

## ACRP News items

- The Board of ACRP are planning a 3-day visional / strategic planning workshop in October. We pray that they will have a positive and productive time.
- ACRP has recently appointed a new Continued Professional Development (CPD) manager for the Council for General Ministry Practitioners (CGMP) and the Council for Ministry Training Practitioners (CMTP). We would like to take this opportunity to welcome Dr Gerhard Botha (formerly Director of the Shepherd Centre at the Faculty of Theology & Religious, University of the Free State) to the management team. We trust that this will be a long and fruitful relationship.
- ACRP Affiliates are reminded that, if you were unable to attend the ACRP Conference, you can still earn your 8 ACRP CPD points! The recordings are still available, so if you are interested in receiving the link to those recordings, please contact Andrea at the ACRP Central Office at [acrp@acrpafrica.co.za](mailto:acrp@acrpafrica.co.za) for more information.

For information regarding training institutions providing accredited ministry training, please visit our website <https://www.acrpafrica.co.za> and have a look at our [Qualifications](#) page as well as our [Adverts](#) page.

# The guiding light Newsletter



## Issue 16 – August 2022



### This is a daily devotion excerpt from the African Women Devotional Bible

#### Extend a Helping Hand

*“And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.”* Leviticus 19:9-10.

Our world is filled with people who are increasingly self-centered. We are so consumed by our own needs and wants that we have forgotten the poor, widows, and orphans. God instructed the Israelites to leave some of their harvest in the field and not reap everything. This leftover harvest was reserved for the poor and foreigners who did not own land. God commanded this to ensure that the less fortunate would be cared for.

In the book of Ruth, when Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, Ruth gleaned this leftover harvest from Boaz's field in order to sustain them. Throughout the Bible, we are encouraged to give to the poor, to widows and to orphans. What are you doing to meet the needs of the vulnerable in your community? Are you leaving anything for them at the edge of your “field” – your salary or your profits? People in need are all around us. Consider setting aside resources for the needy today. It will please our Father in heaven and will open an opportunity to share the gift of salvation with someone else.

*Dear Lord, thank You for the sustenance You have provided for me – the little and the much. Open my eyes to see the needs around me. Open my heart to have compassion on the less fortunate, and open my hands to extend help. Amen.*

**The African Women Devotional Bible – Available from the Bible Society**  
(website: <https://www.biblesociety.co.za>).  
Email: [sales@biblesociety.co.za](mailto:sales@biblesociety.co.za)

**News from the AQP Desk:** In a previous edition it was mentioned that ACRP has been appointed by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) to serve as their Assessment Quality Partner (AQP). As AQP, ACRP is responsible to administer the External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA) for the two occupational qualifications in Christian ministry – see page 2 for more information on these qualifications. The assessment specifications for these qualifications are currently in process of being finalized, and the first sessions of the final (external) assessment for these qualifications is planned for November 2022 and January 2023 for the NQF Level 5 and 2 qualifications respectively. Skills Development Providers (SDPs) are reminded to send information on their students who are ready for the External Assessment to QCTO three months in advance.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views / opinions of ACRP.

## Occupational Qualification development

During 2016 and 2017, ACRP facilitated the development of two formal **occupational qualifications** for pastors and other persons in Christian ministry. This was done in conjunction with the Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). The qualifications are registered on the **Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework** of the SA Qualifications Authority (SAQA). These are the Christian Religious Practitioner (SAQA ID 101997, NQF Level 2) and Christian Religious Professional (SAQA ID 101571, NQF Level 5). Thirty different institutions (Skills Development Providers, SDPs) have already been accredited by QCTO across the country to present these formal ministry qualifications – see the ACRP website for the list of accredited SDPs.

Since both these qualifications are up for revision soon, it is an ideal time also to undertake the development of higher levels of occupational qualifications to follow on (“articulate with”) the current NQF Level 2 and 5 qualifications. The aim is to have an articulation path for occupational qualifications in Christian Ministry from NQF Level 2 right through to NQF Level 7, which is equivalent to a Bachelor’s degree.

ACRP will facilitate this process as well in conjunction with the relevant authorities. A group of ministry representatives / experts of the Christian Religious profession will be convened to advise and to guide the process.



**OASIS**  
INTERNATIONAL

Oasis Int. has been intensely involved with the development and distribution of books by authors speaking to the African contexts. The Africa Study Bible is one of the these. Please read part 10A of their sponsored article:

### *Article sponsored by OASIS International – Publishers of the Africa Study Bible*

#### **THE STORY OF THE BIBLE - PART 10A**

The story of the Bible is the story of God, his people, and his world.

God spoke. The world sprang into life. Everything there is – the huge and the tiny, mountains and oceans, little ants and bugs so small you can only see them with a microscope – God made it all.

Then he made us. He made the very first people and gave us a job: “You be in charge here, for me. You are to take care of everything. I have made you to be like me; show the world what I am like.”

He gave our first ancestors, Adam and Eve, a garden to live in, with flowing rivers and flourishing trees. “Start here,” he said. “I will meet with you here.”

When Adam first saw his wife Eve, he said, “Eyaa! This is the one!” Adam and Eve had everything – God, each other, and good work to do.

#### **But There Was an Enemy**

But there was an enemy. He was jealous. He wanted to wreck what he could not have. He was also clever. He asked Eve, “Why can’t you be the boss? Why not run things your own way? Why let God keep you back?”

Soon, our ancestors disobeyed. They did exactly what God said they should not do. Everything began to fall apart. We are still smart and able to do amazing things. But our thinking and our feelings are twisted and often broken. And the whole world feels the effect. Our brokenness damages all creation.

God saw the messed-up world and the messed-up people he had put in charge of it. God could have gone away. Many of the old African stories say that we made God angry, and he went a long way off. But that is not the story of the Bible. Yes, God can seem far away. Yes, we can choose to build a wall between us and God. But God is not going to be defeated. He is going to take broken people and make them over again. And he is going to take the broken world and make it over again.

#### **God Starts with Abraham**

He started small, with a man called Abraham. “Leave your family. Follow me. I will be family for you. And I will make you into a nation with your very own land to rule. Through you, my blessing will reach the whole world.”

Abraham followed God. Abraham stumbled, but he still trusted God, and God kept his promise. Abraham and Sarah were given a son, Isaac. From Isaac came a son named Jacob, who was called Israel. From that son came a nation, also called Israel.

In time, there were thousands of Israelites. After fleeing a famine, they lived as forced labourers in Egypt. God called Moses to lead them and told the people, “I will rescue you. Come, meet with me in the desert. Be my people. I will give you your own rich land like I promised Abraham. And through you, my blessing will reach the whole world.”

In the next newsletter we will see what became of Israel.

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The two **Must Have Resources** for the private library of pastors of the African continent. Together they form a complete library!

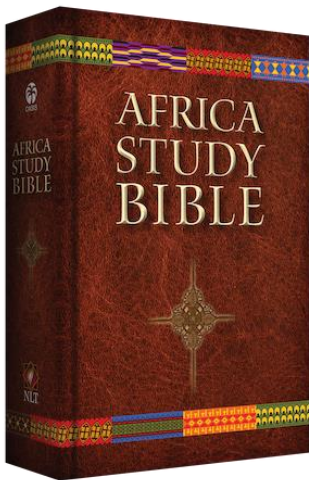
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**Both available from ACRP office**

(place orders by sending an e-mail to [cgmp@acrpafrica.co.za](mailto:cgmp@acrpafrica.co.za))

## 1. Africa Study Bible (ASB) (Hardcover)

*General Editor: Dr John Jusu*



### Key features:

The Africa Study Bible (ASB) was written by 338 contributors from 48 African countries, making it the most ethnically diverse, single-volume, biblical resource to date.

