¹⁵³.

The years that the disciples spent living with Jesus encouraged them not only to listen to his teaching, but were also a challenge to them to imitate the way that he prayed, healed the sick, preached and taught the people. They learnt from first hand

¹⁵¹ See (“The Big Book on Small Groups”:1992: Intervarsity Press).

¹⁵² Arnold defines a disciple in the following way: “*A disciple is a committed follower of Jesus Christ who seeks to live a life marked by continued growth in understanding and obedience*” (Arnold: 1992: 19).

¹⁵³ See (Arnold: 1992: 16)

experience not only about Jesus, but very especially how to answer the challenges of a new life¹⁵⁴.

Arnold explains how Jesus trained and taught the disciples¹⁵⁵, equipping them to be disciples and leaders of the people: “On many occasions he took the disciples aside (for example, Mt. 5-7) in order to instruct them” (Arnold: 1992: 16) ... “He asked questions of them, taught them, admonished them, prodded them to take steps of faith, nurtured them, and loved them” (Arnold: 1992: 17).

Jesus used various techniques for the training of the disciples. He not only taught them through his preaching and teaching, but they were also given “on the job training”. In other words he sent them out in pairs to perform certain tasks¹⁵⁶. It was as they preached, healed the sick and comforted those in mourning - that they began to learn what ministry entailed.

“The disciples learned how to think and act based on their relationship with the master disciple maker. They in turn began to duplicate this kind of ministry after Jesus went back to heaven” (Arnold: 1992: 18).

4.4.3.1 Small groups and the early Church

The early Church after the experience of Pentecost¹⁵⁷ began to grow dramatically. The pattern of ministry can be divided into two major sections. (1) Public proclamation and preaching to large groups of people, for example, in the courtyard of the Temple, and (2) In small groups in the house churches. A significant portion of the work of the disciples was spent going “from house to house, visiting small groups in homes as they taught and made disciples (Acts 5: 42). People met together in their homes to break bread together and to use the opportunity to encourage each other to live out their faith in ever-greater obedience. There were home prayer meetings like the one

¹⁵⁴ See para 4.4.2.3.1 page 87, especially points (1) and (4).

¹⁵⁵ See (Arnold: 1992: 16).

¹⁵⁶ See (Arnold: 1992: 17).

¹⁵⁷ Acts Chapter 2 ff.

held while Peter was in prison (Acts 12: 12), and Peter's letters allude to 'house churches' (Rom 16: 5)" (Arnold: 1992: 18).

Arnold claims that the small groups and house churches were the "building blocks of the church in each city or region", and that the "church needed the "house church" for its survival (Arnold: 1992: 18). There were periods of intense persecution for the first few centuries after Christ, so the early church was often not able to meet openly, nor were they allowed to purchase large buildings for gathering" (Arnold: 1992: 18-19).

4.4.3.2 Preliminary summary

Arnold's perspectives on the importance of small groups can be summarised with the following points:

1. Discipleship begins with a choice being made to follow the Master.

It is not something that simply happens, but follows the choice made to become a disciple, "imitator" of Jesus (Arnold: 1992: 20). Furthermore it is a process that is marked by "a dynamic relationship between fellow Christians and their Lord, and that it is marked by continued progress" (Arnold: 1992: 20).

2. Discipleship means "becoming" like Jesus.

Christians must learn to follow the example of Jesus, becoming like Him. In this way, others witnessing the life and work of the Christians will be able to see in the Christians a model of Jesus, and then learn to follow him (1 Thess 1: 6) (Arnold: 1992: 20).

3. Disciples are made in community.

Jesus illustrated the "relational, community-based model of discipling" (Arnold: 1992: 22). The early Church continued with this practice and in so doing enabled the Church not only to survive persecution and hardship, but also to grow dramatically in numbers.

4. The Church "is intended to be a growing, dynamic organism, a community of growth" (Arnold: 1992: 23).

How can the church facilitate the process of discipleship and community within its ranks? "Small groups! Small groups lend themselves perfectly to growth in

discipleship because people learn best when they are part of a caring and committed community. That is they grow in understanding and obedience when:

- they experience things together with other learners
- they are held accountable to one another for continued growth
- they are affirmed and loved
- they are part of a structure that allows for and reinforces growth”

(Arnold: 1992: 23).

4.4.3.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

I began this chapter by stating that a large part of the Wesleyan theological heritage within the Methodist Church has to do with the development and nurturing of people within the small group system. Wesley called these groups bands and classes. It was also established that the early Church relied heavily on small groups, not only for its very survival, but also as the means for effective pastoral care. I presented Icenogle’s discussions on the theological motivations for a small group ministry. His point of departure was that God is community, and humanity was created by God to be in community with the Godhead and with the rest of humanity (Icenogle: 1994: 10-11).

Hunter was presented in the synthesis of Wesleyan theology and the challenge to the church of today to implement dynamic small groups. As far as Hunter is concerned, it is in the environment of the small group that the individual is able to discover that “I matter to God”. This discovery, along with the nurturing environment of the group enables the individual to live with changed lifestyle and to “do good for all people” (Wesley, quoted in Hunter: 1996: 52).

Jeffrey Arnold presented the small group as being the environment where the concept of discipleship can be examined and appropriated in action by the group members. This, in turn, he stated was in accordance with the pattern of the early Church’s ministry.

The importance of the foundation stones for the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” being -dynamic small groups- has now been outlined and motivated. In the next

Chapter I will present how these foundation stones underpin the “Three Pillars of the Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”. I will also present various church models for ministry employed by churches using small groups, and illustrate why these church models must be taken into account when developing a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

CHAPTER 5: CHURCH MODELS FOR MINISTRY

5.1 INTRODUCTION:

In this Chapter I will present and discuss various models for ministry used by churches. I will first of all present a diagrammatic summary of the focal points of the discussion thus far.

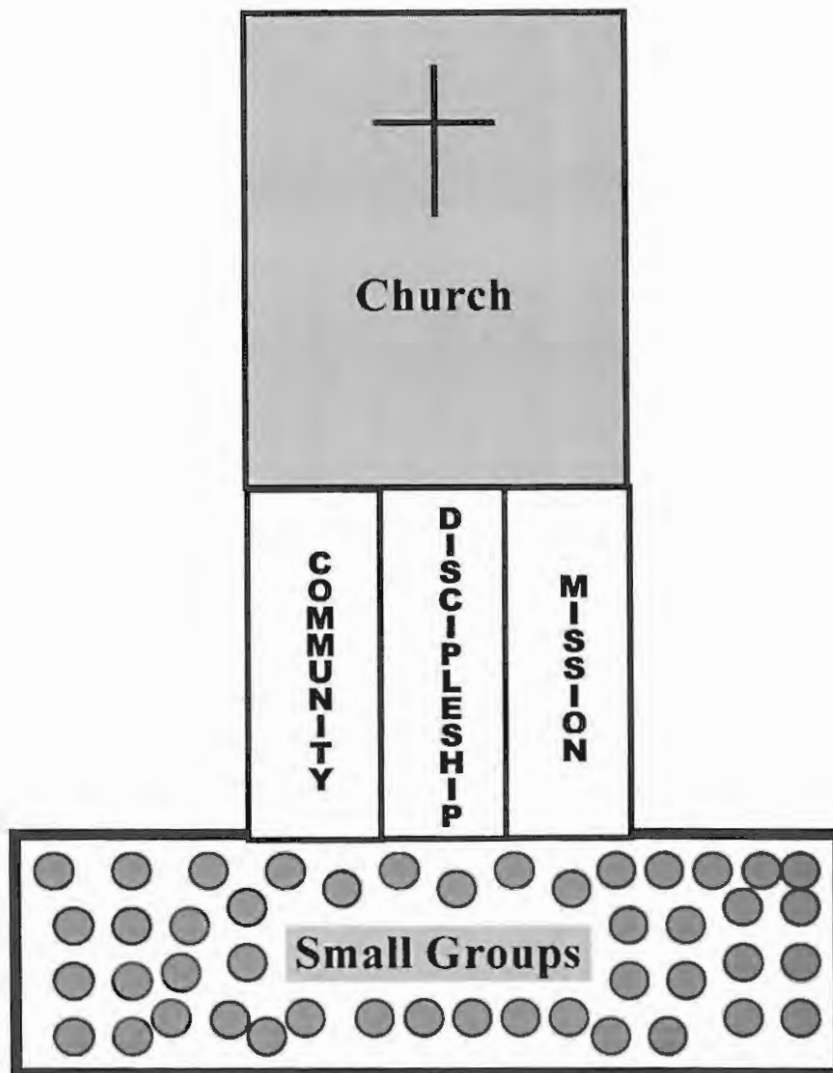


Diagram 2: A diagrammatic summary.

In Diagram 2, the Church is depicted as being built on three pillars: (1) community (2) discipleship and (3) mission. The pillars, in turn, have as their foundation stones, the small groups - represented as the grouping of small circles within the large rectangle. It must be understood that this diagram illustrates the salient points of the discussion thus far, and is not proposed as the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

1. It is evident that each of the pillars is of the same width as the other two. The intention is to illustrate that neither pillar is more important than the other, and that the church relies on each of the three pillars for its existence. The function of the pillars is to channel the work of community, discipleship, and mission within the small groups into the wider life of the Church.
2. Therefore, it is equally important to note that the small groups cannot exist for their own sakes alone, but exist to feed the wider church (the building), through the pillars. In this way there will not be a small group that only develops, for example, community within its ranks. The development of community within the small group only makes scriptural and theological sense when it ensures the ongoing development of community within the wider church. Similarly, another small group will have mission as its chief objective, yet this mission purpose will only find its true expression through the wider life of the Church. The objective of the pillars is then to channel the work taking place in the small groups to the Church itself.
3. Each one of the small groups contributes in some way to each one of the pillars. The small groups are brought into existence to meet certain needs within the

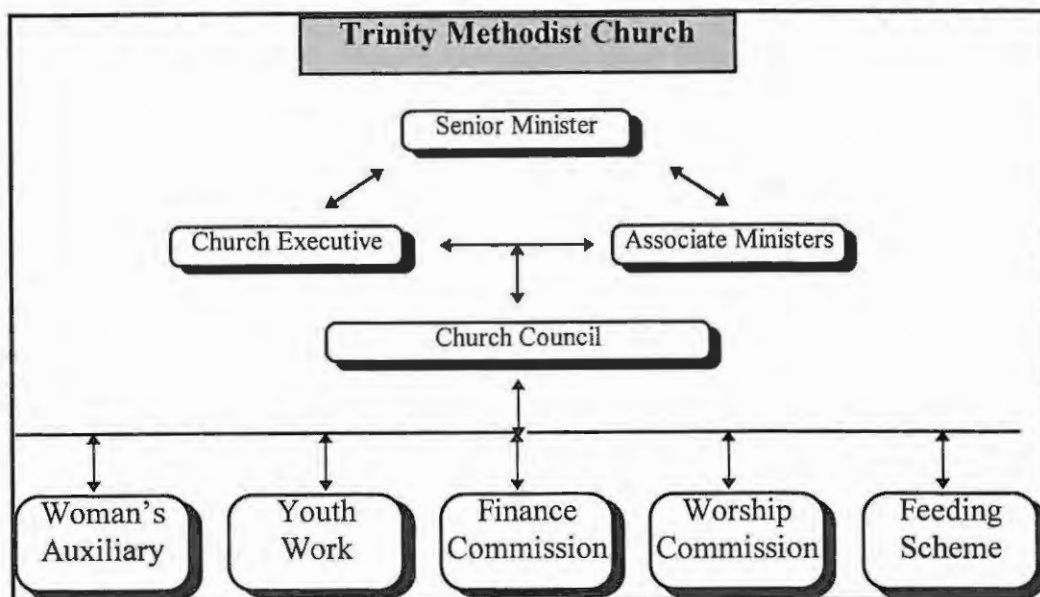
congregation of the church¹⁵⁸. Therefore, a particular small group may have as its chief objective the development of community for people who have recently moved into the area. However, this same group will, to a lesser extent, also have a mission objective and a discipleship concern. This approach will be discussed more completely in the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” itself.

4. The theological framework for this approach is Wesleyan, as it encourages the development of the church from the place of ministering to the needs of all people.

5.2 AN EXAMINATION OF SOME EXISTING CHURCH MODELS

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed in this thesis will be a synthesis of a number of existing church models for ministry. Naturally, the current model for ministry employed by Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein will be presented. I will also be presenting the models for ministry of other churches, and then looking to a synthesis of these models to successfully develop the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

¹⁵⁸ It must be noted that I stress that the small groups are constituted to meet the needs of the congregation of the church, as opposed to meeting the needs of the members of the church. The term ‘congregation’ is inclusive of those received into membership of the specific church, and all those that attend the Sunday services - whether members of the church or not, and those who have received ministry from the church for whatever reason - such as bereavement support, crisis counselling etc., and who are not members of the church. The members of the Church are specifically those who have been received into the membership of the church, and are on the “books” of the church.



(All other commissions and organisations would also be represented at this level)

Diagram 3: The current model for ministry at Trinity Methodist Church.

5.2.1 Explanation of the existing model for ministry

The model for ministry as portrayed in Diagram 3, follows a hierarchical structure. The senior minister is at the apex of the triangle. He has direct supervision of the Church Executive (which comprises 10 members of the congregation, nominated for this office by the senior Minister); as well as the associate ministers (which comprised of two associate ministers, and a youth pastor). The senior minister meets on a weekly basis with the associate ministers. This is largely a management meeting. The senior minister and the associate ministers jointly meet once a month with the church executive - in the week prior to the monthly Church council meeting. This executive meeting has been designed to facilitate the easy progress of the forthcoming debates and discussions at the Church council meetings. In this way if there is, for example, a need to establish a new mission project, then the senior minister, the associate ministers, and the executive will thrash out the implications, examine the pitfalls and advantages of the project etc. The Church council meeting the following week will then be given a report from the executive on the discussions that have taken place. The Church council is the policy-making body of the Church, and has the final say in

the approval or disapproval of any proposal submitted, as well as having the responsibility for the overall management of the Church plant as well. The Church council consists of 18 people. The council members are the elected leaders of the various organisations within Trinity, such as the leader of the “Feeding Scheme” for the underprivileged. There are also “ex-officio” members of the Council who are responsible for the financial state of the Church, the maintenance of the Church buildings (Trust), the woman’s work etc. The ex-officio members of the Council were elected to their office by means of a nomination to the Church council, by the senior minister.

5.2.1.1 Advantages of this model

The most obvious advantage is the clear chain of authority. The congregation and the leaders of the various organisations within it were left in no doubt as to the chain of command. Invariably the visions for the ministry of the church originated with the senior minister; they were then discussed at the various levels below his office-and then implemented. This allowed for the speedy implementation of projects and ideas.

5.2.1.2 Disadvantages of this model

A number of pitfalls were soon identified with this model. There were many within the congregation who began to look to the senior minister as being the one who had all the answers for the future of the church. They began to believe that if a project or ministry initiative did not originate with the senior minister, then it simply would not work. The direct chain of command, from their perspective, was from God to the senior minister, to them the congregation. All those below the office of senior minister were regarded as being there to successfully implement the visions of the senior minister. A power base began to develop where those who agreed with the policies of the senior minister were nurtured, and given areas of responsibility within the church, while those who disagreed were largely ignored. It came to the point where the various organs of the church administration such as the executive and the council, simply approved the implementation of “visions” given to them by the senior minister. This meant that new leadership was not identified and trained within the church, to meet the demands for ministry to a rapidly growing and culturally changing congregation.

This model for church ministry is not unique to Trinity Methodist Church; there are many other churches from different denominations that exhibit the same pattern for ministry. It must be noted that the membership of Trinity grew numerically in a dramatic way, in the years during which the above model was implemented. This is not unusual for a church following this sort of strategy. Trinity had, prior to the arrival of the senior minister, been a small and dwindling congregation. However, the taking of control in an authoritative way, followed by the initiation of dynamic ministry projects, ensured that the church grew.

Trinity is a church with a congregation of 2794 members (this figure is correct as at the 30 April 1998)¹⁵⁹. The membership figure at the 30 April 1990 was 1566 members. This indicates a growth of 1191 members in eight years - 43.19%¹⁶⁰. The church's members are chiefly white, middle class people. The present racial and cultural format of the congregation is largely the result of the historically legislated

¹⁵⁹ A "member" constitutes all those above the age of 16 years, who have successfully completed a confirmation course and have, therefore, been confirmed as Methodists, and received into adult membership. Children younger than 16 years old are not counted as "members" for the purpose of this numerical figure. They are reflected on the numerical statements for Trinity Methodist Church as junior members.

¹⁶⁰ Statistics obtained from the archival records of Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein.

apartheid policies implemented by the past National Party Governments up to April of 1994¹⁶¹.