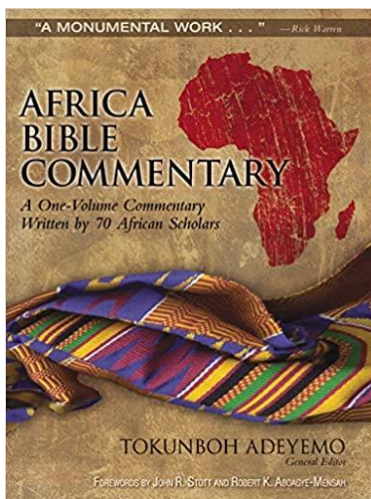
- It was built from the ground up by scholars and pastors in Africa who see the critical need to make Scripture relevant to our everyday lives.
- It contains more than 2,600 features that illuminate the truth of Scripture with a unique, African perspective.
- It is an all-in-one course in biblical content, theology, history, and culture.
- "Touchpoints", "Proverbs" and "Stories" gives an African perspective on the Bible and also show parallels with African wisdom.
- An absolute treasure of 2100 pages

**Price:** R450.00 (excluding delivery costs). A discount for orders of 10 or more can be arranged.

*"The Africa Study Bible is a pacesetter in using the African experience for understanding the Bible. I recommend it highly to those who have sought to understand life and the world from an African perspective".* **Dr Myume Dandala**, former presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and former head of the All Africa Conference of Churches.

## 2. Africa Bible Commentary (ABC) (Hardcover)

*General Editor: Dr Tokunboh Adeyemo*



### Key features:

- One-volume Bible commentary produced by African theologians, in Africa, for the needs of African pastors, students and lay leaders—and for the world.
- Section-by-section interpretive commentary, providing a useful guide to the entire Bible.
- More than 70 special articles dealing with topics of key importance in ministry in Africa today, but that have global implications.
- 70 African contributors from both English- and French-speaking countries in Africa
- Transcends the African context with insights into the biblical text and the Christian faith for readers worldwide.
- An absolute treasure of 1585 pages.

**Price:** R450.00 (excluding delivery costs). A discount for orders of 10 or more can be arranged.

*"A rich and valuable contribution to biblical knowledge and understanding. I commend it to Christian leaders. not only in Africa but the world over".* **Dr Justice James Ogenyi Ogebe**, High Court Nigeria

*For information on how to place an advertisement in our newsletter, prices involved and type of advertisements, please contact ACRP head office at [acrpafrica.co.za](mailto:acrpafrica.co.za)*



**Articles / letters provided by various people can be read in the following Annexures:**

**Annexure 1:** A prophetess and a judge (by Mark Schooney)

**Annexure 2:** Celebrating Women as “first responders” to God’s mission in the world (by Nontando Hadebe)

**Annexure 3:** The Role of Pentecostal churches in Ecology – Part 1 (by Mangaliso Matshobane)

**Annexure 4:** Letter in response to the recent floods in KZN (by Bernard Coopasamy)

**Annexure 5:** Diversification Approach to Ministry as an Attempt to Meet the Challenges – Part 2 (by Busangokwakhe Dlamini)

## Annexure 1

### A prophetess and a judge...

By Rev. Dr. Mark Schooney, honoured at the 5<sup>th</sup> annual AfriCan Global Honoree Author’s Awards 2022 as a “Pen Warrior in Africa”.

The former Prime Minister of England, Margaret Thatcher, was nicknamed the “Iron Lady”- most probably as a result of her uncompromising strength in leadership. In the biographical movie “The Iron Lady” Margaret Thatcher is portrayed as a strong and powerful leader who fought for what she thought was right. She believed in herself and trusted her decisions and almost always got her way in the end. Whilst I know that none of us, including Margaret Thatcher, could ever be perfect in this Fallen world, I believe that we can take a page out of her book of life. None of us can honestly say that we get it right all the time, but we can adopt some best practices from her journey in this temporal plain that would be greatly beneficial to ourselves and our fellow human beings.

The first thing that set this Prime Minister of Great Britain apart as an inspirational leader is that she was a woman. She was the first (and at the date of this writing, the only) woman to be prime minister of Britain, and she held office for 11 years, which is 11 years longer than any other woman and still longer than any other elected British official of any gender in the 20th century. Among many other notable achievements during her term in office, she led Britain to victory in the Falklands war and collaborated with American President Ronald Reagan to set the stage for the ultimate fall of the iron curtain and an end to the Soviet Union. This is not even mentioning the economic reforms she presided over that still benefit Great Britain and the world to this very day.

In as much as I’m no political pundit or commentator, the Iron Lady reminds me of a female biblical leader in Israel’s Old Testament history who might arguably be a contender for the title of the original Iron Lady of the bible.

In the book of Judges chapters 4 & 5, we encounter Deborah who was occupied as a prophetess and Judge in Israel. She operated on the top echelons of governmental office then, and she holds the honour of being the only woman ever in recorded history to hold such a lofty position.

***“She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment” (Judges 4:5).***

I find the location of her seat of power to hold great significance.

The name Ramah denotes height, “to be high,” and the towns to which it applied seem all to have been located on some elevated plain. This was one of the cities allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (**Joshua 18:25**). Bethel, as we know, refers to the house of God and the house of bread (**Genesis 28:19, 35:6**).

Deborah sat in a strategic position. She sat between the elevations and the house of God. We might even say her influence extended to the civil and religious discourse during her life and times.

Once again, what distinguished her in this role is that she was a woman.

Just like Margaret Thatcher, she was a woman, but she held public office during the time of a highly patriarchal power structure in history. Her world seemed to be a man’s world but Deborah held her own in what was perceived as a man’s world.

So, against all contemporary expectations and against the grain of popular culture, God used her. Much more than merely using her to perform some menial task, He used her to lead or judge His people.

Those who don’t believe women are capable or allowed by God to hold positions of governmental leadership within the church will have their arguments demolished in a t.k.o. by this passage of scripture. Deborah did it and the scriptural historical record is clear that God clearly appointed her and Israel clearly accepted her divinely delegated authority. The people of Israel lined up in a queue (under her own tree no less), to have their cases adjudicated by her. She seemed to be a credible and well-respected leader whose spiritual weight was evidently quite heavy.

***Judges 5:7 says, "Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel."***

The time has come for godly women and mothers in South Africa and all across the world to arise in order to give this and future generations a fighting chance.

Of all the titles and designations Deborah could have legitimately ascribed to herself—judge, prophetess, deliverer, intercessor, worshiper—she chose to call herself a mother. She was first and foremost a mother. This once again emphasizes the crucial role of mothers and all women for that matter. There lies much truth in the proverb "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world". The historical narrative of Deborah affirms that women have a major and crucial role of influence in the world since they greatly influence the way in which children grow up and the type of adults they eventually become.

So, that's the story of what Deborah did, but what does that tell us about her character? Her actions reveal her character. Could there be character lessons from Deborah for those of us - both men and women - in leadership roles today? Yes indeed! We should guard against the erroneous assumption that Deborah is some lofty spiritual giant while we are ordinary people and that precludes us from following in her footsteps. No! God never looks for ability but for the surrender that accompanies our availability for whatever task God would have us perform. The point is not her "assertiveness", but her uncompromising willingness to do God's work during hard and tough times.

### **The A.B.C of greatness**

Jesus told his disciples that greatness only comes through serving.  
Matthew 20:28. Deborah served and became great as a consequence.  
What can we summarize as the **A, B, C** of her success formula?