Since the General Elections of April 1994 and the abolition of the legislated racist policies of segregation, the suburbs of Bloemfontein city have also begun to reflect the coming together and cultural mixing that is taking place within the communities of South Africa. This, in turn, has affected, in a very positive way, the congregational format of Trinity Methodist Church, which has now become a more cosmopolitan congregation. The model for ministry at Trinity must, therefore, be developed and, if necessary-changed completely-to make allowances for, and be inclusive of, the various cultural needs within the wider community now being reflected within the congregation itself.

The “growth pattern” for the membership of Trinity Methodist Church graphically represented is as follows:

¹⁶¹ The National Party government was responsible for the implementation of a “plethora of laws and executive actions. At the heart of the apartheid system were four ideas. First, the population of South Africa comprised four “racial groups” - White, Coloured, Indian, and African-each with its own inherent culture. Second, Whites, as the civilized race, were entitled to have absolute control over the state. Third, white interests should prevail over black interests; the state was not obliged to provide equal facilities for the subordinate races. Fourth, the white racial group formed a single nation, with Afrikaans-and English-speaking components, while Africans belonged to several (eventually ten) distinct nations or potential nations-a formula that made the white nation the largest in the country” (Thompson: 1990: 190). Various Acts were passed by Parliament that enabled the Government to enforce its policies of racism and segregation such as: The Population Registration Act (1950), the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), The Immorality Act (1950), The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953) (Thompson: 1990: 190-200). This type of legislation meant that communities were formed and maintained along the lines of race. Churches, such as Trinity Methodist Church, reflected this in their membership rolls; Trinity became an exclusively white, middle class congregation.

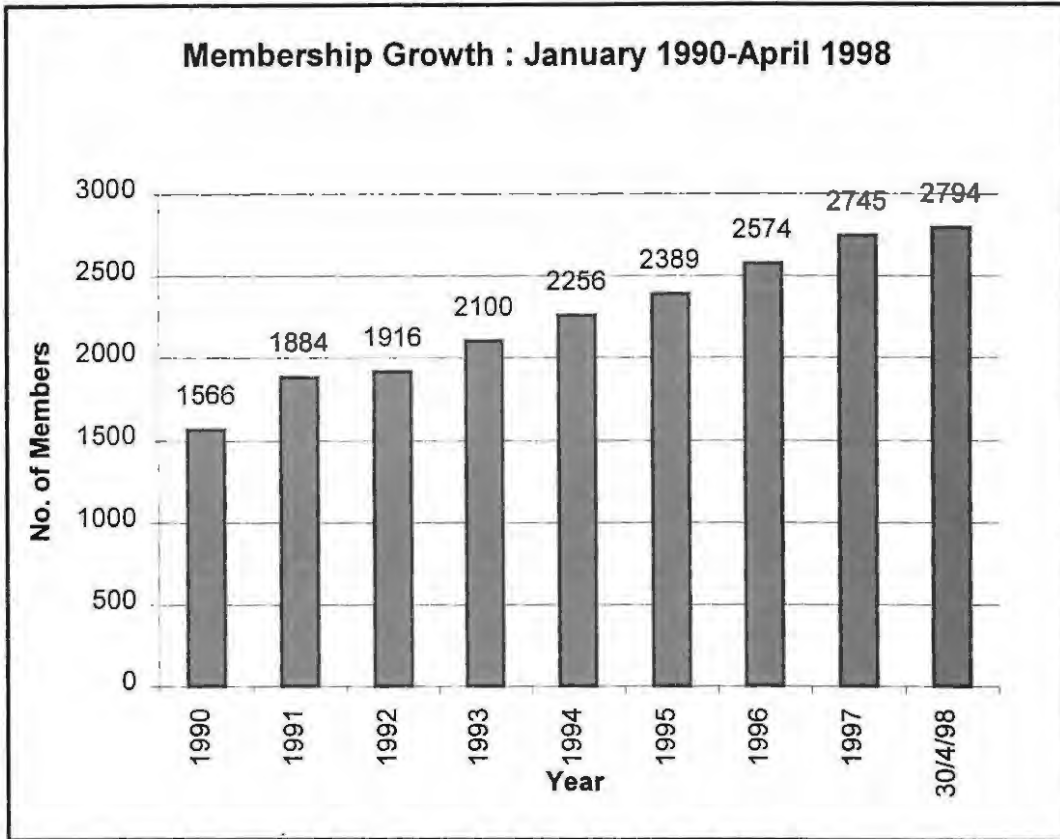


Diagram 4: Membership growth at Trinity Methodist Church.

5.2.1.2.1 Rainer and the “Pastor-Led-Vision Model”:

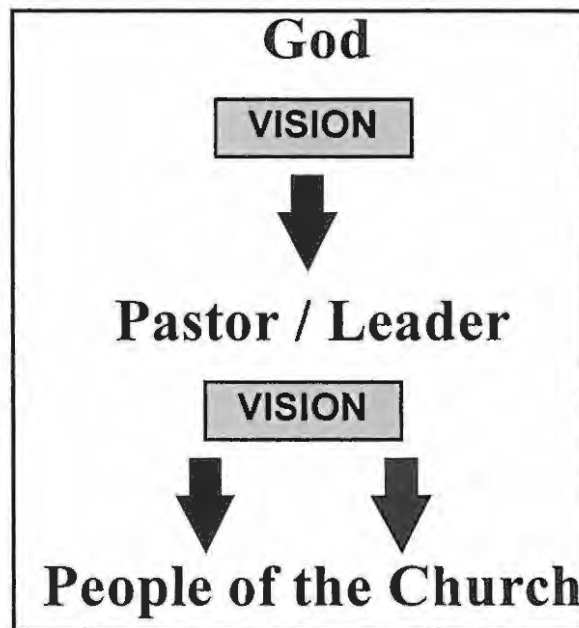


Diagram 5: The “Pastor-Led-Vision” model.

Rainer refers to this as the **“Pastor-Led-Vision” model** (Rainer: 1994: 51). Rainer believes that while his model (depicted by Diagram 5) may in some ways be beneficial for the church concerned, leading to numerical growth, as in the case of Trinity - it is not the model that the New Testament Church employed. He proposes that in the New Testament Church “God, through the giving of spiritual gifts and through His speaking to individuals about their call to ministry, would begin with the entire body rather than with a lone individual” (Rainer: 1994: 51).

5.2.1.2.2 Gorman and the “Central Control” model

Gorman depicts this ministry style as being “Central Control”. She claims that his model functions largely according to the perceptions of the church “on the role of the professional staff and the role of the laity ... this perception is largely determined by the leadership-both paid and unpaid. Central Control focuses the power to determine, initiate and control the small group ministry within the official church structures” (Gorman: 1993: 300). In this model the paid staff are the ones that assume the responsibility for the initiation and function of the ministry, while the congregation is supportive. It is evident how the models of both Gorman and Rainer reflect the ministry model used by Trinity Methodist Church.

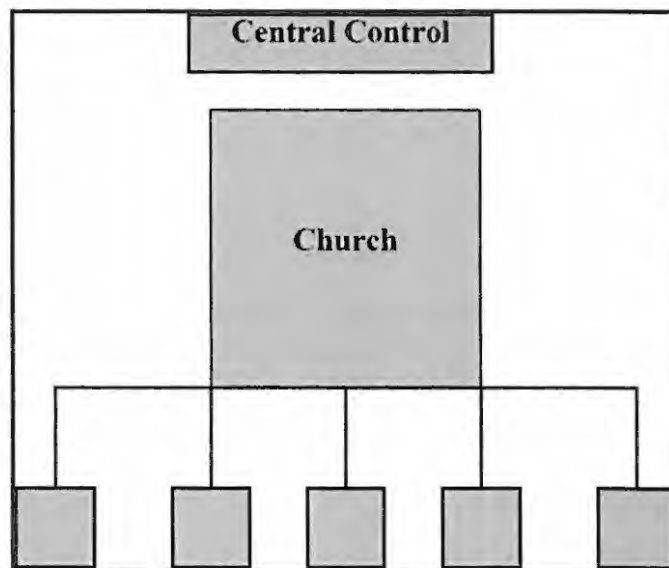


Diagram 6: The “Central Control” model.

Gorman's "Central Control" model illustrates the element of control exercised by the "professional staff" (Gorman: 1993: 300) on the ministries offered to the congregation. Here the staff will design the goals and the small groups themselves after assessing the needs of the congregation. Specific leadership will then be recruited to ensure that the work can take place. Only a specific number of small groups will be formed, and they will offer a limited variety of ministries to the people. The staff will then assign the group members to specific groups. The groups are formed for a specific reason, also termed "by contract", or along the lines of age levels (Gorman: 1993: 301). The members of each group are made aware of the curriculum to be followed. This is often supplied to them, is uniform across the groups and follows a specific theme. The support offered by the staff is directly aimed at those leading the small groups, and also at the members of the groups themselves. The groups are organised around the calendar year for the church (Gorman: 1993: 301).

5.2.2 Comparison of the "Central Control", and the "Pastor-Led-Model" with Trinity Methodist Church

Firstly, Rainer stated that, from his perspective, the "Pastor-Led-Model" was limited when compared to the model for ministry exercised by the New Testament Church. The early church relied on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as each person was able to share his or her spiritual gifts within the context of the small group. Therefore, the emphasis of ministry was in "What is God saying to us?" compared to the pastor led model of "What is God saying to the Pastor?". The pastor-led model was presented as being restrictive to the utilisation of spiritual gifts. It becomes evident that this is the experience of Trinity Methodist Church. The congregation have become too reliant on the ministry of the senior minister, and have not learnt to initiate ministries according to the work of God in their own spiritual life.

Secondly, Gorman illustrated with regards to the "Central Control" model and Trinity Methodist Church, the way that specifically the professional staff and not the members of the church initiate all ministry initiatives in general. This control of the thematic content of the small groups, as well as their membership and duration, while

meaningful for some in their spiritual journey with God, will be extremely limiting for others.

I will illustrate how these perspectives are relevant to Trinity Methodist Church by examining the impact and format of an evangelism course offered at Trinity Methodist Church from January of 1994 to June of 1998. This illustration will present not only the style of ministry offered to those attending the course, but also once again the accepted model for ministry employed by the church as a whole. It will also present the introduction of a small groups system into the hierarchical model for ministry, and show the effect of this “revised” model for ministry on Trinity Methodist Church in terms of membership.

5.2.2.1 Trinity Methodist Church and the “Alpha” course

“Alpha” is a basic evangelism course. It is a course directed at “non-churchgoers, those seeking to find out more about Christianity, and those who have recently come to faith in Jesus Christ” (Gumble: 1993: 9). It is a course that was initiated by Nicky Gumble, a minister on staff at Holy Trinity, Brompton, England. The intention of the course is to encourage people to be introduced to Jesus Christ in a way that will either lead them to conversion, or reawaken within them a spiritual life with God that has become dormant. The way this is done is by encouraging people to examine some of the questions they may have with regards to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The text book that is followed is Questions of Life¹⁶² which the course leader uses to provide the content of the talks for each “Alpha” evening. Each person attending a course is provided with an Alpha Manual¹⁶³. The manual contains an outline of each session studied. Topics presented on the course indicate its basic evangelical intent; “Who is Jesus?”; “Why did Jesus Die?”; “Why and how Should I Read the Bible?”; “Who is the Holy Spirit?” etc. (Gumble: 1993: 5).

The senior minister of Trinity Methodist Church identified the Alpha course as being a valuable ministry tool for Trinity Methodist Church. Therefore, he was sent to Holy

¹⁶² See (Questions of Life: Gumble: 1993)

¹⁶³ See (Alpha Manual: Holy Trinity Brompton: 1993)

Trinity Brompton in 1993, where he received the necessary training and information to run the “Alpha” course. Trinity Methodist Church has very successfully presented fourteen “Alpha” courses over the past four years. The format for each “Alpha” course is as follows:

- The course has a duration of nine weeks. Meetings are from 6.30pm to 9.30pm on Wednesday evenings.
- There is a compulsory weekend camp.
- Upon arrival on the first evening, the course members are assigned to small groups of approximately 10 people in each group. They are assigned a leader. The members of the course may not select which small group they would like to belong to, husbands and wives, and couples are not permitted to be in the same small group as their partner.
- After having shared a meal together, the members of the course are invited to share in a short time of singing, concluded with a prayer. The senior minister, or another person appointed by him, provides the input for the evening in accordance with the syllabus laid down.
- At the conclusion of the time of input, there is a short coffee interval, after which the members of the course meet in their small groups and are led through a time of discussion by the group leader. The senior minister prepares the questions used for the purposes of discussion.
- The conclusion of each “Alpha” course was hallmarked by the following:
 - (a) A Sunday evening service was set aside as the “Alpha Celebration Service”. During this time of worship, certain designated members of the current “Alpha” course shared their testimonies with the congregation.
 - (b) An “Alpha Dinner” was held in the last week of the course. The intention of this being that a current course member would invite a friend or family member to the dinner. During the course of the meal, the senior minister explained the concept of Alpha in the form of an address. Designated members of the “Alpha” course shared their testimonies. The invitation was then extended to those invited to the dinner to come on the next “Alpha” course. If they indicated their willingness their details were immediately recorded.

5.2.2.2 Training for the “Alpha” small group leaders

The training for leaders of the small groups was minimal. The leaders of the small groups were identified and invited to become leaders by the senior minister. His decision was influenced by comments from the existing small group leaders, as to the spiritual readiness, and ability of the person concerned. The individual was then expected to attend a “leadership training course” which was held over a Saturday afternoon prior to the start of the next “Alpha” course. The new leader was not permitted to lead a small group on his or her own initially, but had to be the assistant leader of a small group for the duration of at least one “Alpha” course, before being allowed to lead a group on his or her own.

5.2.2.3 “Alpha” and its effect on Trinity Methodist Church

The “Alpha” course was organised and presented at Trinity Methodist Church according to the following two main criteria: (a) The material presented to those attending the course came in the form of a forty minute talk, provided by the senior minister or his appointed replacement, and (b) the establishment of small groups where discussion and ministry were to take place. The small groups were contracted to meet for the duration of the nine weeks that the “Alpha” course would run. The question must be asked as to whether or not the “Alpha” course, structured along the lines of the “Central Control” model (Gorman: 1993: 300), was beneficial to Trinity Methodist Church in terms of the spiritual growth of the congregation, and the growth of Trinity Methodist Church on the whole?

To answer this question I will now examine the statistical data compiled for the “Alpha” course, as presented at Trinity Methodist Church.

5.2.2.3.1 A Statistical Analysis of the “Alpha” courses presented at Trinity Methodist Church¹⁶⁴

ALPHA #	ATTENDANCE	METHODIST	OTHER	TRANSFERS IN	DROPOUT	% DROP
1	75	75	0	0	0	0
2	95	68	27	10	7	7
3	122	105	17	12	5	4
4	118	75	43	11	7	6
5	128	40	88	15	10	8
6	172	51	121	22	36	21
7	212	47	165	35	66	31
8	163	22	141	15	44	27
9	155	38	117	9	22	14
10	145	37	108	24	13	9
11	180	77	103	28	40	22
12	154	25	129	19	39	25
13	84	24	60	16	10	12
14	48	14	34	9	8	16
Total	1851	698	1153	225	307	
%		37.71	62.29	19.51	16.58	10.91

Diagram 7: A statistical analysis of the “Alpha” courses.

Columns:

- **Alpha #:** This column indicates the number of the “Alpha” courses presented. “Alpha” began at Trinity Methodist Church with the presentation of the “Alpha 1” course in January of 1994. Trinity Methodist Church is at the time of writing, engaged in the delivery of the “Alpha 14” course.
- **Attendance:** This column depicts the number of people attending each “Alpha” course. The total number of people that have attended Alpha since it’s inception at Trinity is 1851.

¹⁶⁴ All statistical data with reference to the “Alpha” course at Trinity Methodist Church obtained from the statistical secretary for Alpha, at Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein. It must be noted that at the time of writing the following data was not available for the “Alpha 14” course, and the figures in the table were calculated according to the average values reflected in the table: (1) “Transfers in” calculated according to the average of 19.51%; (2) “Drop out” calculated according to the average of 16.58%; and (3) “%Drop” calculated according to the average of 10.91%. This was done as the “Alpha 14” course is still underway, and the final figures are not available at the time of writing.

- **Methodist:** The figures in this column indicate the number of Methodist people who attended each “Alpha” course. The total number of Methodists attending so far stands at 698.
- **Other:** This column indicates the numbers of people that attended each particular “Alpha” course, and who were not members of the Methodist Church. This figure is inclusive of all those attending who were members of other denominations as well as those attending who were not members of any church. The total number of these people attending is 1153.
- **Transfers in:** This column depicts the number of people from the column “Other” who after the completion of the “Alpha” course have become members of Trinity Methodist Church. The total membership gain from “Alpha” is 225 people.
- **Dropout:** These figures represent the number of people who failed to complete the “Alpha” course they were attending. The total figure since the inception of the course is 307 people.
- **% Drop:** This column indicates the percentage drop in attendance of each “Alpha” course. This is percentage figure is calculated according to the number from the “Dropout” column taken from the “Attendance” column for the respective course.