#### **A. Deborah was Available...**

Conditions were not perfect and they will never be. Deborah was called by God to lead at a difficult moment in the history of the nation of Israel. In spite of this, she availed herself and stepped forward with bravery in obedience to God by leading the Israelites in times of challenge, oppression and confusion.

***"Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead. So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help. Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time." (Judges 4:1-4)***

#### **B. Deborah was Bold**

She retained her boldness and bravery due to her unwavering belief and trust in God. Her fearless faith earned her the respect of the people, which allowed her to influence and motivate Barak and his men to gain the victory on behalf of the nation of Israel. There was power in her mere presence because she knew that God was with her. So evident was the boldness of Deborah that her presence was desired in order to lift the morale of the military in the battle.

***"Barak said to her: If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." (Judges 4:8)***

#### **C. Deborah was Confident**

Deborah was convinced that God was with her and that He was faithful to save His people. She placed her confidence in God and consequentially never hesitated to fulfill God's commands. Her reassurance and strong beliefs led the Israelites to victory. I could even say that her confidence was contagious because the army believed only because she believed.

***"Then Deborah said to Barak, Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you? So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him." (Judges 4:14)***

The nation experienced peace for forty years because of the availability, boldness and confidence of a female judge by the name of Deborah.

**What is in a name?**

While the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was nicknamed the Iron Lady, Deborah's name is significant for an altogether different reason. Deborah means "honeybee." A name is a very important piece of information when studying any Bible personality. A name usually indicated a person's character or their prophetic destiny. If we think about Deborah based on her name, she is quite an appealing role model to all modern-day women. She was sweet but strong. Feminine finesse and a hustle that is second to none.

Honeybees produce sweetness by gathering raw materials and they are very productive, Deborah was productive. How productive are you?

Honeybee stingers are designed differently from the stingers of other non-productive bees. They are excellent at defending against other insects and are able to sting predators and smaller creatures tirelessly, without losing their stingers if they do. When it comes to mammals, however, their stingers work against them. Our skin is too thick for them to pull away from. Once they sting us, their barbed stingers latch on and get stuck resulting in tragedy for the honeybee.

When the bee moves away—expecting to do so unharmed—the stinger remains in our skin and violently rips away from the bee's body. This causes the bee's internal organs to rupture and get torn away, leaving a wound too great for it to survive -unfortunately resulting in the death of the honeybee. What better metaphor can be applied to the life of a woman and a mother than one of the ultimate sacrifice? Our women and mothers live their lives in service of those whom they love - often as a thankless and unrequited labour of love.

Bees are singularly occupied by and focused upon their appointed task. That's why we might get stung if we don't steer clear of them while they're busy doing what they do best. Bees are no-nonsense creatures, but wow, what wonderful results accrue from their activities! All their industry is delightfully fruitful and produces one of nature's most precious and most healthy commodities: honey. Deborah produced a great and fruitful harvest. She didn't neglect or compromise her call from God, as unusual and as unheard of as it was during her times.

Deborah was a woman of influence and her spiritual mantle resulted in a legacy of **availability, boldness and confidence** for both men and women to follow. Why both men and women? Because Barak and His army was blessed with the victory as a result of her **availability, boldness and confidence**. Barak's name, by the way, means "blessing", yet the only way he could enjoy the blessing was through the **availability, boldness and confidence** of God's busy honeybee (Deborah).

God favored Deborah greatly and that is most clearly evident in the Bible's last line about her ministry. Remember that when she Judged Israel it had been under severe oppression by enemy forces for twenty long years. The counterweight to the oppression resulted in a double portion of victory.

***"And the land was undisturbed for forty years." (Judges 5:31)***

Are you a Deborah?

The period of forty years is often used in scripture to delineate a period or a generation. During this women's month of August 2022, we need the Deborah's to rise in order that our country and our world might rest undisturbed during this generation.

To all the ladies, happy women's month. Rise to the challenge of **Availability, Boldness and Confidence** so our land may rest undisturbed again.

God bless you!

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## Annexure 2

### Celebrating Women as "first responders" to God's mission in the world

By Dr Nontando Hadebe, Board member of ACRP

In the global responses to the Covid-19 pandemic the term 'first responders' referred to professionals primarily medical staff who were the critical points of contact to those infected with the virus. The dedication and sacrifice of these first responders which in some cases led to their death ignited countless initiatives that responded to the needs of families and communities negatively affected by the pandemic. Unfortunately, Covid-19 also brought out the worst in humanity through corruption, greed and selfishness. Despite these vices, the legacy and witness of selflessness and sacrifice by **first responders** brought hope in the midst of death, loss and devastation.

Theologically, God is the first responder to the plight of human beings and works through and with human beings to bring liberation and salvation. August is women's month celebrating women from all races who were **first responders** against pass laws and apartheid on 9th August, 1956. Similarly in the bible we find women as first responders to God's mission for liberation and salvation of humanity. Two significant world changing events will be discussed which are the liberation of the Hebrew nation from slavery in Egypt found in the book of Exodus and the liberation of humanity through the life and death of Jesus in the gospels.

The story of the liberation of the Hebrew nation from slavery starts with five women who fit into the category of **first responders** because their acts of courage, defiance and sacrifice set in motion events that led to liberation. The first two women were Shiphrah and Puah (Exodus 1:15-21), the two midwives who chose to defy the command of Pharaoh who ordered them to kill Hebrew boys at birth. They put their lives at risk and were wise in their responses when interrogated by Pharaoh. Their actions stemmed from their 'fear of God' (v 17) that informed their ethics and enabled them to make decisions which pleased God and preserved life. God blessed them with their own families. The third woman was the unnamed mother of Moses who through ingenuity and faith at great cost to her life, preserved his life and in a moment of great danger chose to do the unthinkable and placed him in a basket to float on the river with full trust in God. The fourth woman was Pharaoh's daughter who chose compassion over obedience to the command of her father and took baby Moses from the basket and adopted him as her son. The fifth woman was Miriam, Moses' sister, who spoke up and through her bold request ensured that Moses' mother nursed him in Pharaoh's home. Each of these women made history-making choices that pleased God in the particularities of their context. In response, God weaved their choices together in the mystery of providence and set in motion events that would liberate their nation and defeat Egypt, one of the most powerful kingdoms in history. The women had no army or political power or position or connections. Their power lay in their ethics based on the fear of God, compassion and trust that enabled them at critical moments to make choices aligned to God's mission in the world! These first responders set in motion events that led to the liberation of their nation and the downfall of one of the greatest kingdoms in the world!

The story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Saviour of the world mentioned three women among the first responders in the birth narratives of Jesus: Elizabeth, Mary and Anna (Luke 1:24-38 and 2:36-38). Elizabeth, barren and past child-bearing age lived a life of defiant faith, not letting her barrenness define and constrict her life. Saying yes to the promise of a son who would precede the coming of Jesus, she did not stop to consider her limitations but boldly stepped forward to bear and bring up a prophet. Mary was asked to be the mother of Jesus. This request by God through the angel Gabriel came when she was engaged to be married to Joseph and without consulting anyone, she agreed to the call at great cost to her and sang her hymn of defiant faith in God (1:47-55). Her life was set aside to take on this new mission which brought her great pain in witnessing the cruel death of her son and joy in his resurrection. Anna, an 85-year-old widow and prophet held the faith of her nation for a Messiah through her faithful prayers in the temple and was answered when she saw Jesus in the temple when he was presented and circumcised.

These three women rooted in their agency as responsible choice makers, made decisions in response to God's call on their lives and at great cost to them that brought Jesus to the world (Mary), John the Baptist (Elizabeth) and hope for the nation in the coming Messiah (Anna). Their individual choices were history making participation in the mission of God in liberating and saving the world.