Summary of the Contents of the Table:

Trinity Methodist Church has presented fourteen “Alpha” courses, since the course was first offered at Trinity in 1994. A total of 1851 people have participated in the course. Of those 698 (37.71%) were Methodist, 1153 (62.29%) were not Methodist and either belonged to other denominations or were not members of any church, 225 (18.73%) people have become members of Trinity as a result of “Alpha”, while 307 (16.15%) people who registered for an “Alpha” course did not successfully complete it. Depicted graphically these statistics appear as follows:

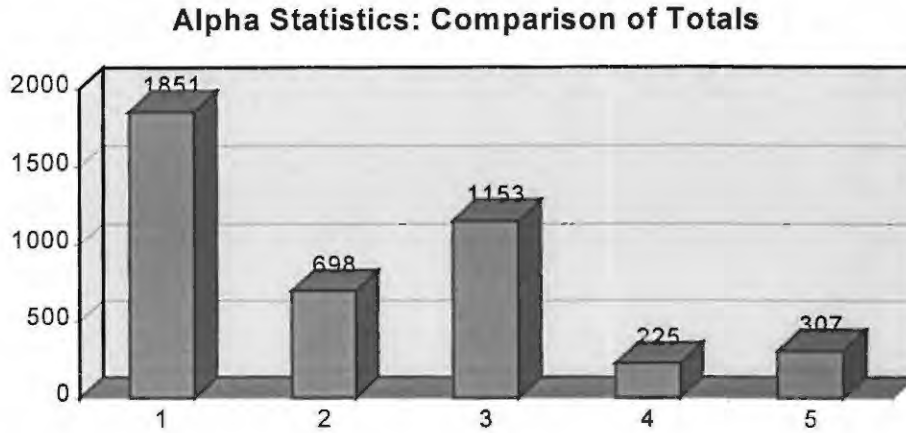


Diagram 8

Columns:

1. (1851) Total number who successfully completed “Alpha”.
2. (698) Total number of “Methodists”.
3. (1153) Total number of “Other”.
4. (225) Total number of those who are - “Transfers in” (became members of Trinity Methodist Church).
5. (307) Total number of those who did not successfully complete “Alpha” - “Drop out.

Alpha Statistics: Comparison of percentages

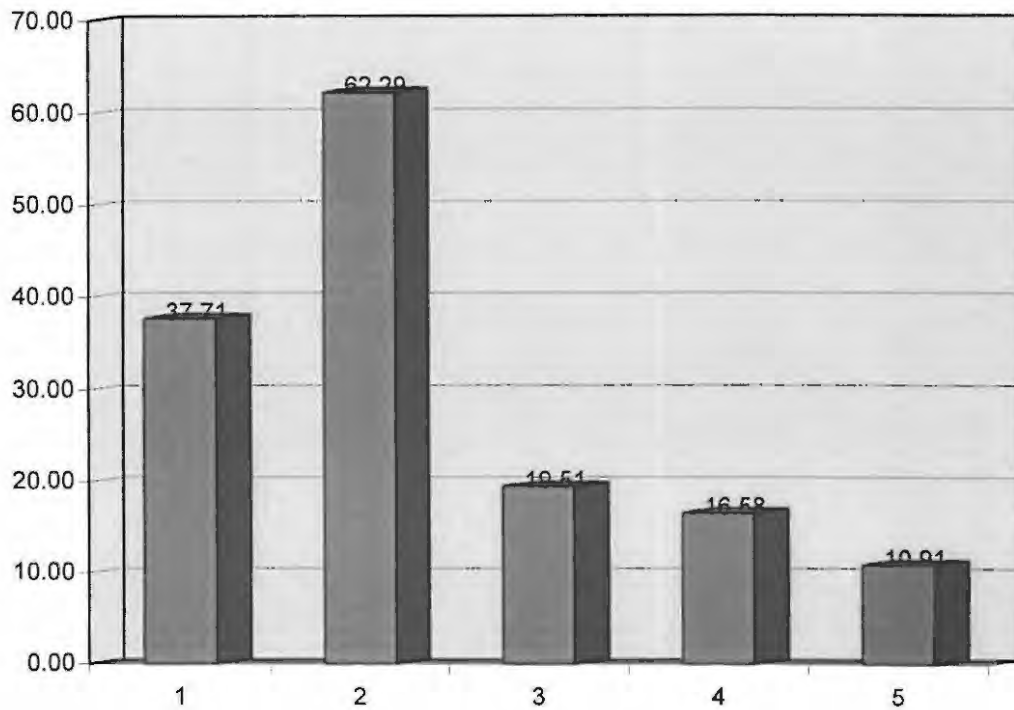


Diagram 9

Columns:

1. 37.71% of the total number that attended “Alpha” were Methodists.
2. 62.29% of the total number that attended “Alpha” were not Methodists.
3. 19.51% of the total number that attended “Alpha” subsequently became members of Trinity Methodist Church.
4. 16.58% of the total number that registered to attend an “Alpha” course failed to complete the course.
5. The average percentage drop of those who register for a specific “Alpha” course, compared with those who successfully complete that same specific course, is calculated at 10.91%.

The question was posed earlier as to whether the “Alpha” course, following the “central control” model for ministry has been beneficial for Trinity Methodist Church or not?¹⁶⁵ In terms of church growth patterns for Trinity Methodist Church taken over the same period that the “Alpha” course has been in progress, the following comparison can be made:

Membership Increase: General Membership Increase, compared to Members joined as result of "Alpha"

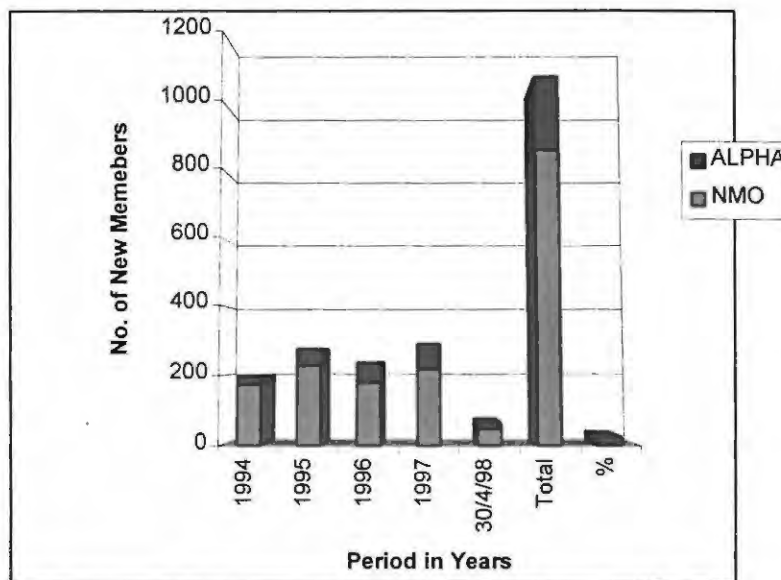


Diagram 10

Trinity Methodist Church has a policy with regards to applications for membership. Those applying are required to attend a “New members orientation course” (NMO). The NMO courses are held during the first, second and third quarters of each year. The NMO course consists of the applicants for membership meeting with the staff of Trinity Methodist Church over two, consecutive Tuesday evenings. At these meetings the opportunity is taken for the ministerial staff to personally meet those wishing to join as members and to inform the applicants of not only the administrative functions of the church, but also its theological emphasis, needs and goals for the year etc. All those wishing to become members of Trinity Methodist Church are required to attend

¹⁶⁵ See para 5.2.2.1 page 103.

the NMO. This makes it possible to compare the numbers of people who have joined Trinity Methodist Church over a given period of time, with those who have applied for membership as a result of the “Alpha” course.

- (1994): 175 people joined Trinity and attended the NMO courses. Of those 175 people, 22 indicated that they were applying as a result of “Alpha”.
- (1995): 228 (NMO), 48 (as a result of Alpha)
- (1996): 180 (NMO), 59 (as a result of Alpha)
- (1997): 220 (NMO), 71 (as a result of Alpha)
- 30/04/98: 49 (NMO), 16 (as a result of Alpha)

The total number of people that joined Trinity Methodist Church from the period of January 1994, to the end of April 1998 is 852, of this amount 225 were as a result of the “Alpha” Course. This means that over a four-year period, “Alpha” has contributed (26.4%) of the new members that have joined Trinity Methodist Church.

5.2.3 The challenge of the “Alpha” course to the existing model for ministry at Trinity Methodist Church

It is apparent that in terms of contributing to the numerical growth of Trinity Methodist Church, Alpha has been beneficial to the church. However, I am of the opinion that “Alpha” has furthermore contributed to Trinity by revealing that a new model for ministry is necessary to ensure continued growth. At first evaluation, the “Alpha” course appears to strictly adhere to the “central control”¹⁶⁶ model for ministry¹⁶⁷. However, an examination of the evaluation forms completed at the end of each “Alpha” course by those participating, reveals that the most significant “work” at “Alpha” happened in the context of the small groups. It was in the small groups, that the members were able to interact with the course contents in the most meaningful way. It was in the environment of the small groups that the members were able to feel the most nurtured and cared for. This intimate experience of being pastorally cared for made a lasting impact on the majority of the course members. This is in keeping with

¹⁶⁶ See (Gorman: 1993: 300).

¹⁶⁷ See para 5.2.2.1 page 106.

the findings of the authors of the “Alpha Course” at Holy Trinity, Brompton. “Alpha” has been running there for approximately ten years. In terms of their research they have found the place of the small group invaluable in evangelising people from diverse cultural groups. Nicky Gumble describes these small groups as consisting “of two to twelve people who gather to study the Bible and pray together. It is in these groups that the closest friendships in the church are made. They are characterised by confidentiality ... intimacy ... and accountability” (Gumble: 1993: 221). He suggests that the “Alpha” course, and its focus on the small groups facilitates *koinonia* thereby enabling Christian fellowship to take place in a way that “cuts across race, colour, education, background and every other cultural barrier” (Gumble: 1993: 223). It must also be noted here that culture, for the purposes of this thesis is not restricted to the very superficial understanding that the colour of a person’s skin determines his or her cultural affiliation. While this is one small aspect of what makes up culture, the definition of culture is a far broader one as Shorter states: “Culture is what a human being learns, or acquires, as a member of society. It comprises the learned aspects – as opposed to the inherited aspects – of human thinking and human behaviour ... it is what human beings share culturally, their customs, values and distinctive way of living, that constitutes them as a recognizably distinct human group or society” (1988: 4). The “Alpha” course was designed and implemented by Holy Trinity Brompton to be effective in the cosmopolitan and diversely cultural city of London. However, this does not mean that the “Alpha” course can simply be transplanted into the cultural mix of South Africa, and be expected to bear the same success. The genius of the course must be identified, and implemented, and it is this: The success of the course is that it encourages the development of a “gospel” culture, for those attending. The common ground of this culture is the message of Jesus Christ, and the challenges that such a message place on the life of the individual responding to it. This common foundation effectively encourages the crossing over of other traditional cultural barriers, in order to understand what it means to be a child of the family of God. The table depicted in Diagram 7 on page 109, with particular reference to the column titled “Other” is evidence of this. In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed some of the inherent problems from a past political order that Trinity Methodist Church must overcome in order to effectively minister to all people. This intention, coupled with

the “Alpha” course and its small group system, and the theological foundation of the “gospel culture” – as presented by Icenogle in para 4.4.2 from page 83, reveal the effectiveness of this programme as part of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

However, the problem with the existing model for ministry at Trinity Methodist Church, according to the experiences of “Alpha” and its success was that the “central control” model cannot keep pace with the organic growth of the small groups. The only way for the “central control” model to keep the authoritarian lines in place in a large church such as Trinity Methodist Church, would be to strictly limit the numbers of people attending the courses or seminars being offered - if any small group work is included in the course content. This would, in turn, enable the church to ensure that there were enough trained and equipped small group leaders to ensure that the small groups adhere to the strict requirements. The number of “Alpha” courses presented each year, and the large response of people wanting to attend each course, have meant that the leadership structure of the “Alpha” course has needed to be organic.

The new expectations of those “awakened” on the “Alpha” course have also presented Trinity Methodist Church with a challenge. It is as they have either entered into the membership of the course for the first time, or had their spiritual walk with God rejuvenated and then returned to the life of the church, that they have expected a continuation of the nurturing process experienced at “Alpha” to take place. The existing church model does not allow this to happen.

Why? The model for ministry at Trinity Methodist Church has regarded the Sunday services as being the platform for the encouragement, spiritual challenging and spiritual direction, teaching and guiding of the congregation, and so they should. The problem is that the services have come to be seen as the most significant place for this to occur. This has been to the detriment of the theological perspective of the service of worship being the place of public celebration, by the body of Christ for the way in which God has been with them, and working within their lives, in the days leading up to the services. Arnold states:

“Worship is a dynamic response to God, acknowledging who he is and what he has done in our lives. It is an overflow of lives which have been spent walking with God. When churches come together on Sundays and at other times for worship, they are to corporately respond to God. Together they can experience God’s presence and rejoice in knowing and loving him” (Arnold: 1992: 35).

“Alpha” encouraged those attending to take the first small steps to spiritual growth. This they found fulfilling and meaningful. The concern arose as to how to continue to pastorally care for and nurture those that wanted to continue to grow in their relationship with God. The services of worship and traditional Bible study groups that are held regularly were not meeting this need. The answer lies in the development of a new model for ministry that has as its heart “small groups”.

David N. Power argues that the revitalisation of churches and the spiritual growth of Christians is most effective within the small group system.

“While there are those who pursue the model of parish reorganisation and revitalisation as the way whereby to renew church life and foster Christian community, the emergence of informal groups of believers and of small communities which have little to do with ecclesiastical and even confessional boundaries is of indisputable significance for present and future” (Power: 1990: 105).

The “Alpha” course has, therefore, been of great benefit to Trinity Methodist Church in a number of ways. It has provided the church with a steady supply of new members. Those attending the “Alpha” course that have come from other church denominations and returned to their respective churches spiritually enlivened, have challenged Trinity to take her mission responsibilities more seriously. Those that have completed the “Alpha” course and remained at Trinity, have brought with them a challenge for the church to develop a new model for ministry that ensures continued spiritual growth and development for all.

5.2.4 Preliminary summary

There are various models of ministry employed by churches of all denominations. The intention of this chapter has been to evaluate the model for ministry employed by Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein. I have presented this model as being hierarchical in nature and in accordance with hierarchical structures of church management as identified and described by church growth specialists; in particular Rainer and Gorman. Rainer calls this model of ministry the ““Pastor-Led Vision Model” (Rainer: 1994: 51), while Gorman gives it the title “Central Control” (Gorman: 1993: 300).

The common thread that runs through both their models is the way that the ministry control remains in the hands of the initiated few. These initiatives are then presented to the congregation as being the will of God for them; the congregation then follows this direction given to them. The question must then be asked as to whether or not this model of church ministry has any lasting value for the spiritual growth of the congregation, or whether it is of benefit only to a certain small percentage of the church.

The reasons that this question must be asked are:

1. A model for ministry that is developed along Wesleyan lines must be for the benefit of all, and not only for some. The intention of Wesley was to enable as many as possible to hear the Gospel message, and for them to then grow responsibly in their faith. This was the intention of the classes and the bands¹⁶⁸.
2. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” must by it’s very nature and purpose be inclusive of the various cultures and traditions within the congregation. It is then imperative that these cultures influence the ministry offered by the church, if the ministry is going to be of any theological significance and value. The only way this can occur, is if the members of the congregation are enabled to provide the direction for ministry in the church, as opposed to the exclusive approach of the

¹⁶⁸ This was discussed in detail in para 4.3 page 74.

minister or pastor. This would be in line with Rainer's alternative to the "Pastor-Led Vision Model, aptly titled "People-Led" Vision Model¹⁶⁹.

3. This need for Trinity Methodist Church to move towards a more inclusive approach in its model for ministry has been endorsed by those who have experienced the potential for growth and development within the environment of the small group system, such as the "Alpha" course offered them.

Trinity Methodist Church needs to develop a model for ministry that will assist it to consolidate the growth that has taken place in recent years. In a sense, the process of church growth has led Trinity Methodist Church to a crossroads. The one fork of the road is a continuation of the existing pattern for ministry. The danger that lies down that road is in losing the enthusiasm and vitality of those longing for a growing relationship with their Lord, as they continue to be disillusioned with a church whose model for ministry does not facilitate this process. The second fork in the road leads to the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry". The objective of this thesis is the development of this model and it will show how those longing for a relationship with God that causes them to grow spiritually; are cared for. This will take place within the environment of small groups and church community celebrating their love for God through the expression of (1) community, (2) discipleship and (3) evangelism.