As we celebrate women's month in the post-Covid era, the memory of first responders, their dedication which came at great cost resulting in some of them losing their lives reminds us that selflessness and sacrifice contribute to liberation, life and wholeness. Similarly, the history changing events of liberation and salvation in the Bible are testimony of women as first responders whose sacrifice, courage and selflessness made them partners with God.

The history of Christianity owes much to these women as being among the first responders in the key events that are foundational to our faith.

We celebrate women as partners with God in the mission to liberate and transform the world!

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## The Role of Pentecostal churches for strengthening ecological principles and a foundation for Pentecostal contribution to Creation Care – Part 1

By Dr Mangaliso Matshobane<sup>1</sup>, Board member of ACRP

### Abstract

This essay discusses the role of Pentecostals in strengthening ecological principles by plotting the journey from its fundamentalist roots to its current position on Ecotheology. The journey is long and winding, starting from the anthropomorphic ideals of human dominance over creation, influenced by apocalyptic eschatological views which render the conversation on creation-care void. The breakthrough came when Pentecostals refocused on their pneumatological theology which led them to a conversation on the role of the Spirit in creation. The essay discusses the eco-theological perspective of Pentecostals using their four tenets of Christ as saviour, healer, baptiser in the Spirit and coming king. The essay uses Osmer's theoretical framework of describing what is going on in eco-Pentecostal theology, interpreting why it is going on, then reflecting normatively on what should be going on and finally proposing pragmatic ways to improve the involvement of Pentecostal churches on creation-care. A Pentecostal hermeneutical approach on biblical theology is proposed as a strategy to engage Pentecostal churches in creation-care.

### Introduction

Pentecostalism is arguably the fastest growing religious movement in the world. Anderson gives statistics that by 2012 there were over 612 million Pentecostal/ Charismatics in the world.<sup>2</sup>

This number is inclusive of independent churches known as 'Neo-Pentecostalism and Neo-charismatics' and African Initiated Churches (AICs). The greater percentage of Pentecostals comes from the Southern Hemisphere (Latin America and Africa). There is also a good percentage coming from Asia. "Within the past thirty years there has been an estimated 700% increase in the number of Pentecostal believers who represent about a quarter of the world's Christian population and a two-thirds of all Protestants"<sup>3</sup>. If these statistics are anything to go by, the planet stands to benefit if the global Pentecostal movement can play a role in strengthening ecological principles.

The Pentecostal church is fairly new to the discussion on eco-theology. This is partly due to its alignment and adaption of the fundamentalist position on creation in the earlier years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1920 & 1930)<sup>4</sup>. This alignment was beneficial to Pentecostals who found the collaboration with fundamentalists helpful in defending the credibility of the scriptures on God and the creation against liberal and modernist attacks.<sup>5</sup> The alignment with fundamentalists has unfortunately played a great influence in making Pentecostals socially and environmentally indifferent.<sup>6</sup> The latter was promulgated by a premillennial apocalyptic view which purports that the world will come to an end in a cataclysmic fashion where creation as we know it will be destroyed. It is this kind of eschatological view that has influenced conventional Pentecostalism to become indifferent to environmental responsibilities.<sup>7</sup> The other contributor to the negative view of Pentecostals on creation-care is the fundamentalist position on the six days, young earth creation which rejects the evolutionary science of the old age earth.<sup>8</sup> This rejection of evolutionary science of creation has also caused the rejection of caring for the creation especially in view of climate change.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A founder and an ordained Apostle of an Independent Pentecostal Church, named Community Church, based in South Africa. A board member of a professional body for clergy in South Africa called an Association for Christian Religious Practitioners (ACRP, [acrpafrica.co.za](http://acrpafrica.co.za)). A PhD graduate in Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, research on Pastoral Succession in Independent Pentecostal Churches.

<sup>2</sup> Allan Anderson, *An introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge, University Press, 2014), 3-5.

<sup>3</sup> Allan Anderson & Michael Bergunder, Andre. Droogers & Cornelis van der Laan (eds.), *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 2

<sup>4</sup> Amos Yong, "Poured out on all creation!?: Searching for the Spirit in the Pentecostal Encounter with Science," in *The Spirit renews the face of the earth: Pentecostal forays in science and theology of creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), xiv

<sup>5</sup> Gerald King, "Evolving Paradigms Creationism as Pentecostal Variation on a Fundamentalist Theme," *The Spirit renews the face of the earth: Pentecostal forays in science and theology of creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009). King elaborates on the history of Pentecostals and fundamentalists collaboration against the modernist biblical higher criticism that is undergirded by Darwin's argument of evolution.

<sup>6</sup> Shane Clifton, "Preaching the Full Gospel in the context of global environmental crises," *The Spirit renews the face of the earth: Pentecostal forays in science and theology of creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 118.

<sup>7</sup> Al Triesdale, "Last things First: The impact of Eschatology on Ecology," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 46, no. 2 (1994), 116-122.

<sup>8</sup> Clifton, Preaching the full gospel, 120

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 120



It is also unfortunate that Pentecostals did not involve themselves in the early conversations on creation care with ecumenical groups, due to their suspicion of such forums to be pursuing a liberal agenda.<sup>10</sup>

One of the main contributors to this indifferent perspective is the exegesis of Genesis 1:28 where God gives mankind dominion over creation. Pentecostals take their cue from fundamentalists in their definition of dominion, which taken literally, gives mankind dominance or rulership over creation. Humanity is seen as the centerpiece of creation and therefore has the right to dominate all creation as a “God-given resource for unlimited human use.”<sup>11</sup> This anthropocentric perspective of creation has created a hierarchical relationship between humanity and nature which has led to the degradation of the environment by humans.<sup>12</sup> The anthropocentric perspective is the dominant factor that features in the main tenets of Pentecostal theology, which presents Christ as saviour, healer, baptiser in the Spirit and coming king.<sup>13</sup> These theological tenets will be discussed from an eco-theological perspective within a theoretical framework of Osmer. The latter will help us to describe ‘what is going on’ traditionally in Pentecostal churches on creation-care; give an interpretation on ‘why is it going on’; find the normative of ‘what should be going on’ and propose a pragmatic strategy on ‘what can be done’ to ensure that Pentecostal churches contribute in strengthening ecological principles for creation-care.<sup>14</sup> It is important to firstly establish what is going on within Pentecostal circles in reference to eco-theology and where possible, give reasons on why it is going on, before proposing the role that Pentecostal churches can play.

What is going on and why?

As indicated in the introduction, I will begin my discussion from an eco-theological perspective using the four tenets of Pentecostal theology to establish the traditional, normative and practical view of Pentecostals on creation-care. Firstly, we will discuss Christ as Saviour.

Christ as Saviour

Traditional view

Pentecostals have traditionally viewed salvation from an anthropocentric perspective. The saving of souls has always been primary than the “saving of the soil.”<sup>15</sup> Pentecostal theologians agree that the traditional view of salvation that is exclusively for humans to the neglect of creation has been more prominent within Pentecostal circles.<sup>16</sup> Pentecostals place a high value on evangelism such that social action (like feeding the poor, taking care of the orphans etc.) is viewed as a tool to evangelise the individuals that are being served. If social action has to ultimately lead to evangelism, it will be difficult for Pentecostals to comprehend how environmental action can produce similar results.<sup>17</sup> This dualistic view that separates between the spirit and nature is informed by the influence that Greek philosophy (Stoicism) has had on Christians tradition, in general, instead of the Judeo-Christian tradition that is fundamental to Christianity which emphasises stewardship of creation where dualism does not exist.<sup>18</sup>

Normative view

Yong proposes a view of salvation that is multidimensional, namely: a salvation that is personal, material, social, cosmic, eschatological, family oriented and ecclesiastical.<sup>19</sup> Cosmic salvation is the most noted for the purposes of this essay which refers to the salvation of all creation. This understanding is also confirmed by the Pauline writings where he states that creation waits eagerly to be delivered from its groans and labours.<sup>20</sup> Hubbard-Heitz discusses how traditional Pentecostals associated certain spaces (clubs, movie theatres and saloons) with activities of sin.

<sup>10</sup> Cecil Robeck, “Pentecostals and the Apostolic Faith: Implications for Ecumenism,” in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 9 no.1(1987), 61-84.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Maltby, “Fundamentalist Dominion, Postmodern Ecology,” *Ethics and Environment*, 13, no.2 (2008), 119-141.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Tallman, “Pentecostal Ecology: A Theological Paradigm for Pentecostal Environmentalism,” in *The Spirit renews the face of the earth: Pentecostal forays in science and theology of creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009),140.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Dayton, *Theological roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson,1987).

<sup>14</sup> Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Aaron Jason Swoboda, *Eco-Glossolalia: Emerging Twenty-First Century Pentecostal and Charismatic Ecotheology*, *George Fox University* (Faculty Publication-Portland Seminary)2015.

<sup>16</sup> Tallman, *Pentecostal Ecology*, 132; Clifton, *Preaching the full gospel*, 120; Aaron Swoboda *Tongues and Trees Tongues and Trees: Toward a Pentecostal Ecological Theology*. *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* Supplement 40. Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, (2013) 193

<sup>17</sup> Clifton, “Preaching the full gospel”, 122.

<sup>18</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Greening of the Spirit: Towards a Pneumatological Theology of the Flourishing of Nature*, in *Blood Cries Out: Pentecostals, Ecology, and the Groans of Creation*, ed. Aaron Swoboda (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2014),87.

<sup>19</sup> Yong, *The Spirit poured out on all flesh*, 95.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 8:19-22 NKJV

The intention, therefore, is to transform those spaces into sacred spaces through preaching the message of salvation.<sup>21</sup> If spaces can be seen as needing transformation through salvation, then the sins of ecological domination and oppression on creation are not excluded in atonement. The latter should motivate Pentecostals to seek for spaces that are ecologically unfriendly and convert them into healthy ecological havens.<sup>22</sup>

#### Pragmatic view

A teaching that focuses on redefining human dominance over creation instead of stewardship from a Pentecostal theological perspective must be developed and taught in Pentecostal theological schools. When pastors of churches have been taught correctly, they will in turn teach their congregations an environmental inclusive theology. The role of a pastor as an instructor of truth in Pentecostal circles is highly valued and yields a lot of influence especially among Neo-Pentecostals also known as Charismatic-Pentecostals.<sup>23</sup> Arguably, the first pronouncement of a Pentecostal view on ecology was by the Dutch Theologian Suurmond in 1988 who advanced an argument on an ecological lifestyle which encompasses three interconnected dimensions of life: personal, ecclesiological and universal ecologies.<sup>24</sup> This interconnected holistic approach is the focus the Pentecostal church must take when teaching congregants to be sensitised to ecological issues. Next is the eco-theological perspective of Pentecostals on Christ as Healer.

#### Christ as Healer

#### Traditional view

The traditional view of Pentecostals on the work of Christ as a healer has always been anthropocentric.<sup>25</sup> This is because Pentecostals have always linked healing with salvation, therefore, they view it as attainable by means of the atonement for mankind.<sup>26</sup>

#### Normative view

Harold Hunter challenged this anthropocentric perspective on healing, that it should involve of all creation including “the sick and dying environment.”<sup>27</sup> The zeal that Pentecostals have demonstrated in administering gifts of healing can easily make them pray for other creatures either than humans. This was demonstrated by William Branham, a well-known charismatic healing evangelist of his time, who prayed for an opossum.<sup>28</sup> If Pentecostals can stretch their faith in this manner, they can also extend their faith to pray for the healing of all creation.

#### Pragmatic view

Pentecostals can learn how to extend their theology of healing to other creatures by studying the example set by the African Indigenous churches of Zimbabwe called the Association of African Earth-keeping Churches (AAEC), which in the broader sense can be classified as ‘Pentecostal’ because of their pneumatic nature.<sup>29</sup> These churches have developed a liturgy in their tree planting ceremony, of confessing ecological sins followed by a planting of trees.<sup>30</sup> Another ground-breaking work on creation-care, from which Pentecostal churches can learn is an article called ‘*Pentecostal healing for God’s sick creation*’ by Harold Hunter. Hunter, a Pentecostal scholar, gave a challenge to Pentecostals to understand healing not just from an anthropocentric view but also from an all creation perspective, where all of creation, including humans, can be healed.<sup>31</sup> Such literature can form a basis from which Pentecostal churches can develop bible study curriculum which will begin a conversation that will lead to a practice of healing the creation.

<sup>21</sup> Brandon Hubbard-Heitz, *The Devil Suicide: Early Pentecostal Hermeneutics of Space and their Ecotheological implications, Blood cries out: Pentecostals, ecology, and groans of creation* ed. Aaron Swoboda (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 35.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 37

<sup>23</sup> Maria Frahm-Arp, *Professional Women in South African Pentecostal Charismatic Churches* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010), 67

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Jacques Suurmond, “Christ King: A Charismatic appeal for an Ecological Lifestyle,” *PNEUMA* 10, (1988), 26-35, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/157007488X00037>

<sup>25</sup> Clifton, “Preaching the ‘Full Gospel’”, 122.

<sup>26</sup> William Menzies and Robert Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000) 160.

<sup>27</sup> Clifton “Preaching the Full Gospel”, 131.

<sup>28</sup> William Branham, “God’s cure for an Opossum,” *Voice*, 3 no.6 (September 1955) 3-11.

<sup>29</sup> Maria Frahm-Arp, *Professional women in South African Pentecostal charismatic churches* (Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010) 48. When referring to various groups within the Pentecostal movement and their interpretation of the work of the Holy Spirit whether they are classical Pentecostal, Zionist, Apostolic churches or Pentecostal Charismatic groups including contemporary neo- Pentecostals, Frahm-Arp calls them a “Complex of Pneumatically Sensitive Expressions of Christianity (CPSEC)”

<sup>30</sup> Daneel, M.L. “African Independent Churches Face the Challenge of Environmental Ethics.” In *Ecotheology voices of South and North*, ed. David Hallman (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994), 247-263.

<sup>31</sup> Harold Hunter, “Pentecostal Healing for God’s Sick Creation,” *The Spirit and church*, 2 (2000) 145-167.

Next, is the eco-theological perspective of Pentecostals on Christ as baptiser in the Holy Spirit.

### Christ as Baptiser in the Spirit

#### Traditional view

Traditionally Pentecostals view the Holy Spirit as exclusively active in humans, particularly in believers and not in unbelievers, let alone in any other creature.<sup>32</sup> They base their Pentecostal experience of the infilling of the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, from the passage of Acts 2, which at face-value looks like it is anthropocentric.

#### Normative view

Pinnock's work on the *Flame of love* helped both Protestants (Moltmann) and Pentecostals (Macchia) to understand the role of the Spirit not only at creation but continues to relate to creation. He indicates that the role of the Holy Spirit in creating the earth out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) must not overshadow the continual work of the Spirit creation (*creatio continua*).<sup>33</sup> Some Pentecostals affirm the role of the Spirit in creation as proposed by Pinnock and further argue that the role of the Spirit in creation should not be separated from the role of the Spirit in salvation.<sup>34</sup> The same Spirit who created is still the same Spirit who is present in redemption.