The second fork of this road will lead Trinity Methodist Church to challenges that are similar to those faced by John Wesley. His ministry took shape as he ministered to those disillusioned by the institutional church of his day. The model that he developed was effective and encouraged spiritual growth and development. Wesley began with the organising of small groups (classes and bands) where the seeker was nurtured in his or her search for a life changing relationship with God.

The "Central Control" model outlined by Gorman and applied by Trinity Methodist Church illustrated that while it can be an effective model to make use of for church

¹⁶⁹ See (Rainer: 1994: 52).

growth, there are a number of hidden dangers within it (Gorman: 1993: 300). For example, if the control is not exercised wisely and in a way that encourages spiritual growth, then it can be restrictive and inhibit the work of the Holy Spirit within the lives of the seekers. In this way, the congregation become too reliant on the vision the senior minister has for the church and it's ministry and, in so doing, lose sight of the calling that God has placed on each of their lives to become responsible disciples. The danger also exists in a model of this kind that the church becomes "personality based" and functions around the personality of the senior minister. The church then begins to operate along the hierarchical system of a business corporation, with levels of seniority that lead to the chief executive officer at the apex of the heap.

However, a clear line of authority is needed within any church model if the church is to be productive in its desire to serve God and His kingdom. The challenge that lies before a church and its model for ministry is in how to develop this line of authority in a way that prevents abuse of power from occurring. I am of the opinion that observing Wesley's model for ministry and his use of the classes and bands, with their distinctive ethos of operation can do this.

The control mechanism within them was chiefly accountability. The members met regularly, and each group was assigned a leader to convene the meetings and to have pastoral oversight of the members. However, the members of each group held each other accountable for adhering to the demands of a life of discipleship. In this way, the people led the direction in which the church was developing in terms of its mission and service, and Wesley's function was to ensure that this was always in accordance with sound theology and doctrine.

Rainer incorporates a similar approach in his "People-Led Vision Model".

5.2.5 Rainer and the "People-Led-Vision" model

Rainer offers an alternative model to the one of "Central Control" (Gorman: 1993: 300). He terms it the "People-Led-Vision" model (Rainer: 1994: 52).

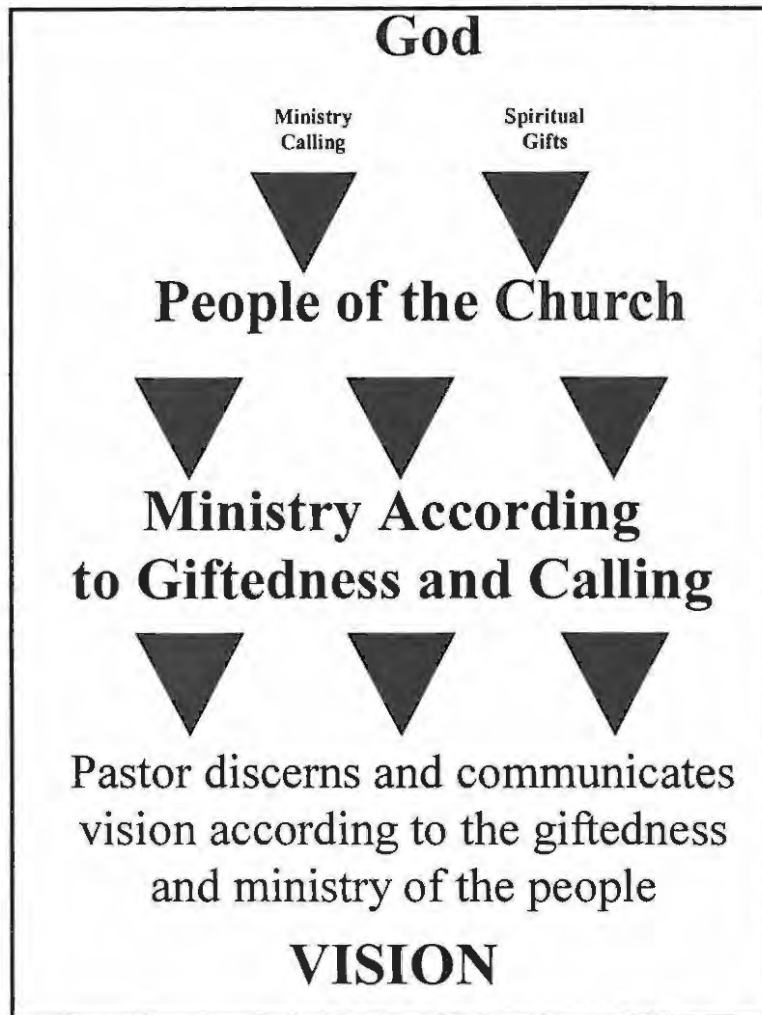


Diagram 11: The "People-Led-Vision" model.

In this model the pastor's role is "to discern what God is already doing in the church, communicate that vision to the people, and equip the people as they continue to develop ministries according to the vision" (Rainer: 1994: 52). A possible objection to this model when compared to the model of "Central Control", is that the authoritarian leadership role of the pastor and the professional staff is dramatically weakened (Gorman: 1993: 300)¹⁷⁰. I am in agreement with Rainer in his objection to this argument for the following reasons:

¹⁷⁰ Which is also an example of the model for ministry presently in use at Trinity Methodist Church.

1. The early church did not exist for the sake of an effective organisational structure. The church was there to proclaim the Gospel of salvation to all, and to support the challenge of Jesus to love God and neighbour, the church attempted in their ministry to meet the needs of all people¹⁷¹. Therefore, the focus of their ministry was always directed at those that needed God through Jesus, at the healing of the sick and the feeding of the hungry etc. The organisational structure was developed to facilitate this process of ministry.

2. Therefore, one of the chief functions of the pastor is to ensure that the church always moves beyond the boundaries it has established of organisational entrenchment, to enable dynamic ministry to occur in the lives of the people “outside” the walls of the church. I am not proposing that all organisational boundaries should be abolished. That would be to “throw the baby out with the bath water”. The point I am making is that the pastor must see as part of his or her function, the need to lead the congregation beyond the traditional organisational boundaries of the church that are restricting the ministry of the church to all people. The “pastor then leads the church past organisational entrenchment to an outward focus” (Rainer: 1994: 52)¹⁷².

¹⁷¹ The word “needs” taken at face value, in the context of the discussion above, is problematical. I do not use it in the hedonistic sense, that the early church existed to ensure that whatever the individual or community desired they were given. The word “needs” indicates the challenge the early church faced, in not only proclaiming the Gospel message of love and forgiveness, justice and fairness, but in also supporting their call with appropriate social action. This action in meeting “needs” had to always be measured against the spiritual standards that had to be upheld. Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians 10: 23-33.

¹⁷² St. Paul urged the early church to come to terms with an observance to the law (the Jewish religious organisational structure) and a new life of faith, in Jesus Christ. See Romans Chapters: 2-13.

3. The pastor enables this to occur as he leads the people in the “refinement of the outward focus to particular callings and giftedness” (Rainer: 1994: 52). He does this by discerning “God’s work and vision according to the ministries that have unfolded. He begins communications and rekindles the vision, while continuing to equip those in ministry” (Rainer: 1994: 53).
4. Therefore, the role of the pastor in this model “is to discover the calls and gifts of the body of Christ and to lead that local fellowship toward an understanding and fulfilling of the vision that God has given it.” (Rainer: 1994: 53).

5.2.6 Gorman and the “Central Motivation” model

Gorman reinforces the need for the congregation to have the “power to determine, initiate, and maintain the ministry of groups within the congregation” making “the paid staff supportive” (Gorman: 1993: 300) in her model called “Central Motivation” (Gorman: 1993: 300).

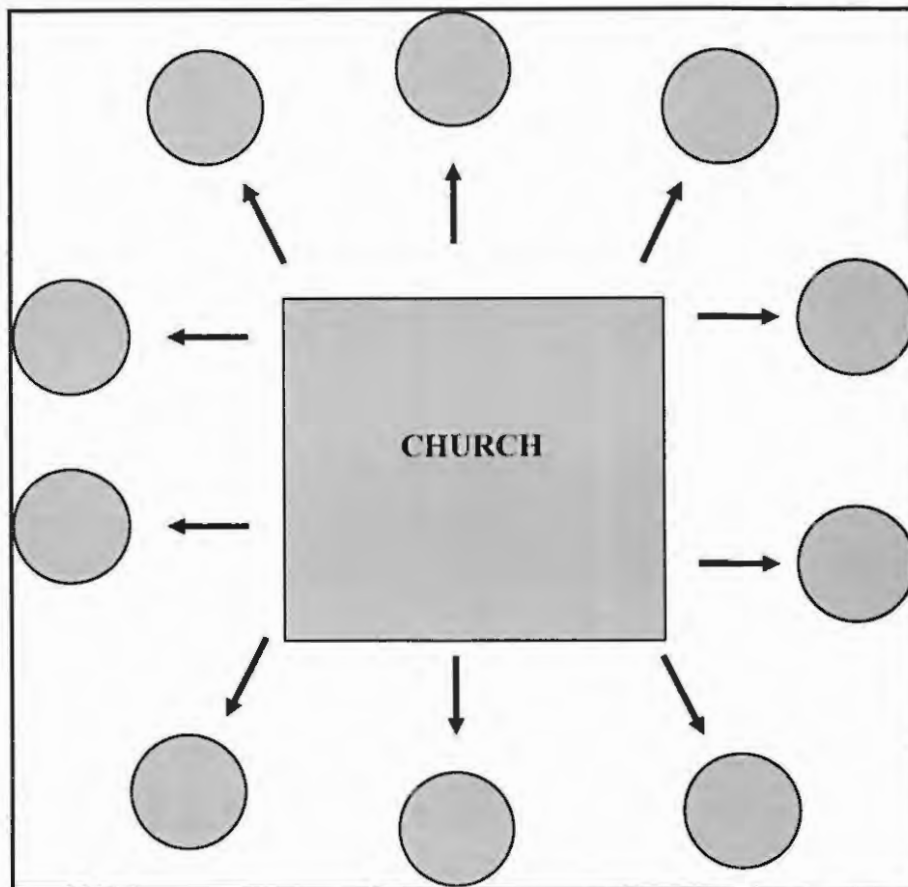


Diagram 12: The “Central Motivation” model.

Gorman lists the characteristics of this model as follows:

- “Pastor models/calls persons to construct and become involved in community.
- Allows persons to design groups according to their motivation/interests.
- Provides minimal enablement.

- The groups membership may be constituted according to a “contract” (task/purpose orientated) or by time available (emphasis on being in the group for community sake).
- Minimally aware or unaware of specific curriculum used.
- Curriculum usually highly varied.
- Staff aware of purposes-often unaware of groups-number, etc.
- Groups function primarily on their own.
- Groups are organised spontaneously” (Gorman: 1993: 301).

The advantage of the “central motivation” model is that the people of the congregation are encouraged to initiate the ministries within the small groups according to the needs that small group would have at the time. Therefore, the development of the small groups is an organic process.

5.2.6.1 A comparison of the “People-Led-Vision” and “Central Motivation” models with Trinity Methodist Church

Looking at the four models outlined above¹⁷³, and comparing them to the existing model at Trinity Methodist Church as outlined in an examination of the “Alpha Course”, leads to the conclusion that dramatic church growth at Trinity Methodist Church has been as a result of the combination of the two emphasis (i) “central control” and (ii) “central motivation”. The general trend over the years has been markedly to that of “central control”, however as the church has grown so a change has begun to occur within the perceptions of the congregation, where they are now initiating of their own volition small groups in line with the model of “central motivation”. The development of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” would then need to take this emerging combination of models into account. A church that has successfully done this is Evergreen Baptist Church, Rosemead, California¹⁷⁴.

¹⁷³ “Pastor-Led-Vision” model, “Central Control” model, “People-Led-Vision” model and “Central Motivation” model.

¹⁷⁴ See (Gorman: 1993: 304-306).

5.2.6.2 The Model for ministry of Evergreen Baptist Church

This church has developed the strategy where people outside the church are invited to “Come and See” for themselves what the church is like (Gorman: 1993: 304). The church has a four-fold emphasis to its model which is as follows: (1) “Enfolding” (2) “Disciple” (3) “Equip” and (4) “Unleash” (Gorman: 1993: 304) . These emphases are regarded as being the primary goals of the church. Each of these primary goals have secondary goals. The secondary goals outline how the individual is welcomed when he or she have first come to the church, and then outlines the programme the person is included in to the point where he or she has been equipped and charged with ministry and mission work. The phrase that they have coined outlining this strategy is “Disciples who Grow to Go that Others might Come and See” (Gorman: 1993: 304).

The strategy of this church outlined in table format and adapted from the Diagram in (Gorman: 1993: 305) is as follows:

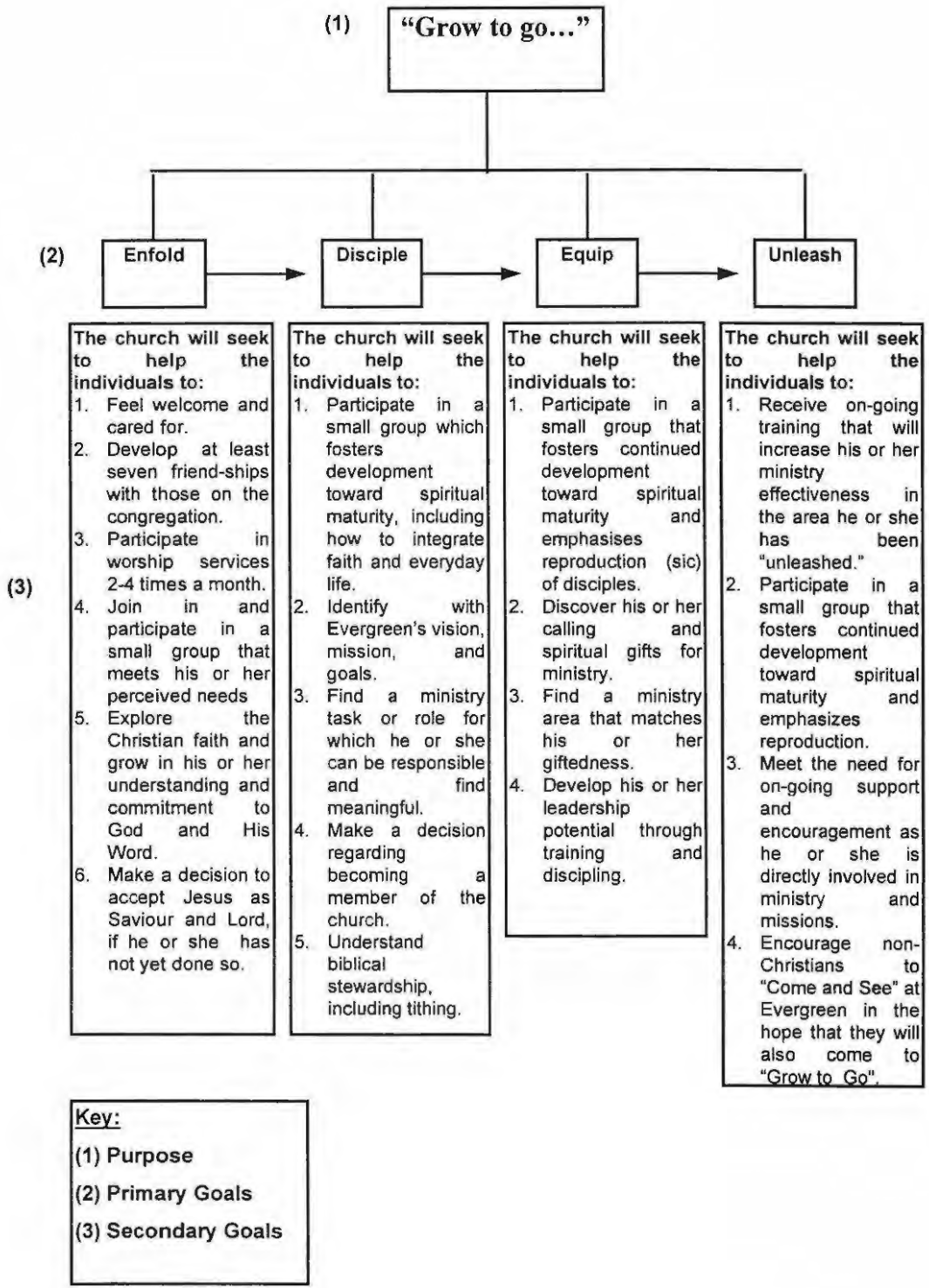


Diagram 13: Model for Evergreen Baptist church.