Pentecostals are further challenged by the theology of Jürgen Moltmann on kenotic pneumatology, the Spirit who suffers with the creation as he did in the incarnate Christ.<sup>35</sup> This means that the Trinity empties itself through the Holy Spirit who identifies with the on-going groanings of creation as it awaits its redemption.<sup>36</sup> Some Pentecostals have gone on further to advocate the role of the Holy Spirit not only in creation but in nature, calling it the pneumatological theology of nature, juxtaposed with the role of the Holy Spirit in creation, also known as a pneumatological theology of creation.<sup>37</sup> The former is based on an argument for the involvement of the Spirit in nature, using the metaphorical language of scripture where the Spirit and natural elements are used together: "tongues of fire", "the wind of the Spirit"<sup>38</sup>. Swoboda further develops the role of the Holy Spirit as uniting both the creation and the church through baptism, which is a central doctrine of Pentecostals.<sup>39</sup> The Spirit who baptised the early church in Acts 2, is the same Spirit who was hovering over primordial chaos in Genesis 1:2, therefore, the Spirit-baptised church must care for the Spirit-baptised creation.<sup>40</sup>

#### Pragmatic View

There is a need to approach this subject from scriptural records that places the Holy Spirit in relation with creation. Pentecostals being keen observers of the scriptures will appreciate the number of biblical texts that highlight the involvement of the Spirit with creation, which in any case formulates their pneumatological theology.<sup>41</sup> These biblical texts must then be interpreted within an eco-theological perspective to highlight the role of the Holy Spirit in creation. When this has been established, Pastors of Pentecostal churches must then teach a pneuma-ecological theology where the congregants are called upon to invite the Holy Spirit to be poured out and "renew the face of the earth."<sup>42</sup> The Pentecostal church, in its teaching, must draw from the history of its theologians who have been advancing a pneumatological eco-theology. In 1996 the work of Clark Pinnock, alluded to above, became a turning point in Christendom on the significant role of the Holy Spirit in creation and it set a tone for an eco-theology that is pneumatologically understood.<sup>43</sup> Macchia, gave a positive review of the work of Pinnock, from a Pentecostal perspective.<sup>44</sup> He noted that Hollenweger, a Pentecostal scholar, in his classical work *Creator Spiritus*, sought to point Pentecostals in the direction of the work of the Spirit in creation.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Steven Stuebaker, The Spirit in Creation: A unified Theology of Grace and Creation Care, *Zygon* 43, 2008,943-960. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2008.00970.x>

<sup>33</sup> Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 1996)49-72.

<sup>34</sup> Stuebaker, "The Spirit in Creation", 953.

<sup>35</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993) 119.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Althouse, Implications of the Kenosis of the Spirit for a creational Eschatology: A Pentecostal Engagement with Jürgen Moltmann, in *The Spirit renews the face of the earth: Pentecostal forays in science and theology of creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 156.

<sup>37</sup> Yong, Introduction: Poured out on all creation! Searching for the Spirit in the Pentecostal Encounter with Science, in *The Spirit renews the face of the earth: Pentecostal forays in science and theology of creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009) xix-xx

<sup>38</sup> Yong, The Spirit poured out on All Flesh, 267.

<sup>39</sup> Swoboda, "Eco-Glossolalia", 11-13.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 13

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>42</sup> Psalms 140: 30

<sup>43</sup> Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP)1996. *Flame of Love*,1996.

<sup>44</sup> Frank Macchia, Tradition and the Novum of the Spirit: A Review of Clark Pinnock's *Flame of Love*," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 6, (1998) 31-48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/096673699800601302>

<sup>45</sup> Walter Hollenweger, *Creator Spiritus: The challenge of Pentecostal Experience to Pentecostal*," *Theology*, 81 (1978).

The conversation of the Spirit in creation has always been in the foundation of the church but latent and dormant. It is the responsibility to the church to re-open this conversation again. Next, is the eco-theological perspective of Pentecostals on Christ as Coming King

### Christ as Coming King

#### Traditional view

A traditional Pentecostal view of eschatology is influenced by the fundamentalists who subscribe to a dispensational premillennial view of an end of the world in a cataclysmic fashion.<sup>46</sup> This view has caused Pentecostals not to entertain any discussion on creation care because of their apocalyptic view of eschatology.<sup>47</sup> Their view of eschatology has mostly been anthropocentric where the future is seen in terms of eternal life, as are result, their engagement with the social, political and environmental issues of this age is lacking.<sup>48</sup>

#### Normative view

Peter Althouse, a Pentecostal scholar, discusses at length Moltmann's view of eschatology and affirms his view of a transformational eschatology.<sup>49</sup> The latter refers to the fact that, although Christ died physically and was buried, at resurrection, his body was transformed. In the same way the earth which is presented in the scripture as 'passing away' then again as 'a new heaven and a new earth', does not refer to the annihilation of the earth but rather its renewal, as it was also the case with the flood.<sup>50</sup> Moltmann provides classification of eschatology into four areas: personal eschatology which focuses on eternal life, historical eschatology focuses on the kingdom of God, cosmic eschatology focuses on the creation, then lastly divine eschatology focusing on the glory of God.<sup>51</sup> Moltmann further argues that eschatology cannot be exclusively reduced to the human context without involving their environment because they are intrinsically connected.<sup>52</sup> Pentecostals must therefore not see eschatology in the light of cessation of creation but must view it in the context of a pneumatological theology that focuses on the Spirit who gives life and transforms the earth.<sup>53</sup>

#### Pragmatic view

Pentecostals must intentionally study other eschatological views in order to migrate from a premillennial apocalyptic view of eschatology which promotes an annihilation of the universe and embrace a transformative eschatology which is eco-friendly. The eschatological theology of a transformational eschatology advanced by Moltmann,<sup>54</sup> needs to be taught in Pentecostal theological schools and churches. This transformational eschatology can be taught from a Pentecostal perspective which has been ably reviewed by Althouse,<sup>55</sup> who also attests to the fact that "Moltmann's eschatological theology is helpful for constructing a Pentecostal ecotheology."<sup>56</sup>

Now that we have discussed the eco-theological perspective of Pentecostals based on their theological tenets, we will then discuss what the church ought to be doing in strengthening ecological principles.

### *What the church ought to be doing: to be discussed in the next Newsletter*

<sup>46</sup> Robby Waddell, Revelation and the (New) Creation: A Prolegomenon on the Apocalypse, Science and Creation, in *The Spirit renews the face of the earth: Pentecostal forays in science and theology of creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009),35.

<sup>47</sup> Al Truesdale, "Last Things First: The Impact of Eschatology on Ecology," *Perspective on Science and Christian Faith*, 46 no.2, (1994), 116-122.

<sup>48</sup> Waddell, "Revelation and the New Creation," 31.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Althouse, In appreciation of Jürgen Moltmann: A Discussion of His Transformational Eschatology." *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 28 no.1 (2006) 28.

<sup>50</sup> Douglas Moo, Nature in the new creation: New Testament eschatology and the environment, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 49 no.3 (2006), 466-469.

<sup>51</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996)

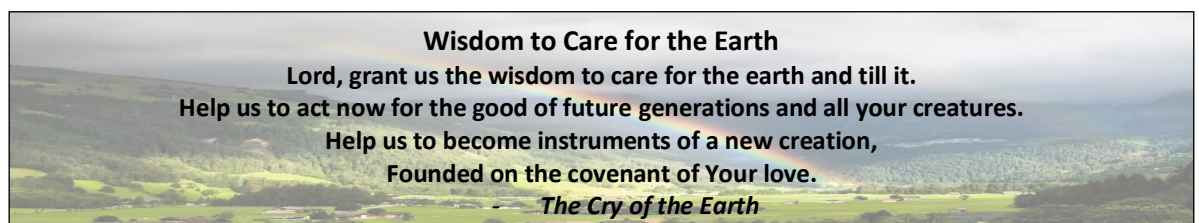
<sup>52</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom* (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress, 2003)71.