The model for Evergreen is one that is based on the small group system. Each of the primary goals is attained by, for example on the one extreme, including those who

have “come to see” in a small group, where they are nurtured and cared for, to the other extreme, of those who have been members of the church for some time and have been equipped for “mission and ministry”. The objective is to ensure that the small group nurtures and develops the person into responsible and dynamic Christianity. The way that the small groups are constituted becomes extremely important. The emphasis of the small group for those new to the faith [enfolding] cannot be the same as that for mature Christians involved in Mission and Ministry [unleashing]. Evergreen therefore structures the small groups in the following ways¹⁷⁵:

- **Enfolding:** 50% of the group time would be spent on **nurture**, the remaining 50% would be divided equally among worship, community and mission.
- **Discipling:** The group time would be divided equally among **nurture, worship, mission and community**.
- **Equipping:** The group time would be divided with 50% of the time spent on **training**, and the remaining 50% divided equally among worship, community, and mission.
- **Unleashing:** The group time would be divided with 50% of the time spent on **missions and ministry**, and the remaining 50% spent on worship, community, and training.

5.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter began with a diagram illustrating that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed in this thesis will have as its foundation stone a system of dynamic small groups. The church itself will be fed by the work of the small groups in three major areas: (1) community, (2) discipleship and (3) mission.

The discussion of the first four models for ministry employed by churches focused on two apparently divergent perspectives. Firstly, the “Pastor-Led-Vision” model and the “Central Control Model” revealed church ministry strategies where the senior pastor\minister and the paid staff dominated the ministry of the church.

¹⁷⁵ See (Gorman: 1993: 306).

Secondly, the next two models “People-Led-Vision” model and “Central Motivation” placed the responsibility for the work of the church, and the exercising of ministry largely on the shoulders of the congregation. The minister and staff were custodians of the peoples understanding of God’s vision for them and the ones to ensure that education, training and support was provided for the congregation.

The Evergreen church included these two perspectives within it’s own model, merging them and forming a new model for ministry. The Evergreen model maintains the authority of the ministers and staff and their function as the caretakers of the vision that God has given the Church on the one hand, while on the other hand they have a deep responsibility to train and equip the laity for the work of ministry and mission within the community. The emphasis at Evergreen is on (1) enfold (2) disciple (3) equip and (4) unleash. The intention is to nurture those within the church so that community is established, to then, within the context of community, teach the congregation how to live as disciples of Jesus, and then to train and equip them to minister to others within wider the community.

All the models for ministry that were discussed in this chapter have included what I have termed the pillars of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”:- community, discipleship and evangelism. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that these pillars are of vital importance and must be of central value, not only to the success of a model for ministry, but especially as part of a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

CHAPTER 6: THE “MODEL FOR MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRY”

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this thesis is for:

“The development from a Wesleyan perspective of an appropriate ‘Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry’, from within a traditionally mono-cultural Methodist Congregation”.

Chapter One focused on the Wesleyan heritage within the Methodist Church in general and within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in particular. Therefore, Methodist theology was briefly examined, while certain Wesleyan theological perspectives were more comprehensively dealt with. Special note was taken of the way John Wesley, a man of philosophical and intellectual ability, longed for a personal assurance of his salvation. Once this had been realised at Aldersgate Street, Wesley’s purpose-driven ministry began. His desire was to love and serve God with all his heart and evidence of this love and service would need to be apparent in the way that he ministered to all those in need. Many were led to conversion through his preaching and ministry. This following of converts, known as “Methodists” grew, and societies were formed. Wesley needed to institute certain measures of control to ensure that (a) discipline was maintained and (b) that all those seeking the Lord were nurtured and guided in their walk with God. Therefore, the class meeting and the bands were constituted. These are the historical roots of the dynamic small group system within the Methodist Church. The small groups were where the nurturing work of the church took place. Wesley did not lead each of these groups personally, but trained and equipped lay people to perform these duties.

Chapter Two highlighted the significance and influence of personal religious experience from the perspectives of the following scientific disciplines: sociology, psychology and theology. The intent of this chapter was to reinforce the call of Wesley that all people have a deep desire within them not only to be saved, but to

have an intimate experience of this salvation that allows them to know that they are saved.

Chapter Three emphasised “Three Pillars for a Model For Multi-Cultural Ministry”. These pillars facilitate the process whereby the personal experience of God can be nurtured and grown within the life of the individual, as well as in the life of the Church. The pillars are (1) community (2) discipleship and (3) mission.

Chapter Four provided the foundation stone on which the pillars of the church, and the church itself should stand. This foundation stone is the dynamic ministry of small groups. The theological importance of the small group system, and the Wesleyan heritage contained within them, was examined. Various current church growth specialists’ perspectives supported this discussion.

Chapter Five was an examination of various churches and their models for ministry. The church examined closely, and by means of an analysis of statistical data, was Trinity Methodist Church. The “Alpha Course” at Trinity Methodist Church, and its impact on the model for ministry of Trinity Methodist Church, was used to illustrate the need for personal religious experience, and dynamic small group activity within a model for ministry. The model for ministry at Evergreen Baptist Church was presented as an example of a synthesis of various church models that has enabled Evergreen to grow dramatically in terms of membership, and ministry impact within the wider community.

The intention of this chapter is to provide the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”. However, the term “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” suggests that the model developed is able to cross the boundaries of diverse cultures or cultural groups. The model furthermore implies that it will provide a mechanism that will assist in promoting a common culture, for the work of the church in the future. However, certain terms must be addressed at this point, to facilitate an understanding of “culture” and “cultural diversity”. The explanation of these terms will furthermore indicate how the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” is able to address the diverse

needs contained within a large Methodist congregation such as that at Trinity Methodist Church.

There are many definitions of culture. Sir Edward Tylor states that it is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Shorter: 1988: 4). Therefore, in this definition culture is what human beings “share culturally, their customs, values and distinctive way of living, that constituted them as a recognizably distinct human group or society” (Shorter: 1988: 4). Shorter emphasizes that culture is not only determined by behaviour, but also by the exchange of ideas that have arisen through the groups evaluation of their interactions with each other. This is supported by Clifford Geertz who defines culture as: “A system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about, and their attitudes towards, life” (Shorter: 1988: 5)

Shorter makes a distinction between the following terms, which are useful to note when attempting to come to an understanding of culture and cultural diversity: **Enculturation** – This is a sociological concept which refers to the “learning process of the individual, the process by which a person is inserted into his or her culture. It is a concept that it closely related to that of socialization ... Culture is therefore a psycho-social phenomenon which exploits psychological factors that favour the adoption of certain symbols and certain conceptions” (1988: 5-6). This is distinct from **Acculturation**, which describes the encounter between one culture and another, or the encounter between cultures. Shorter states that “Culture itself comes into existence through collective processes, and the encounter between cultures is likewise a collective process largely beyond the cope of individual human choice. It is of course, an encounter between two different sets of symbols and conceptions, two different interpretations of experience, two different social identities ... the encounter is fraught with complexity ... acculturation is a historical process, and that in dealing with culture and the encounter between cultures, we are confronting a dynamic and diachronic phenomenon, and not a static, unchanging one” (1988: 7). **Inculturation** is

a theological concept, and in short it is “the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures. More fully, it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures” (Shorter: 1988: 10-11). Culture is a developing process, “and there must be therefore a continuous dialogue between Faith and culture” (Shorter: 1988: 11). The fourth term *Interculturation* attempts to deal with the criticism that inculturation is a one way process, in other words that the Christian church engages a culture through the process of evangelism and simply imposes the Christian culture on it. Interculturation on the other hand describes the process by which the culture of the evangelized society is influenced by the Gospel, and how the church (the one carrying out the evangelism) is in turn creatively challenged in terms of its own theology and culture by the evangelized. This expresses the reality that inculturation must “be lived in partnership and mutuality” (Shorter: 1988: 13).

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” incorporates the need for “partnership and mutuality” (Shorter: 1988: 13), and does so with the implementation, and use of small groups. The role of the small groups is crucial for the process of Interculturation to take place. This model will need to encapsulate the principles of the preceding chapters as outlined above, and build on them. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” has furthermore been developed by analysing the model for ministry in use at Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein. Therefore, it must be noted that references and illustrations of church management techniques and styles of ministry are applicable to Trinity Methodist Church, and not the Methodist denomination as a whole. If the point being discussed is relevant to another congregation or church, then specific mention will be made of that fact.

I stated in the previous chapter that Trinity Methodist Church follows what Gorman would describe as the “Central Control” model for ministry (Gorman: 1993: 300)¹⁷⁶ and Rainer as the “Pastor-Led Vision Model”¹⁷⁷. According to these models the minister and staff are in a hierarchical structure of authority. The senior minister is at

¹⁷⁶ See para 5.2.1.2.2 page 104.

the apex of this triangular structure, with levels of authority on a descending scale amongst the staff members. The ministry exercised follows the line of authority from “God to the senior minister, to the staff members, to the members of the congregation”. In this way the existing format at Trinity Methodist Church means that the Church as an organisational structure, with the senior minister at the helm, instructs the small groups on the ministry that they must follow, decides the format of the small groups and their ministry structure¹⁷⁸. The congregations meeting on a Sunday are regarded as the forum for celebrating the Sacraments and proclaiming the Word. The process of nurture and spiritual growth originates from within the organisational structure and is passed on to the people through the preaching in the Sunday services, and in the limited syllabus adhered to by the small groups. Therefore, the small groups meeting are regarded as one of the controlled ministry areas or functions of the church.

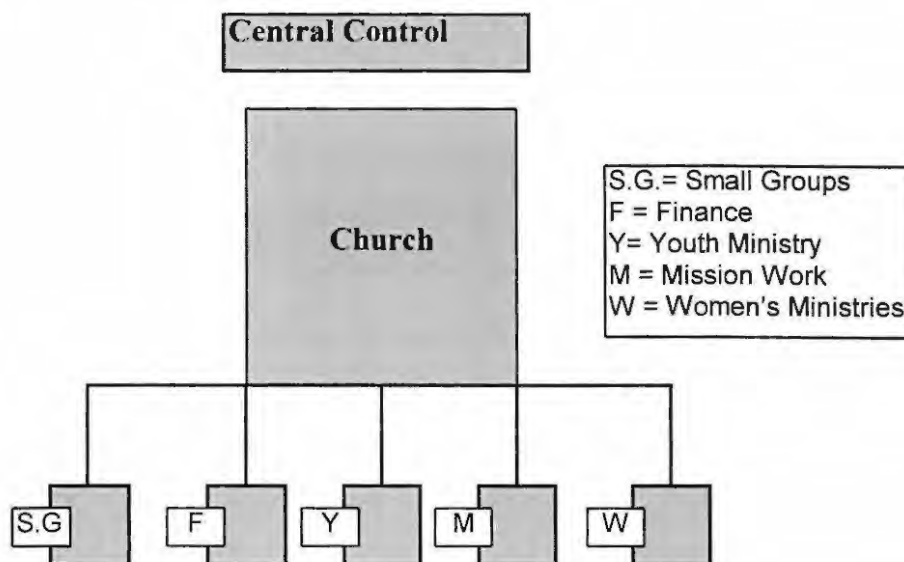


Diagram 14: Trinity Methodist Church represented according to the “Central Control” model for ministry.

In terms of this model, depicted in Diagram 14, everything that Trinity Methodist Church perceives as needing to take place, whether this is mission work, evangelism,

¹⁷⁷ See para 5.2.1.2.1 page 103.

¹⁷⁸ See para 5.2.2 page 105.

an outreach program or even simple administrative duties such as checking that the mailing list of the church is up to date etc. - must originate from within the office of the minister itself. The initiative for all work and ministry comes from the minister and the paid staff, while the congregation is largely regarded as being passively involved. In a hierarchical model of this nature, the following scenario will illustrate the order of operations:

A new mission strategy has been decided on at Trinity Methodist Church. This project has been identified as being a new and vital area of ministry for the church to engage in. A discussion was held by the senior minister and other ministerial staff members at the weekly staff meeting. A decision was made to embark on this new ministry. This decision was placed on the agenda of the next Church Council meeting. The issue was raised and motivated by the senior minister at the Church council meeting, and after a brief period of questions asked from within the body of the meeting, the project was agreed on, and a date for its commencement set. Over the next few weeks the congregation's support was canvassed during the various Sunday services. Sermons followed the themes of Christians needing to care for the sick, the poor and the outcasts. In this way the congregation were encouraged to "catch this vision for ministry" and to give their support for the project either indirectly (such as donations of food, clothing, and money) or directly through personal involvement. In the months that followed the initiation of this ministry the congregation was kept informed of how the project was progressing.

This illustration highlights some of the inherent dangers within the hierarchical model for ministry. The passivity of the congregation is apparent. The ministerial staff generates the sense of urgency for the work of the kingdom of God. The congregation waits to be informed of what work needs to be embarked on. When the new vision is presented and explained to them, very few of the congregation become directly involved, but rather choose the way of indirect support through various donations to the church. If the matter rests at this stage then very few of the members of the church will have spiritually grown in their understanding of the responsibility to mission, or the need to live as a disciple of Jesus, and no sense of community within the

congregation itself or with those outside the walls of the church who are the recipients of the mission work, will have been achieved. Furthermore, little if any at all cross-cultural discovery will have occurred.

The advantages of this model in terms of this scenario are that the ministerial staff are able to implement the new strategy for mission far more quickly. Administratively the small number of people involved makes the co-ordination of the mission projects more manageable. The decision to follow mission themes in the preaching of the sermons does mean that the ministerial staff will have provided the congregation with a form of “teaching” - even though the depth of this teaching will be limited by the nature of the Sunday services themselves.

I will now present the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, and then compare it to the current model for ministry in use at Trinity Methodist Church.

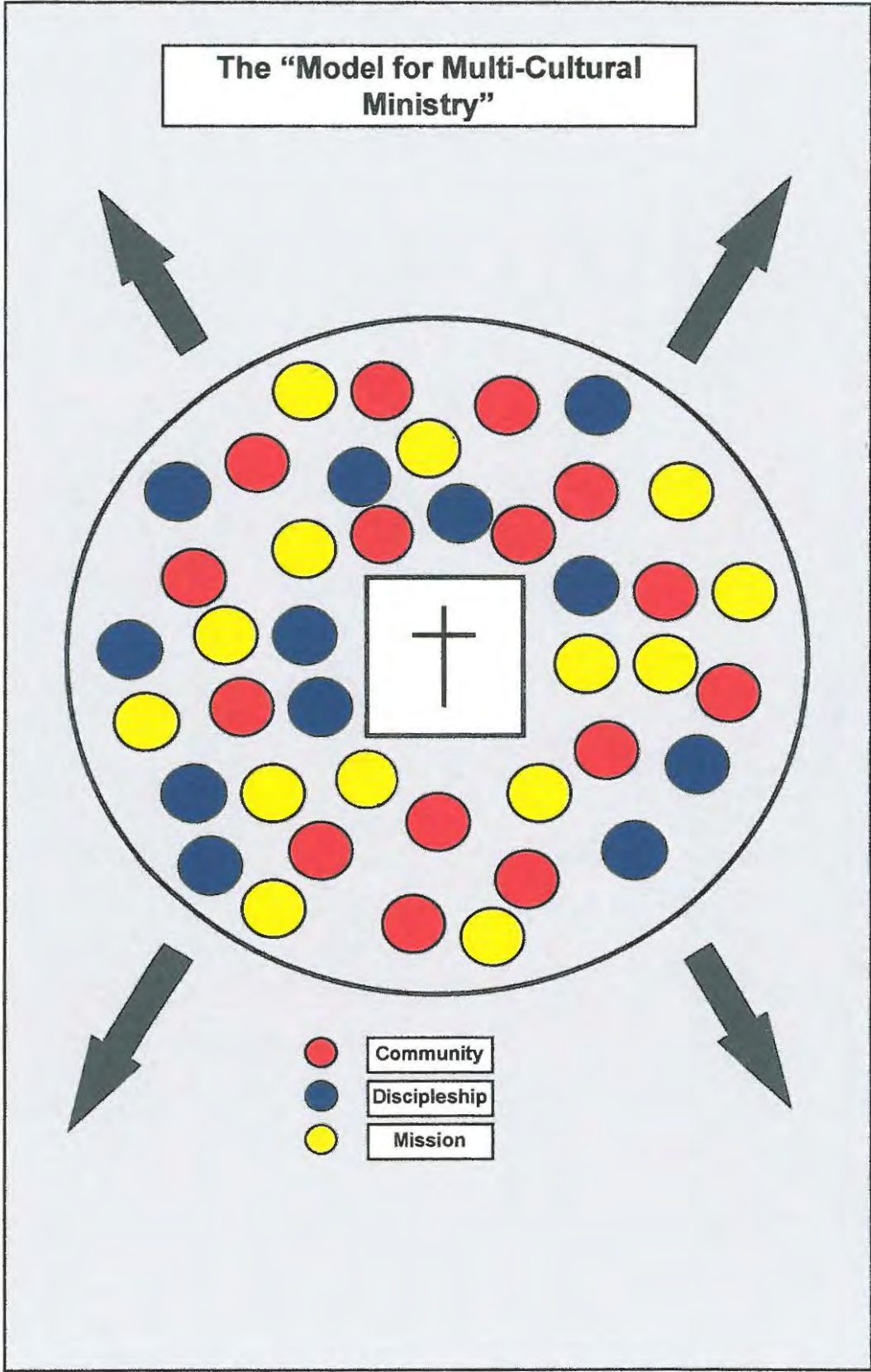


Diagram 15

6.2.1 Explanation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”¹⁷⁹:

In the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” the large circle depicts the Church. The white rectangle containing a cross is the church building in which the Church (congregation) meets regularly each week for a time of worship and celebration together. The small coloured circles within the circumference of the large circle depict the small groups that meet each week. A red circle is a small group that represents “**Community**”, a blue circle represents a small group emphasising “**Discipleship**”, and a yellow circle depicts a small group whose priority is “**Mission**”. The size or shape of the church is not represented by the physical size or shape of the church building, but by the number of, and ministries of, the small groups that meet. The large black arrows point away from the large circle (the church); this illustrates the Scriptural truth that the church is called to go and minister to all people¹⁸⁰. It is as the Church follows this ministry pattern that it will grow. The sign of growth is measured by the increase in the number of small groups, and people meeting in the groups, as opposed to measuring the congregation according to the number of people that worship regularly in the Sunday services.

The diagram depicts the small circles as having one colour, therefore one purpose only. This was done to facilitate an ease of presentation. In reality this is not the case. The small group labelled “community” will have as its main objective the establishment of community. Therefore at least 50% of the time that this group meets - it will nurture and foster the building of community. However it will also be expected to have the elements of discipleship, and mission with it as well. This format is true for the small groups meeting with the chief objective of discipleship. They will spend at least 50% of their time meeting as small groups on programs to develop an understanding of, and responsibility for, discipleship. They will also be expected to foster the development of community and mission within their small groups as well. The small groups that meet with mission as their chief objective will focus on mission

¹⁷⁹ See Diagram 15.

¹⁸⁰ See (Matthew 28: 16-20: NIV: 1983).

for at least 50% of the groups meetings, and the remaining time be spent on the ongoing fostering of community and discipleship¹⁸¹.

6.2.2 The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” and Trinity Methodist Church

The benefits of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” for Trinity Methodist Church, are numerous. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” has as its foundation the small group system, therefore, it enables the church employing it to redevelop its structure to be in accordance with that of the early Christian church as portrayed in the New Testament book of Acts¹⁸². The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” enables this by encouraging authentic community, discipleship and mission to take place¹⁸³.

6.2.2.1 The “community” small groups

It is this community ethos that encourages the person to stay within the small group. It facilitates the process of personhood, and, in so doing, nurtures the individual’s spiritual journey leading him or her into a deeper relationship with God, and with other people. David Power states that it is within community that God’s power is released:

“The locus of God’s power is the community itself, for the reality of power is the Spirit of Christ poured forth into our hearts. The symbols of the presence of the Spirit are those which signify interaction between the members in mutual charity and service” (Power: 1990: 120).

This perspective is also in accordance with Wesleyan theology. Historically, there is a large amount of evidence that proves the value of the small group system within Methodism. Wesley believed that there was great value in attaching the seeker to a

¹⁸¹ The process of changing the chief emphasis of the small group, while keeping the other elements of the model involved in the life of the small group as well (to a lesser degree) is based on the model of the Evergreen Baptist Church, see para 5.2.6.2 on page 121.

¹⁸² The theological significance of small groups was dealt with in Chapter 4 page 63 ff.

¹⁸³ Authentic community, discipleship and mission are achieved as a result of the employing of small group dynamics such as openness and honesty, of sharing not only laughter and joy, but tears and heartache as well. The dynamics of effective small groups will be dealt with more completely later in this chapter.

small group and fostering the experience of community there, before allowing the seeker to become a member of the church¹⁸⁴.

“Any person determined to save his soul may be united (this is the only condition required) with them [the Methodists]. But this desire must be evidenced by three marks: Avoiding all known sin; doing good after his power; and, attending all the ordinances of God. He is then placed in such a class as is convenient for him, where he spends about an hour a week. And, the next quarter, if nothing is objected to him, he is admitted into the society: And therein he may continue as long as he continues to meet his brethren, and walks according to his profession” (Snyder: 1980: 55).

In practice this would mean that people visiting Trinity Methodist Church would be identified. They would then be placed within small groups that have as their chief emphasis - community. Trained leaders lead the small groups. The focus of these small groups is not chiefly on bible study and deep spiritual growth but rather, on fostering the development of interpersonal relationships. It is as the relationships develop that the leaders will begin to encourage the members to attend the Sunday services regularly.

However, being members of these small groups is not dependent on whether the members attend Sunday services or not. It is when the relationships have sufficiently developed, and commitments to Jesus as Lord and Saviour have been made that the leaders of the “community” small groups begin to introduce the concepts of discipleship and mission. When the need arises for a member of a “community” small group to be spiritually developed beyond the initial conversion experience, then he or she will be placed in a “discipleship” small group. This will be done by the small group leader in prayerful consultation with the person concerned, allowing him or her to select the “discipleship” group he or she wishes to attend.

¹⁸⁴ See para 4.3 page 74.

6.2.2.2 The “discipleship” small groups

The “discipleship” groups will provide the members with Bible study and courses designed to facilitate healthy and responsible spiritual growth. The ongoing nurturing of community within these groups will provide a support base for the members as they strive to live their life as a disciple of Jesus. This is again in keeping with Wesleyan small group dynamics¹⁸⁵. One of the chief components for the success of these groups is accountability. The trained leaders of the small groups ensure that the members hold each other accountable for the personal goals that have been set to enable spiritual growth to take place. These small groups will also be expected to have as part of their emphasis the development of mission.

6.2.2.3 The “mission” small groups

Wesley made sure that those who were determined to live their life according to the challenges of scripture understood that a love for God had to be followed by a love for one’s neighbour¹⁸⁶. The two could not be separated. One’s love for God had to be followed with the evidence of one’s love for one’s neighbour. The classes and the bands became a mechanism not only for spiritual growth, but also for collecting money for mission work.

“The class meeting became the backbone of the Methodist financial system as well. “A penny a week and a shilling a quarter” became the rule. The considerable sums thus raised and handled by the stewards were used for the poor and later provided the main support for the Methodist travelling preachers” (Snyder: 1980: 55).

¹⁸⁵ See para 4.3 page 74.

¹⁸⁶ Wesley in his sermon “The Almost Christian” writes that the mark of a true Christian is “First, The Love of God. For thus saith His word, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ... The second is ... the love for our neighbour. For thus saith our Lord, in the following words, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” If any man ask, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ we reply, Every man in the world; every child of His who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh” (Wesley: 1956: 16)

I am not proposing here that the “mission” groups should be a mechanism for raising money! These small groups will have as their chief objective the work of mission. The groups would then identify the areas of need within the wider community and initiate mission strategies or programmes to ensure the work of the church in “mission” is done. However, as with the other two small group formats, the chief focus of mission will not be the only objective of these groups. They will also foster the ongoing development of community, and the life of discipleship within the spirituality of the members.

6.2.2.4 The Sunday services

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” implemented in this way encourages a changing of perceptions with regards to the Sunday services. In the “central control” model, the model in use at Trinity Methodist Church, the Sunday services are used chiefly for the proclamation of the Word, and the sharing of the Sacraments (Gorman: 1993: 300). These services are often impersonal due to the numbers of people that attend. Theologically, they are sound and well-constructed traditional Methodist services. The services provide very limited and scarce opportunity for the celebration of community, or as a means for reflection on the call to discipleship and mission.

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” encourages the format of these services to change, for they in essence become the family of God meeting to rejoice at the work of their Father within their lives. The services become a call to all who would hear, to “Come and see”¹⁸⁷ what the Lord has done! The weekly church services must become a time of celebration for the congregation for the ways in which God has worked in their lives directly, and through them, worked in the lives of others beyond the boundary of the Church - through the ministry of the small groups. However, there is a deep reality that must be embraced when authentic community, discipleship and mission are embarked on, and that is suffering. Jesus reminded his followers of this

¹⁸⁷ See para 5.2.6.2 page 126.

when he told the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25: 31-46¹⁸⁸. Therefore, the Sunday services will not only be a time of celebration and rejoicing, but also for prayerful reflection and petition.

However, a challenge faces Trinity Methodist Church and any other church that has a present model for ministry that needs to change. How and where does one begin to implement a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” of this nature, in a well established and institutionalised church?

6.3 WHERE TO BEGIN?

The “central control” model leaves the responsibility for ministry squarely with the senior minister and ministerial staff of the church (Gorman: 1993: 300). The flow of initiative and information is, for want of a better illustration, from the “top-down”. That is from the apex of the triangle (the senior minister), to the base of the triangle (the congregation). This model is in accordance with the model followed by the majority of mainline, institutionalised churches. A major implication of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” is that it literally turns this concept on its head. The emphasis is no longer from the “top-down”, but from the “bottom-up”. The congregation (represented by the small groups) initiates the work of the church. They do this as a result of identifying “needs” within their lives, and within the wider community beyond the walls of the church. They, then, in consultation with the ministerial staff, and other small groups, employ strategies to meet these needs.

6.3.1 Implications of implementing the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”

The changing of a church’s model for ministry has far-reaching implications for the congregation concerned. A factor that must be carefully considered when implementing a new model for ministry, is the “fear of change”. Gorman describes this as follows:

¹⁸⁸ In this parable those obedient to the commands of God - called “the righteous” , care for the hungry and thirsty, clothe the naked, look after the sick and those in prison and invite the stranger into their homes.

“‘Change’ is seldom neutral. We talk of ‘change for the better’ or ‘change for the worse.’ We are exhilarated by the prospect of change or threatened by its demands ... For the most part persons initially resist change because it means leaving what is ‘comfortable’ and moving to the unknown. But there is no forward motion without change. The Christian life is expected to be one of transition and transformation as believers are formed more wholly in the likeness of Christ. At the heart of all life is growth and development, positive or negative” (Gorman: 1993: 110).

This will no doubt be very true for the congregation of Trinity Methodist Church. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” has been developed in this thesis by using Trinity as a base for research, and by developing a model that will work within the ethos of **this specific congregation**. The implications of the implementation of the new model for ministry must be carefully taken into account so as not to damage, nor perhaps destroy, the work of God within this Methodist congregation.

6.3.1.1 It must take into account the “ethos” of congregation

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” has been developed while taking in the specific needs of Trinity Methodist Church, some of these being: (a) Trinity is an evangelical church, therefore, evangelism is a central part of the ministry of the church, (b) Trinity is fast becoming an inner city church and, therefore, will be increasingly faced with the realities of vandalism, theft from the church complex, and the reluctance of the members of the congregation to venture at night to the church, from the safety of the suburbs.

The city of Bloemfontein is expanding rapidly; therefore, the suburbs are growing away from the centre of the city; members of the church who have relocated homes to live in these new suburbs have further to travel to the church. (c) Trinity is responsible for providing pastoral care and ministry to the Methodist students of the Free State University. A Methodist society has been formed on the campus, and meets mid-weekly. The evening congregation at Trinity Methodist Church averages 500 people, and, of these, 80% are students from the Free State University. (d) Trinity has grown dramatically in the past eight years and there is a need to consolidate this numerical

growth with effective programs encouraging spiritual growth and development to spiritual maturity¹⁸⁹.

6.3.1.2 The implementation of the model is a long term project

The implementation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” with its small group orientation must be done with great care, and be regarded as a program to be implemented over the long term. Gorman emphasises that once the ground work for the implementation of a new model for ministry has been completed such as: (a) evaluating the needs of the congregation, (b) comparing them to the current model employed by the church, (c) ascertaining what God has called the church “to be and to do”, (d) assessing and re-evaluating the role expectations of the church on the clergy, and (e) the involvement of the laity in leadership structures etc, then a “three-to-five year plan based on the above assessments, choices, and desirable goals” must be designed (Gorman: 1993: 312). This plan must also include “training, special events” [and] “steps to be taken in the support of existing groups and the formation of new groups” (Gorman: 1993: 312).

6.3.1.3 The model must be implemented with ongoing and careful planning and preparation

The implementation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” will need to occur in tandem with “lots of planning, prayer, attention and constant evaluation” (Icenogle: 1994: 368). The way to facilitate this is by developing a ‘timeline’ that ensures the clear setting of goals and targets for the changes that will need to be made, it will also ensure that (i) the implementation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” takes place effectively, and that (ii) there is adequate and ongoing evaluation of the process of implementation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” and the resources needed.

The model for “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” is based on the foundation of a system of small groups. The following timeline illustrates how a system of small

¹⁸⁹ See para’s 5.2.2 - 5.2.3 pages 105-114.

groups can be effectively developed, thereby providing the basis for the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” at Trinity Methodist Church¹⁹⁰:

¹⁹⁰ Adapted from the table in (Gorman: 1993: 314).

DIAGRAM 16 : TIMELINE FOR TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH

	YEAR 1				YEAR 2
	1-4 weeks	5-20 weeks	5-20 weeks (ctd)	21-29 weeks	1-4 weeks
<p>GROUPS: Goal 1</p> <p>In three years to have at least 25% of our active members involved in some type of small group within the church.</p>	<p>Publicise</p> <p>Hold meeting with the Congregation</p>	<p>Begin to talk through the contract time of the small groups.</p> <p>Divide into small groups.</p>	<p>Begin the small groups</p> <p>Bring in leaders, to evaluate and view the small groups.</p> <p>Weekend Camp.</p>	<p>Make a list of those wanting to be part of a small group.</p> <p>Set up small groups.</p> <p>Develop contract in groups</p>	<p>Begin small groups.</p> <p>Add small groups as leaders are trained and available.</p>
<p>LEADERS: Goal 2</p> <p>By the end of the first year at least 2 teams of leaders equipped, by the end of the second year at least 5, and by the end of the third year at least 10 teams of leaders</p>	<p>Evaluate the responses from the congregation.</p>	<p>Model group time</p> <p>Note: I will lead the first nine weeks, thereafter the leaders of the small groups will be responsible for presentation of the material in the small groups.</p>		<p>Weekend retreat.</p> <p>Recruit teams of leaders from last year</p>	<p>Set up 2 seminars.</p> <p>Develop strategy to recruit new leaders (i.e. from Alpha).</p>
<p>EVALUATION: Goal 3</p> <p>For three years every six months conduct an evaluation of the progress of the small group ministry. Report back to the Church Council every six months</p>		<p>Evaluate and prepare report for the Church Council.</p>	<p>Observe the small groups and prepare report.</p> <p>Set up program for Year 2.</p> <p>Plan September retreat.</p>	<p>Find and contact speakers for the seminars.</p>	<p>Evaluate progress.</p>

The information contained within the “Timeline for Trinity Methodist Church” must be read from left to right, for example:

- **“GROUPS: Goal 1”**: This represents the chief objective of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” namely to provide effective and meaningful multi-cultural ministry to as many of the congregation of Trinity Methodist Church as possible. This ministry must not be dictated to by the constraints of culture, but must creatively transcend them. Small groups are the principal means of achieving this goal. The only way that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” based on the small group system, can begin to influence the wider life of the church, is if enough members of the church are involved in small groups. At present approximately 150 people, out of a total membership of 2794 people, are members of small groups. This is a percentage level of 5.36%¹⁹¹. The target of “Groups Goal 1” is to have at least 25% of the membership of Trinity Methodist Church in small groups by the end of three years (i.e. by the end of 2001 AD).

How will the congregation be introduced to the small group system? The “Alpha Course” and its impact on Trinity Methodist Church has been discussed in this thesis¹⁹². It was while evaluating the success of the “Alpha course” that it became apparent to me that the basic system being employed on that course, would be very supportive in the development of a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”. The general consensus of those having attended the “Alpha Course” was that the most rewarding aspect of the course was the interaction in the small groups¹⁹³. Therefore, a course was designed to follow “Alpha”, to use that spiritual momentum of the either new or reawakened discovery of God to develop “disciples for Jesus”.

¹⁹¹ This figure is relevant for those that are members of Bible study, covenant and discipleship groups and does not include the members of the Woman’s auxiliary.

¹⁹² See para 5.2.2.3 page 108.

¹⁹³ See para 5.2.3 page 114.

6.3.1.3.1 The “Beta” course

The “Beta” course was designed and developed to achieve this and, in so doing, to foster the development and ongoing use of the small group system. It has been of great benefit thus far.