<sup>53</sup> Clifton, "Preaching the Full Gospel," 132;

<sup>54</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012) 16.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Althouse, Pentecostal Eco-Transformation: Possibilities for a Pentecostal Ecotheology in light of Moltmann's Green Theology, in *Blood cries out: Pentecostals, ecology, and groans of creation* ed. Aaron Swoboda (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014),116-132.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 122.





**Letter by Ps Bernard Coopasamy in response to the recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal**

Grace and peace to all of you in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Firstly, I wish to thank God and to give him all the praise glory and honour for Romans 8:28 which says:  
*And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, and who are called by according to His purpose to manifest his glory and His power as indeed the church is called to be His voice and hands on this earth.* We are the steward ambassadors of His glory on the earth.

This is His perfect will and joy that we as His sons and daughters may bring healing, deliverance and comfort to all broken-hearted, distraught people, families and individuals especially during such a time as this. I and my Christian colleagues /partners are deeply honoured to be the foot soldiers in His great kingdom.

\* \* \*

My name is Pastor Bernard Coopasamy from the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. As intermediary and CPD training institute I write this article as per the humble request of our dear sister Andrea and the honourable Rev Dr Hannes of ACRP. My prayers go to the leaders / partners and clergy including all readers who have been adversely affected over the past three years, by the Corona Virus pandemic and looting, unrest and most recently the devastating floods that ravaged our province and left a trail of pain, trauma misery, loss of lives and destruction of communities.

We are indeed saddened about the fact that so many lives were lost, and that so much damage was caused. We are really praying for everyone. Special thanks to the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council who have already started with their donations of support of food parcels, clothing and blankets, tents, water tanks and support systems through fundraising. As the church we are called to be His voice and hands on this earth.

We are now made aware that it could take years to rebuild and re-align for the future days and years to come.

Here is the story of just one person's dilemma that we have published to tell the world:

**IN THE WAKE AND AFTERMATH OF THE FLOODS:**

On the morning of 15 April 2022, I awoke with an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and despair. It was the same feeling that I had on the morning of one of my parents' funerals... a feeling of abject despair! There was no electricity and our taps had run dry! It was Good Friday, the anniversary of our Lord's Crucifixion, a day I ought to be brimming with HOPE because of our Lord's finished work at Golgotha, but here I was with a pervasive sense of despair, and a foreboding sense of doom! To add to my tumultuous emotional state, the news of the death, destruction and devastation that the storm had caused broke on all social media platforms. We daily read about the heart-rending stories of how infants and little children had been buried alive and have lost their lives in the floods!

Some have no clear drinking water... it has now come down to basic hygiene – brushing of the teeth, taking a shower, flushing the toilet, had all become onerous, near-impossible tasks .... With my cellphone almost dying, I got down on my hands and knees to pray... I remembered that it was Denzel Washington who said, "Place your sandals far down under your bed, so when you get up in the morning, and you get down on your hands and knees to fetch your sandals beneath your bed, while you're down there, don't forget to pray!" I prayed fervently that God will restore not only our lights and water, but God will restore our HOPE, trust and faith in Him in our communities, once again!

I knew because I had studied my Bible diligently, that God abhorred a complainer and a murmurer, that if I persisted in complaining about my lack of water, about how difficult my life had become, that it demonstrated a lack of faith, HOPE and trust in His ability to provide even in the midst of this trial of gargantuan proportions! I was driven by a still, small voice, to count my blessings because others had sustained far greater loss than me - the tragic loss of life and limb, and property! At this juncture I was reminded of Paul's Epistle to the Romans 5:3, "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, HOPE.... and HOPE does not disappoint us!"

In the aftermath of the horrendous floods, in the wake of the devastation and loss of lives that it had caused, in the midst of our water woes, from my place of desperation, there was an invaluable and priceless lesson that God was teaching me – He was encouraging me to "hold unswervingly to the HOPE we profess, for He Who promised is faithful!" (Hebrews 10:23).

I saw people collecting water from streams and drains, doing their laundry and washing their dishes in the over-flow of storm water pipes, some even collecting rainwater to wash themselves, and to flush their toilet cisterns! The lack of water had left us naked, bare and exposed! It had laid bare our vulnerabilities! The words of the Bible resonated with the tumultuous emotions that beset me – Psalms 42:11b encouraged me to “put your hope in God!” Job 11:18a – “You will be secure because there is HOPE!” Isaiah 40:31 asserts, “Those who HOPE in the Lord will renew their strength!”

Here I was, a leader of my family, feeling intimidated by my circumstances, but as I recited these scriptures on the subject of HOPE, I felt rejuvenated in my spirit, and I realised that these scriptures were the antidote to the venomous despair that threatened to wreak havoc in my life! God’s word was the “Spiritual Prozac” that had restored my HOPE in Him! Even in the midst of this trial, Paul’s Epistle to the Romans provided much-needed comfort to me: “May the God of HOPE fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you overflow with HOPE by the power of the Holy Spirit!”. I humbly plead with you ... let us therefore make sure that our relationship is in order with our God.

We are really praying for everyone and have already started with a donate-and-support system for all families who had damages that was caused during these horrific floodings in KwaZulu-Natal.

On another note, we can see that these are merely the early signs of the end-age and the return of our Lord Jesus. Signs and the prophecies of the end times are now for certainly falling into place, and the return of our Lord is closer than we ever expected.

Friends, my colleagues and partners are really praying for everyone and with the help of ACRP academics have started to implement a short initial trauma debriefing and counselling course to support all affected by various social ills that was caused during these horrific flooding.

Post Pandemic: Many victims not only in our province have been left traumatised. Many people are still stuck in community halls or living in unsafe premises after their spaces were destroyed. And this on the back of a context where we already face housing, land, homelessness and space challenges. As we partner with God in the work of redemption and “making all things new” how could we reimagine our role? And how could we reimagine what we have and what exactly can you and I do in the wake of the Pandemic and floods. The on-going need for the theology trainings of love, counselling, and safety, decent housing for families must surely be the beckoning call for the church. There is surely now a need to start a deep dive into exploring scripture and see how it can help to shape, inform and expand our understanding on how effective Christian counselling and help can be implemented.

Hearing stories without implementing is just a thought or imagination. We find that action is needed through contextualisation of Scriptures. There is a great need to look at how the caring church could be addressing these social ills in our communities. Various sessions of helping communities in need will be on-going to stretch our imaginations & re-think how we could be addressing some of the most urgent needs for housing, food sustainability and education in our land and country, South Africa.

May the word of God become the Medicine of Hope or the Beacon of Hope for the rest of the world...

Please take note: God will use ordinary people to do His bidding. He often uses the ones who we least expect. He lifts up the marginalised, the downtrodden, He raises the forsaken and grants them the ability to do great things for His glory to be seen.

Thank you ACRP for helping and designating Powerhouse Academy (intermediary) to be a blessing to South Africans.