The “Alpha” course dealt with some of the basic questions pertaining to Christianity, such as “Who is Jesus?”¹⁹⁴. The “Beta” course has been designed to provide the Christian with some of the necessary spiritual tools for the Christian journey. The “Beta” course is designed to run over seven consecutive weeks. Those attending must be “born again”; in other words have had an experience of conversion¹⁹⁵. This is necessary to ensure that the content of the course material is relevant to the spiritual needs of those attending.

The format of each evening is as follows:

There is a approximately thirty minute period of praise and worship (led by the worship leader - a lay person and employed at Trinity Methodist Church), and ending with a short prayer. I then provide the “spiritual tool” for the evening in the form of a forty-five minute address. At the conclusion of the address there is a fifteen minute “coffee break” after which the course members break into their small groups, and discuss questions prepared for them, and deal with any other questions that a group member may have. A trained group leader is responsible for leading a small group. The size of the small group averages ten people per group. A weekend camp is offered to the members in the last third of the course.

¹⁹⁴ See para 5.2.2.1 page 106.

¹⁹⁵ This could have occurred on an “Alpha” course, or at any other stage in the believer’s life. Even though “Beta” is described as following “Alpha” it does not imply that anyone wanting to do “Beta” must have done “Alpha” first. The only prerequisite is that they are already “born again”.

The content of the addresses is as follows:

- Week 1: “Where have we come from?” [spiritually] and “Where do we need to go to?” [spiritually].
- Week 2: “Resources for the journey: the Bible”
- Week 3: “Resources for the journey: Worship”
- Week 4: “Resources for the journey: Service”
- Week 5: “Resources for the journey: Stewardship”
- Week 6: The camp: “Resources for the journey:
 - Developing an understanding of the theology of the Cross
 - The Holy Spirit
 - Living in God’s will
- Week 7: “Resources for the journey: Community¹⁹⁶”

The design of the course is to provide seekers with an environment that is conducive to their spiritual growth. The presentation of the “talk” each evening ensures that the theological content of the study material is sound and in keeping with Methodist doctrine. This does not mean that the content is dry doctrinal material, it is kept light and relevant to the needs of the people.

The role of the small groups is nurtured and carefully guided by a trained lay leader and myself. The small groups meet for the duration of “Beta” at an appointed venue on the church premises. At the conclusion of the “Beta” course, the small groups continue to meet on a weekly basis at the home of the group leader. They are given material and discussion questions for use each evening. The syllabus is not regimented, but rather flexible. This allows the leader to approach either myself or the lay leader, and request study material that is relevant to a deep need the group may

¹⁹⁶ It is clear that the sessions provided on “Beta” also deliberately nurture the development of each of the pillars of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, community, discipleship and mission.

have¹⁹⁷. The “Beta” course provides a means for spiritual development of the members of the course, while simultaneously developing a network of small groups.

“Beta” will assist greatly in meeting the target of 25% as outlined in Groups Goal 1. At present there are “Beta” courses on offer in the second and third quarters of each year. The first and fourth quarters are used for the training of leaders, evaluation of the previous course and preparation for the next course.

An illustration of the effectiveness of this system for the training of leaders, and the establishment of small groups is evident when looking at just the “Beta” course in the second quarter of 1998. 75 people attended “Beta” during this quarter. The conclusion of the course means that seven leaders will be hosting small groups in their homes, 75 people of the congregation that were not in small groups are now part of one, and that with an average of 10 people in each group - 7 new small groups have been established in one quarter of the year.

The various columns of the table outline not only the objectives of the development of the small group system in “Beta”, but also enable a careful monitoring to be made to ensure that the course remains relevant to the ongoing development of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

6.3.1.4 Comprehensive training is necessary for the leaders of the small groups

It is crucial for the development of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, [and when making use of a course such as “Beta”], that those involved with the implementation of the model’s programmes, and especially the lay leaders, must be well trained. There will also need to be regular and prayerful consultations and ongoing training sessions with them to assist them and the church “to survive the stormy blasts of hard storms, fickle members, young and naïve leaders and oppressive outside institutional systems” (Icenogle: 1994: 368).

¹⁹⁷ It has already occurred where a member of a small group lost a child through suicide. The flexibility of the syllabus enabled the group concerned to study topics such as “The Christian and Depression”.

6.3.1.5 The “old” and “new” paradigms for ministry must be employed alongside each other

The implementation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” at Trinity Methodist Church means the starting of a new paradigm for ministry alongside an old and trusted model for ministry. Therefore, care must be taken to nourish the old model while at the same time to establish and then nourish the development of the new.

“These two ministry systems must run side by side for an extended period of time, long enough for the new to become viable and stand on its own” (Icenogle: 1994: 369).

It must be ensured that there are enough trained leaders to nourish the old system, while at the same time to launch the new model for ministry. The new model must not be regarded as parasitic, feeding off the expertise of resources and leadership in the old, leaving it drained of all life and energy.

6.3.1.6 The integrity of the “three pillars” must be maintained

•The pillars of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” (a) community (b) discipleship and (c) mission, must be used as the chief thrust of the ministry at Trinity Methodist Church, and of the focus of the small groups identity. However, there are a myriad of other aspects of ministry that must also be implemented, and that will be contained within the pillars for example:

- The welcoming of visitors and new members into the church will be an aspect of Community,
- evangelism and outreach will be a vital component of the pillar of mission,
- the development of bible study material will be contained within the pillar of discipleship,
- literacy classes for the uneducated and illiterate will be part of the pillar of mission,
- The caring for of the elderly is part of the thrust of community etc.

6.3.1.7 Resources must be established and utilised

Resources to assist in this change over process must be identified. This can be in the form of study material or conferences and seminars that should be attended by leaders, or the inviting of church growth and small group consultants to assist in the process.

6.3.1.8 The roles and functions of the senior minister and the ministerial staff must be re-evaluated

The implementation of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” along the lines of the small group system does not only challenge the way the church carries out its ministry as a whole, but very specifically has an impact on the role and function of the ministerial staff. What, then, becomes the role of the senior minister and the ministerial staff?

They become responsible for co-ordinating the work of the church in a way that ensures the church remains faithful to (1) the Gospel and (2) the Doctrines of Methodism and very importantly, to (3) the vision that God has given the church. This is a combination of the ideas expressed by Rainer in the “People-Led-Vision” model¹⁹⁸ and the “Evergreen Baptist Church’s model¹⁹⁹. The ministers are then responsible for the proclaiming of the Word of God, and the nurturing of the spiritual lives of the people within the congregation and small groups.

To ensure that this ministry can be its most effective, the ministerial staff will need to train and equip lay leadership. The small groups function not in a haphazard way, but follow a co-ordinated program led by a trained leader. This leader will have to be a lay person, someone who has the gifts for leading a small group. The small group leaders will then need to meet on a regular basis with the ministerial staff, to keep them

¹⁹⁸ See para 5.2.5 page 120.

¹⁹⁹ See para 5.2.6.2 page 126.

informed of the process of the work within the small groups, to obtain new Bible study material and co-ordinate mission tasks to avoid unnecessary duplication etc.²⁰⁰

6.3.2 The benefits of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” to the Church

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” offers many benefits to the church. The implementation of a well-planned small group ministry of this sort encourages the following:

1. The discovery of spiritual gifts²⁰¹

A large church of the size of Trinity Methodist Church faces the constant reality that many of the members would like to be involved in the work of the church, but they feel threatened by large groups of people. The small group is then an environment in which they can slowly become involved in acts of ministry, and thereby be made use of by the church. Small groups “allow people to stimulate each other and as a result, to put their God-given gifts to use for building the church” (Arnold: 1992: 33).

2. The development of lay leadership²⁰²

Wesley was often criticised for the way that he made use of the uneducated and poor members of the societies as leaders of the classes, bands and as travelling preachers.²⁰³ Nevertheless the heritage passed on to the Methodist Church is that the equipping of

²⁰⁰ This is a sound Wesleyan strategy; John Wesley met with class leaders and stewards of the societies periodically to receive their reports on the work of the society, to hear the needs of the society, and to decide on matters of discipline see (Snyder: 1980: 55) and para 1.10 page 31.

²⁰¹ See (Arnold: 1992: 31-32).

²⁰² See (Arnold: 1992: 33-34).

²⁰³ “The extensive system of bands, classes, societies and preachers, together with other offices and functions, opened the doors wide for leadership and discipleship in early Methodism. By the time Methodism had reached 100, 000 members at the end of the century, the movement must have had over 10,000 class and band leaders with perhaps an equal or larger total of other leaders. Many of these, as well as some of Wesley’s preachers, were women ... One hears today that it is hard to enough leaders for small groups or the other responsibilities of the church. Wesley put one in ten, perhaps one in five, to work in significant ministry and leadership. And who were these people? Not the educated or the wealthy with time on their hands, but laboring men and women, husbands and wives and young folks with little or not training, but with spiritual gifts and eagerness to serve. Community became the incubator and training camp for Christlike ministry” (Snyder: 1980: 63).

lay people to positions of ministry and leadership is vital if the church is to continue to grow and remain relevant in its quest to meet the spiritual needs of all people. The development of lay leadership is recognised as being one of the priorities facing the modern church, and this is one of the key factors in the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

Arnold makes this fact clear: “Many churches now recognise that, in order to effectively carry out the various ministries of the church, a primary task of pastors and church leaders is to equip lay people to use their gifts. The pastor is properly viewed more as facilitator than as the primary means through which ministry flows. He or she looks for gifted potential leaders and then spends time with them, helping them to grow as disciples and encouraging them to use their God-given talents” (Arnold: 1992: 33).

Hunter is another prominent church growth scholar who proclaims that the answer the church needs for meeting the demands of ministry in the present day and for the future lies in the ministry of small groups, and in the equipping of the laity for ministry in the church. His departure point is that “Early Christianity was a *lay movement*. No one was ‘ordained’ in the sense that any Christian tradition means it today ... the ordination of some people to the priesthood is a postcanonical development within the Church. It is a product of the Traditions, but not of the New Testament” (Hunter: 1996: 120).

3. Effective congregational care²⁰⁴

A small group that provides ministry to its members is ensuring that the church is caring for the pastoral and spiritual needs of its members. Effective and dynamic small groups can assist in meeting the overall ministry strategy of the church. In the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” the small groups can take on many of the pastoral functions of the church such as visiting the sick in hospital, and the aged in the old age homes, or providing support for those bereaved.

²⁰⁴ See (Arnold: 1992: 34-35).

The three components of the small group make-up in the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” (community, discipleship and mission) will ensure that the small groups do not turn their focus inwardly thereby focusing on the needs of their small group members only, but that they will also look to embrace the needs of others within the congregation as well.

4. Thanksgiving and praise²⁰⁵

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” emphasises that the way the congregation views itself in general, and the Sunday services in particular, will be challenged by the establishment of a small group system. The congregation is no longer passive, and the ministerial staff active; the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” encourages the church as a whole to work together with the ministerial staff, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the church’s ministry. It is as the people minister to each other, and as they are involved in mission to the wider community, that the evidence of God’s love and power become evident. It is as prayers are answered and needs met that God’s love confronts us deep within our beings.

The coming together of the congregation for the Sunday services, in terms of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, is the communal celebration of the small groups. In other words, it is the time when all the members of the small groups meet with each other in “a dynamic response to God, acknowledging who he is and what he has done” (Arnold: 1992: 35). It is the moment of “corporate response”, where all can “experience God’s presence and rejoice in knowing and loving him” (Arnold: 1992: 35).

“When enough people in a church start experiencing these moments of responding to God, the worship of the whole church begins to change. If some of the praise and thanksgiving occurring in small groups overflows to the worship service, there can be new intensity and sense of purpose felt in congregational worship” (Arnold: 1992: 36).

²⁰⁵ See (Arnold: 1992: 35-36).

5. Evangelism²⁰⁶

It becomes evident when reading the New Testament Scriptures that evangelism is not about high-powered public rallies, but chiefly to do with sharing the Gospel message in face to face personal encounters with others. The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” makes use of the small groups to encourage this natural type of evangelism. It is a natural evangelism because it does not take place in an orchestrated way, such as in a large public rally, but occurs over a period of time as the members of the small group interact with each other.

The value of conversion in the environment of the small group is enhanced by the ongoing support system that the new convert has in the small group itself. The questions of the convert, the doubts that will inevitably arise along with the desires and dreams to serve God, can all be carefully and prayerfully worked through in the small group itself.

6. Spiritual and numerical growth²⁰⁷

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” makes use of the small groups as a means for encouraging the spiritual growth of the people²⁰⁸. As I mentioned earlier, Wesley identified this advantage when he established the classes and the bands. Those who were ‘seeking’, were placed in the environment of the small group to be nurtured and cared for, but also through the accountability of the group members to each other, they were encouraged to grow spiritually. It was this effective ministry within the small groups that encouraged the rapid growth of Methodism²⁰⁹.

²⁰⁶ See (Arnold: 1992: 36).

²⁰⁷ See (Arnold: 1992: 36-37).

²⁰⁸ See para 6.3.1.3.1 page 149.

²⁰⁹ See para 1.10 page 31 and para 4.3 page 74.

7. Effective multi-cultural ministry occurs

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” makes use of the small groups system as this provides the most effective way for true and effective multi-cultural ministry to take place²¹⁰.

A supreme challenge facing the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) in general today, and Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein in particular, is that of providing a ministry to its members - that are drawn from diverse social backgrounds and cultural groups - in a way that authentically unites them and allows them to experience what it means to be “the body of Christ”. I am of the opinion that too often the (MCSA) has attempted to bring about unity in the church through institutional changes only.

For example liturgies for multi-cultural Sunday Services have been designed and implemented. These liturgies are merely documents containing hymns and prayers in different languages, and when the service is ended the majority of the congregation are left feeling confused and disillusioned, as they were unable to understand the segments of the service that were not in their own language. The fact that hymns are sung, prayers and scriptures read in a variety of languages, does not mean that authentic multi-cultural ministry is taking place. Authentic multi-cultural ministry only occurs when people from divergent cultural backgrounds meet and interact with each other in a face-to-face way, with Jesus as the cause for their gathering.

The institutional systems that attempt to force the merging of cultures (and denominations) will fail as they are not based “upon the foundation of God’s nature and the hunger for human community ... Institutional merging systems will fail because they are not a person-to-person covenantal network of real people in real places. Much of this is an attempt to unify and reorganise the dying systems of Christendom. Too often, ‘small groups today are committees through which the

²¹⁰ Church growth and small group specialists also make use of the term “trans-cultural” ministry.

maintenance demands of the denomination sap much of the church's energy and vitality" (Icenogle: 1994: 362).

Multi-cultural ministry to truly succeed must establish "real communities of loving people in face-to-face relationships [where] mutual trust can be sustained as the true and eternal ecclesia of Jesus Christ" (Icenogle: 1994: 362). Therefore, the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry" does not begin with attempting to bring about institutional change at Trinity Methodist Church, rather it starts with the formation of a dynamic small group system, that encourages the members of the groups to meet and interact in a "face-to-face" way (Icenogle: 1994: 362). If institutional change must occur at some stage to offer support for multi-cultural ministry, then it must happen as a reflection of the changed perceptions of the members resulting from their "face-to-face" interaction with each other (Icenogle: 1994: 362). To illustrate the importance of this process I will now describe how Trinity Methodist Church embraced the need to fervently develop the pillar of mission.

The need for Trinity Methodist Church to develop a new model for ministry was conveyed to the congregation over a six-week period. This was primarily by means of notices published in the weekly church bulletin and due to exhortations by myself and the other ministers on the staff. At the end of this period the congregation were invited to attend a seminar on the evening of 24 March 1998. The objective was to, not only outline the need for a new model for ministry, but also to remind the congregation of their Methodist roots, and that as a Methodist Church we were failing in our attempts at multi-cultural ministry in that we had no mission strategy as a church. It was felt that a discussion of our Methodist heritage would assist in the development of the new model for ministry as we recaptured the Methodist truth that we are a denomination born out of mission. Therefore the need for the "Pillar of Mission" was the topic emphasised.

The three ministers on staff were given the responsibility of addressing the meeting. Rev Coetzee dealt with "Mission and Scripture"; I was responsible for "Mission and Methodism"; and Rev Hiscock presented "Trinity and its present involvement, or lack

of, involvement in Mission". The responsibility for convening this meeting, and future discussions with regards to a new model for ministry, was left with me. Approximately 160 people attended the seminar. They were not asked to immediately respond to what they had heard presented, but rather to return the following week to their small groups, and over the next few weeks to pray and discuss the "call to mission" together.

They were asked to return to a second congregational meeting on the 14 April 1998. They were to present the feelings and ideas of their small group, for and against the proposal for a new model for ministry, and how they felt this related to what they believed God was calling them to do.

The second congregational meeting was held. The groups were unanimous in the need for (a) a new model for ministry and (b) to nurture this model within the realm of the small groups. It was felt that the pillars of community and discipleship were already being nurtured to a degree in each small group; therefore the place to begin with the new model would be the development and implementation of a strategy for mission work. The small groups each presented their ideas. The contract that was established was that each small group in the church, irrespective of its function, must have as part of its ethos mission work. The small group could decide on what this "mission work" would be. A lay person was elected to work with me, to compile a database of the small groups. He will compile a list of names and contact numbers of each small group leader with the members of his or her group, and co-ordinate the various mission objectives of each group.

A certain number of far reaching decisions were arrived at as a result of the prayerful interaction within the small groups; a few of these decisions are represented here:

- (1) It was decided that May 1998 was to be "Mission month". During this period the congregation would be given the opportunity to hear from those involved in mission work within Trinity Methodist Church, to listen to the appeals and

exhortations from the lay people themselves for them to join with them in mission work, and to become part of a small group.

- (2) It was decided that Pentecost Sunday (31 May 1998) should be used for a "Mission Expo". Organisations, Bible study groups and individuals were urged to construct a display of what God had called them to do as "mission" for the work of the church. These displays were exhibited in the largest hall of Trinity Methodist Church (St. Luke's hall) and the congregation invited to view them.
- (3) A small group of women on their own initiative began a weekly soup kitchen at the church funded by donations of food and money from the wider community.
- (4) Others have come forward with proposals for the development of homes for the care of babies infected with the HIV virus; these people have on their own initiative approached other church, community and government departments to research the viability of the projects

The groups were requested to earnestly pray, and develop, effective strategies for the implementation of these and other mission goals. They were to return with these details to the next congregational meeting to be held on the 21 April 1998. It is evident from this example how effective small groups can be, in motivating the church to accept its responsibility to minister to all people, for the sake of the kingdom of God.

The ministry of the small groups (as rediscovered in a very small way at Trinity Methodist Church) is, therefore, a vital component of the "Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry" as it is a call to the church to return to its "biblical roots: reflecting the very nature of God in community, that image of God reflected as humanity in community, the ministry of Jesus with small groups of men and women, and the intercultural and intergenerational house churches of the apostolic age" (Icenogle: 1994: 365).

The church growth specialist, Carl F. George, states the following;

“I believe that the smaller group within the whole-called by dozens of terms, including the *small group* or the *cell group*-is a crucial but underdeveloped resource in most churches. It is, I contend, the most strategically significant foundation for spiritual formation and assimilation, for evangelism and leadership development, for the most essential functions that God has called for in the church. The model for a healthy thriving church ... highlights the lay-led small group as the essential growth centre. It is so important that everything else is to be considered secondary to its promotion and preservation” (George: 1992: 41).

Power exhorts the church to bear in mind that apart “from the time of its beginnings in Israel, Christianity has always been a faith which came from outside the cultural setting of the place where it was preached. It has always arrived in an alien dress, and so has always been faced with the problem of a fusion of cultures” (Power: 1990: 39). It is useful to remember this, for if the church has found it difficult to evangelise people effectively across cultural divides due to the presence of “cultural barriers” such as: language, custom, economics, tradition, rites and institution in the past, then how will it be possible to unite divergent cultures in a meaningful way within a denomination?

The historical realities within South Africa have exacerbated this issue, as a nation of people we were deliberately divided and separated from each other along the lines of race and culture for generations. This can also be stated in the following manner: The deliberate implementation of a program of cultural separateness, was an institutional attempt by the government of the day to hold on to power in an exclusive way. This has led to mutual suspicion between the cultures within the (MCSA). Power defines culture as being the following:

“Loosely speaking, we can say that it includes economic, political, and religious systems. It is whatever is expressed in traditions, beliefs, customs, institutions, art and artefacts, symbols, myths and rites. Its core is the values and the meaning on which human life, individual and collective, is based” (Power: 1990: 40).

Power supports the point that I am making when stating that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” must be based on and begin with face-to-face interaction as opposed to institutional systems, as he discusses the following question:

Is “the core of Christianity content and form, or is it popular dynamics of religious experience? In other words, is it doctrine and ritual, or is it a dynamics of faith which structures the human experience of the transcendent?” (Power: 1990: 43).

It might be possible to argue that the core of Christianity is content and form, if one is a member of a homogenous cultural denomination. In this instance, the arrival of Christianity in my community would mean that I simply adapt many of the rituals and forms within Christianity to suit my cultural expectations.

Power terms this evangelisation - “adaptation” and “acculturation” (Power: 1990: 43). However, this view cannot be held in a congregation consisting of a number of apparently divergent cultures. This view would suggest that within a culturally “mixed” congregation, the culture that is the most prominent will succeed in adapting the Gospel according to its needs, at the expense of the other cultures present. This hardly leads to an expression of a viable and inclusive message of salvation!

Therefore, if the view is held that Christianity has to do with the “dynamics of religious meaning” (Power: 1990: 43) and experience²¹¹, then the following principles must be taken into account:

1. That “religion is consummated in faith, and that faith grounds religion when it is authentic” (Power: 1990: 44). Power uses Bernard Lonergan to substantiate his argument:

²¹¹ I support this view, and hence my emphasis on Wesley’s need to experience that he was saved (see para 1.6 page 20 and para 1.8 page 23) and Chapter 2 of this thesis.

“faith is the knowledge which is born of love, of being in love in an unrestricted fashion. It is a dynamic state of being, a movement toward self-transcendence and toward communion in spirit. In more biblical terms, it is the Spirit of God within us, the Spirit speaking to our spirit, seeking to create a communion in love, transcending divisions, and finding ultimate oneness in the mystery which abides in all things ... It will not develop unless it is given expression, and the expression will be culturally manifold” (Power: 1990: 44).

2. The second principle that must follow, Power refers to as the “intention of truth” inherent in “symbolic expression” (Power: 1990: 45). The symbols and the way that they are used illustrate the people’s experiences of life, of God, and of each other - and of their attempts to make sense of this. The “intention of truth” is the constant, irrespective of the language or culture, social position or intellectual ability of the person concerned. It is this dynamic of Christianity that needs to be discovered, and when it is it enables Christianity to be “introduced into any culture or religion” (Power: 1990: 46).

The beginning is the proclamation of *kairos* which turns “every moment into the ‘still turning-point of time’, makes of it a moment in eternity in which the God of love is encountered” (Power: 1990: 46). It is when the Christian is encountered with this salvific love of God that a change of perspective must occur. The “Christian witness combats any particularism which selects one people in preference to another. It announces God as a God whose saving spirit blows where it wills. Its witness is to this spirit, this love of God, at work in all time, in all history, and in any particular history” (Power: 1990: 47).

3. This witness to the “spirit, this love of God at work” (Power: 1990: 47) is in the attitude of praise. It is in praise - spirit to Spirit - that God is invoked as Father, and that the celebration that all are children of the same heavenly Father can take place.

4. It is not the preoccupation with “Christianity’s institutional elements” (Power: 1990: 48) that enables this to take place but rather a profound celebration of a “future-filled, hopeful anticipation of life. Persuaded of the life in the Spirit, a people can live in hope. It can work towards that hope, for the “Spirit, speaks to our spirit,” and this is the ground of liberation” (Power: 1990: 49).

The discussion by Power above is reminiscent of John Wesley’s argument for his Doctrine of Christian Perfection. In his debate Wesley emphasises that it is possible for Christians live free of sin. This is not the result of their own strength alone, but chiefly as a consequence of *experiencing the power and love of God at work within their lives* (italics mine), it is His grace enabling them to avoid sin. This Wesley called the prevenient grace of God²¹².

The life of the Christian lived free from sin, becomes an offering of love from the Christian to God. This cannot occur as a result of the mere observance to institutionalised and traditional religion, but is in response to the deep experience of the love of God within:

“This great gift of God, the salvation of our souls, is no other than the image of God fresh stamped on our hearts. It is a *renewal in the spirit of our minds, after the likeness of him that created them*. God has now laid the *axe unto the root of the tree, purifying their hearts by faith*, and cleansing all the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. Having this hope, that they shall see God as he is, they *purify themselves even as he is pure*; and are *holy, as he that has called them is holy, in all manner of conversation*. *Not that they have already attained all that they shall attain, either are already* (in this sense) *perfect*. But they *daily go on from strength to strength; beholding now, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord*” (Whaling et al: 1981: 310-311).

²¹² See para 4.4.1.2. on page 79.

Wesley states that the experience of this prevenient love of God at work within the believer offers the Christian liberty, a freedom in God that enables a profound rejoicing within the spirit and a personal discovery of what it means to be a child of God:

“And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; such liberty from the law of sin and death as the children of this world will not believe, tho’ a man declare it to them. The Son has made them free who are thus born of God, from that great root of sin and bitterness, Pride. They feel that all their sufficiency is of God; that it is he alone who is in all their thoughts and works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. They feel that it is not they that speak, but the Spirit of their Father, who speaks in them; and that whatsoever is done by their hands, the Father who is in them, he does the works ... They are freed” (Whaling et al: 1981: 311).

Power furthermore argues that Christianity cannot be about the formalism of ritual and institutionalised religion for that works against the reality of Christianity being an “ecclesial community ... a fellowship of free spirits-free, that is, in the Spirit” (Power: 1990: 50). A Christianity that succumbs to the adaptations and manipulations of a culture to satisfy the masses is an indication of a Christianity that has succumbed “to the formalism which satisfies masses unprovoked to thought or awakened consciousness” (Power: 1990: 50).

6.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The intention of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” is to not be dependent on the changing of institutionalised ritual, nor to distort the truth to satisfy the masses, instead it must proclaim the “intention of truth” (Power: 1990: 45). All are created in the image of God, salvation is available to all who would receive it in Jesus, and therefore, as Christians we are liberated, free in the Spirit to celebrate life. The necessity for the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” to be a means for uniting the children of God within Trinity Methodist Church²¹³ in glorious celebration is apparent when reading the statement contained within the “Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa”:

“This one flock of Christ is at present gathered in many folds, distinguished by differences, partly of race and language and partly of doctrine and usage, yet united as one indivisible fellowship ‘in faith and knowledge of the Son of God’ ... a congregation of faithful [men] in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance.” (1981: page 1 para 1/4.).

The “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” transcends the boundaries and limitations of culture and language. The small groups invite the person to come and experience the liberating love of God at work within his or her life (**community**). When this encounter has occurred then the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” invites the person, by nurturing and guiding them (**discipleship**); to grow in the greater knowledge and experience of God’s love at work within his or her life and then and to share this in mission and ministry (**mission**) with others who have not yet personally encountered this truth. The Sunday services become celebrations of community; children of God of all languages and cultures coming together to celebrate their experiences of life and love with the community of God, and in this sharing to encourage others to journey with them into the presence of the ‘Divine Other’ that they may experience His liberation as well.

²¹³ Trinity Methodist Church in particular and the MCSA in general.

CONCLUSION

The intention of this thesis has been to develop a “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”, that addresses the specific goals and directives for multi-cultural ministry at Trinity Methodist Church, Charles Street, Bloemfontein. The model is, therefore, congregation specific in its formulation, and has not been developed to meet the needs for multi-cultural ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in general.

The need for a model for ministry of this kind arose as Trinity Methodist Church began to experience the reality of its congregation becoming more culturally representative of the wider Bloemfontein community. Therefore, as people from divergent cultural traditions became members at Trinity, and brought with them the need for a ministry relevant to their cultural expectations, so it became more and more apparent that a new model for ministry had to be developed and implemented.

To make sure that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” was firmly grounded in Wesleyan theology, I presented in Chapter One a brief overview of John Wesley’s life, his experiences, and how they influenced his theological development. This was necessary, as it determined not only why Methodism came into being, but also to identify the causes for the remarkable growth of Methodism as a movement. I revealed how Wesley as an ordained clergyman struggled in his ministry. He longed to live a life of spiritual obedience and service for God. The crisis for Wesley was that he could not live this life for God, until he could **experience the assurance of his salvation**²¹⁴.

²¹⁴ See para 1.5.3 on page 16.

It was at Aldersgate Street in 1738²¹⁵ that his heart was strangely warmed and he knew with a deep certainty that he was a child of God. This experience had a dramatic influence on both Wesley's life and ministry. It was after this 'Aldersgate experience' that the Methodist movement began to gain momentum. Wesley developed Methodist doctrines such as that of Christian perfection, and vociferously proclaimed that all needed to be saved, and have assurance of this salvation - even the poorest of the poor.

Wesley was a man of administrative and organisational ability. He instituted a system of small groups to enable the seeker, and the convert who desired to grow in his or her faith, to be spiritually nurtured. He achieved this by the institution of the class meeting, the bands and the society²¹⁶. Here Wesley was a pioneer of a new model of ministry. The only way that these small groups and societies could function was as a result of trained lay leadership. Wesley often did not draw these lay leaders from the educated of society, but rather from the poor working class. He made use of both men and women in positions of leadership, and trained them well. Methodism developed as a movement of lay people, enabled to perform ministry, went about the business of the work of the kingdom of God.

“There were class leaders, and band leaders, and other kinds of small group leaders, as well as local preachers and those so-called “assistants” who took de facto charge of societies and circuits—all laypersons. Other laypeople visited sick and hospitalised people; others worked with children and their families; others visited poor people, widows and single parent families; still others engaged in conversations with undisciplined people and started new classes for seekers” (Hunter: 1996: 122).

Methodist theology was presented as evangelical - all people need to be saved. Yet I demonstrated clearly that Wesley rooted Methodist theology squarely in the work of mission, small groups and the empowerment of the laity.

²¹⁵ See para 1.6 page 20.

²¹⁶ See para's 1.8 -1.9.3 from pages 23-29.

Chapter Two was a brief examination of the importance of the relationship between “religion and culture” and “religious experience”. Wesley needed to experience the assurance of his salvation. The converts in the Methodist movement were nurtured, to ensure that they experienced the assurance of their salvation as well, and that this would lead to a life of scriptural holiness²¹⁷. The intention of Chapter Two was to endorse the place of “experience” in the well being of: (a) the individual (psychology), (b) the society (sociology) and the (c) spiritual (theology). The importance of experience was emphasised in this chapter as it is of central significance to the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

Chapter Three presented a means of nurturing an experience of God in a Wesleyan theological way that enables the development of (i) the personal spiritual needs of the individual, that develops (ii) the spirituality of the church, and (iii) that will make an impact on wider society as well. I proposed that this is possible by the implementation of the “Three pillars of a model for multi-cultural ministry” - community, discipleship and mission.

In Chapter Four I presented the foundation stones of the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” - small groups. I examined what the definition of a small group is, its historical presence in the church, and its theological significance to the ministry of the church²¹⁸. I also revealed how small groups have roots within Wesleyan theology²¹⁹. The views of leading church growth specialists on the role and importance of the “small group” in the church of today were discussed.

Chapter Five is an examination of some models employed by churches to provide effective ministry. The model of ministry for Trinity Methodist Church was presented and discussed. I identified Trinity’s model as that of “Central Control” and illustrated how this model functioned with an analysis of the “Alpha” course²²⁰ and I made use

²¹⁷ See para 1.8 page 24.

²¹⁸ See para’s 4.2.1 - 4.2.3 pages 69-71.

²¹⁹ See para 4.3. page 74.

²²⁰ See para’s 5.2.2 - 5.2.3 pages 105-114.

of statistical information produced graphically to illustrate the influence of the “Central Control” model and the “Alpha” course” on Trinity Methodist Church. I then proposed that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” in its determination to be Wesleyan would need to move from that of “control” to “equipping and empowering the laity”. Therefore, I emphasised the “People-Led-Vision” and “Central Motivation” models as being of great importance to the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry”.

In Chapter Six I presented the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” and discussed various ways that it can be implemented successfully at Trinity Methodist Church. The implications and benefits of the model for Trinity Methodist Church were examined. I illustrated the potential of the model for equipping the laity and enabling them to shoulder the responsibility for ministry, with the clergy being educators and facilitators to this process. This was discussed with reference to the development of small groups in the “Beta” course²²¹, and on the willingness of the congregation to develop the pillar of mission²²².

I am of the opinion that the “Model for Multi-Cultural Ministry” developed within this thesis could be highly effective in the development of a dynamic multi-cultural ministry at Trinity Methodist Church. The model is situated, deliberately, within the tenets of Wesleyan theology. The use being made of small groups is a dynamic way to ensure the spiritual growth of the people of the church, and to take ministry to all people who are in need. The use of small groups is the most effective way for the cultures within the church to interact in a way that is authentic and obedient to the model for ministry of the early Christian church, as contained in the book of Acts, and as commanded by the Saviour to those who would serve:

²²¹ See para 6.3.1.3.1 page 149.

²²² See no. 7. page 158.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 18b-20)²²³.

²²³ (NIV: 1991).

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