Yours in his service  
Pastor Bernard Coopasamy

*A short video on the Ndwedwe project can be watched on the ACRP website at  
<https://www.acrpafrica.co.za/news-events/newsletter>*

“Our prayers may be awkward.  
Our attempts may be feeble.  
But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it  
And not in the one who says it,  
Our prayers do make a difference”  
~~ Max Lucado

### Diversification Approach to Ministry as an Attempt to Meet the Challenges – Part 2

By Busangokwakhe Dlamini, Director of Siyakhana – Ecumenical Community of the Paraclete

#### More relevant approaches to ministry in Africa

The church is lay. De Gruchy (1997) suggest that ministry in and for Africa needs to be largely by lay people. In this he concurs with de Flueriot (1981). This, he says, is not to ignore the importance of professional clergy, but it is to recognize that in Africa a particular form of the church has evolved – the outstation, a small gathering of church members away from the mother church. The outstation is not potentially a fully-fledged church, he maintains. He argues that it is what it is and will always be due to forces beyond its control such as (1) vast distances that characterize rural Africa, (2) the lack of reliable communications infrastructure, and (3) the inability of small rural communities to attract professional clergy.

Lay apostolate is the future. For both de Flueriot (1981) and de Gruchy (1997) the laity is to be regarded as the future of the Church in Africa. Christians regularly gather under the leadership of a lay person. De Gruchy (1997) observes that an ordained minister will characteristically visit the outstations three or four times a year for a service. Therefore, when Christians gather on a Sunday in rural Africa they do so under the leadership of a lay person. Furthermore, the essential pastoral and educational needs of the Christian community are by necessity also in the hands of lay people.

Equipping lay leadership is the right thing to do. Clearly, the fundamental formation of the Christian community in Africa is not in the hands of ordained ministers, but in the hands of its lay leaders. It is they who preach Sunday by Sunday; it is they who lead baptism preparation and confirmation classes; it is they who counsel the sick and bereaved and offer advice in the home. If the lay leadership is not adequately equipped and skilled then the formation of the people will be horribly wrong. Clearly then, to begin to think of doing ministry in Africa one needs to have a major emphasis on the education and skilling of lay people, de Gruchy (1997) suggests.

Process is to be the focus. In the education and skilling of lay people there needs to be focused primarily upon process rather than upon content and the leader sought is the facilitator, the animator, the enabler. The content of such a programme, de Gruchy (1997) maintains, will therefore focus on how: How to counsel the sick; how to lead worship; how to organize a meeting; how to run a Bible study. And again, this will not be a fixed formula, but rather some basic principles offered together with the granting of permission to change them if local needs require. Thus, the empowering of people who have the skill, wisdom, and courage to forge new directions needs to be a priority throughout.

The Bible is central in the empowering of people. Easy access to the Bible is, therefore, to be facilitated. Throughout the world the Bible is an extraordinarily powerful book, but experience suggests that this is even more the case in rural Africa. In an oral community, de Gruchy (1997) states, the Bible has a sort of numinous power, being the record of God's 'word;' and furthermore in poorer homes where people cannot afford other reading material it is usually the only book in the home. This gives it a power beyond and different to that ascribed by traditional theology, even of the fundamentalist kind.

Let ministry be rooted in the Bible. Ministry in Africa needs to be overtly related to the Bible, otherwise it will not make an impression upon the participants. The connections between this holy book and the new insights that are offered have to be clear, asserts de Gruchy (1997), otherwise, once the participants return home, they will forget most of what they have learnt.

Let the Bible dictate methodology. The method used in sharing insights needs to be done in dialogue with the Bible, de Gruchy (1997) exhorts. Participants need to discover that the Bible is user-friendly, need to become familiar with it in its breadth and depth, rather than a few favourite texts, and need to become confident in the skills of basic exegesis and interpretation.

Free the Bible. Ministry in Africa has to address the problem of captivity of and by the Bible. It is clear that amongst the rural communities the Bible is imprisoned in a strange set of preconceived notions that blunt its radical message and lead in turn to it becoming a tool of control, argues de Gruchy (1997). For all the reverence for the Bible, there has been little recognition of the fundamental message of the Bible. The Bible has become the rulebook, a code of law, that lays down the rights and wrongs of God against the community and the internal critique of such a notion in the very Bible itself is not appreciated.

Importance of critical Biblical studies is to be shown. There has been no sustained effort to break the imprisonment of the Bible in the new generation (Brown, 2006; de Gruchy 1997). A key task awaits those involved in ministry then to begin to distill the gains made by critical Biblical studies in the past generation.

Ministry must be contextualised. The emphasis has to do with developing and empowering leaders in various communities. Each local church or outstation functions within a microcosm of social, economic, and cultural forces, and the teaching and pastoral practice has to relate to that context. Whilst the context is broadly similar, each local context is unique and the particular issues of one village will not be those of the next one, de Gruchy (1997) observes. What cannot be done, therefore, is developing and empowering people to function a mechanistic way. What is to be done, rather, is to equip leaders so that they have the ability to read their own situation and respond accordingly.

The articulation of rural Africa needs to be sharpened. What is clear from the perspective of rural Africa is that much of what passes as 'contextual' ministry is hardly contextual for much of Africa at all, de Gruchy (1997) says. By this is meant that it is to be expected that the brighter and more articulate clergy will move to the cities but in their claim to speak on behalf of Africans they have assumed a universality that is just not true.

Rhythm and experience of life in rural Africa has to shape reflections. If ministry in Africa is to be done contextually, then it has to be done rurally. This is not just that rural issues need to be on the agenda, but that the very rhythm and experience of life in the rural areas has to shape reflections. Part of this has to do with a sense of perspective as to what really is important in life of an African, de Gruchy (1997) suggests. Far from the imposing testimony to the power of human beings afforded by big cities, the rural areas with their majestic views, large skies, and desperate reliance upon rain and sun on the one hand, and their pathetic scenes of poverty and loneliness on the other, hold before humanity a truth of God and the world that should not be allowed to be lost.

Knowledge is to be shared. To take the content of the faith from a western European background and dump it upon people in Africa is extremely disempowering. Yet at the same time to withhold and refuse to share the content can itself be disempowering, asserts de Gruchy (1997). Knowledge is power, the adage holds. And the choice by those who have had the benefit of a classical education to withhold that knowledge from others because it is deemed irrelevant to their situation can be paternalistic.

Creative ways of sharing content are to be found. Unless reflection on faith on the ground remains in dialogue with previous generations of Christians, as well as with Christians from other cultures and contexts, it can become something less than the continuation of the message and work of Christ. So doing ministry in Africa needs a continued discussion and sharing of the tradition and wisdom of the wider church family, de Gruchy (1997) suggests. The key concern is to find creative ways to share this content in relationship to the over-riding concern to impart a process. As is clear, the talk is not just about the contextualisation of ministry, but also the contextualization of methodology.

Divides are to be broken. It is almost impossible to teach and discuss ministry in rural Africa without it happening in the context of prayer, singing and dancing. This is to be celebrated as it roots the mind within the body, and the individual within the community. It is a reminder that ministry has ultimately to make sense to the worshipping community, and it breaks the divide between teacher and learner as all share in the circle of song. And likewise, it presents ministry in Africa with another huge challenge. So much of the faith is experienced in rural life within the context of liturgy, and so much of the meaning of the faith is communicated by song and dance, that it is clear that if the message conveyed and expressed in those songs is not renewed and liberated, then again, there will be no change in the pews. Ministry in Africa needs its musicians, its poets, its songwriters, and writers of prayer and liturgy. Ways have to be found to integrate the insights of academic wisdom into the rhythm of Africa, or a losing battle is fought, de Gruchy (1997) maintains.

*Need for greater diversification to be continued in the next Newsletter*

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"Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty"

~~ E.M Bounds

"True prayer is a way of life, not just for use in cases of emergency. Make it a habit, and when the need arises you will be in practice."

~~Billy Graham