

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CELL CHURCH CONCEPT IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Author: Arthur Roger Tucker

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Supervisor: Professor Dr. C J A Vos

Co-supervisor: Professor Dr. M Nel

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SUMMARY

Since 1993 some churches in South Africa have adopted a new ecclesiological concept. This is the “cell church” concept. It is advocated as an answer to the church’s perceived ineffectiveness in mission in the post-modern world. Cell church theory conceptualises small group meetings (known as cells) in homes as the focus of church life. In practice, a cell church has two foci; the cell group meeting and the celebration, establishing a “bipolar” church structure.

This thesis outlines the practical research methodology based upon Zerfass’ heuristic model. It then establishes five practical theological actions (proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service) using Moltmann’s trinitarian functions of the church. Eight criteria, are then drawn from four biblical major church metaphors and the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm in the horizon of the kingdom of God, by which to evaluate the effectiveness of these actions. These criteria are adaptability, mission, mobilization, discipleship, community building, organisational integration, serving the poor and the trinitarian experience of God. They are then applied as interrogative tools to help undertake a theoretical situational analysis of current church praxis in South Africa and then, in the same manner, to cell church theory and praxis. The theological claims of cell church theory are discussed and examined in the light of Reformed theology. Finally the criteria are used to empirically evaluate the development of the cell church concept in twenty-seven churches in the Western Cape using a two-phase sampling process analysing information gathered by means of questionnaires completed by congregational leaders and cell group members.

It is argued that, whilst it is not normative, cell church theory has functional similarities to the operation of the church within the New Testament. It offers hope of a more effective praxis than the addition of home fellowship groups to a unipolar church. This appears to be mostly substantiated by the empirical study of the twenty-seven churches where it is, in general, increasing their effectiveness and maturation in every practical theological action. Yet it is not completely fulfilling its

promise in the action of proclamation in terms of the unchurched being added to the church.

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Chapter 1 The methodology employed in the study

1.1 Practical theology

This study is an attempt to evaluate the cell church concept from a theological, theoretical perspective and through empirical research conducted into its development in the Western Cape. The approach employed will be to use the tools and principles developed by the theological and operational discipline known as “practical theology.”

1.2 The origins of practical theology

For many centuries there was only one discipline of theology without subdivisions. Under the impact of the Enlightenment, theology evolved into a fourfold pattern. These consisted of the disciplines of the Bible (text), church history (history), systematic theology (truth) and practical theology (application) (Bosch 1991: 489). The inclusion of practical theology is sometimes still a matter of dispute. Hiltner (1958: 24), for instance, following in the tradition of Thomas Aquinas (Van der Ven 1988: 8) would question it as a valid theological discipline on a par with, say, systematic theology. In contrast such varied theologians as Duns Scotus, Luther and Calvin have seen theology as ‘scientia practica’ which leads naturally to the establishment of practical theology as a separate theological discipline (Van der Ven 1988: 8; Heitink 1999: 107).

Three men laid the groundwork for practical theology – Rautenbach, Schleiermacher and Nitzsch. In 1774 Stephen Rautenbach established the first University chair of practical theology in Vienna in order to help Christianity in today’s world (“die Gegenwart”) (Van der Ven 1994: 30). He thus established the concept that the object of practical theology is the praxis of the church in the *context of modern society* (Van der Ven 1996: x; Heitink 1999: 9).

The first Protestant chair of practical theology was established in Tübingen, by Schleiermacher, in 1794 (Van de Ven 1988: 7; 1994: 30). Schleiermacher considered the discipline to be the crown of theology because the practical field is the one where all theology is put to work to serve the church (Meeks 1979: 62). Thus he introduced the concept of using every available resource from the “logic-centred” fields of theology, such as biblical theology and systematic theology, in order to reflect upon the church’s praxis (Hiltner 1958: 28).

Nitzsch (1847: 123 ff.) introduced a methodological empirical approach. He defined practical theology as the theory of the church's practice of Christianity, concerned with the basis, development and changing of the church's life and action. Learning from praxis must always have a practical goal, analyze experiences in order to explain where possible what is taking place empirically, find its basis and develop principles (Heitink 1999: 45 ff.).

Five historical misconceptions need to be rectified. Practical theology is *not*:

1. A universal ecclesiological panacea offering a solution to every theological problem the church faces in the modern world, as seems to be advocated by Browning (1991: 7 ff.). This approach "places an excessive demand on practical theology and entails unavoidable conflict with systematic theology..."(Zerfass 1974: 164).
2. Only concerned with teaching prospective pastors skills needed for successful praxis (Zerfass 1974: 164; Heyns & Pieterse 1990: 7; Bosch 1991: 489, 490; Van der Ven 1996: ix). It is now classified as an operational science involving reflection, theory, methodology and research (or "Handlungswissenschaft" in German) on a par with psychology, sociology, pedagogy, political science, economics and communication sciences (Zerfass: 1974: 164, footnote 5).
3. Just a tool for pastors. It is concerned with the whole church (Heyns & Pieterse 1990: 2). Therefore this study takes seriously the recent theological emphasis of the "charismatic congregation" which moves away from the over clericalized, pastoral church toward the church of the whole people of God (Moltmann 1977: 291-300; Meeks 1979: 72; Ballard 2001: 2).
4. Just concerned with the church as advocated by Rahner (1966: 50) (Bosch 1991: 490, 491; Heitink 1999: 113). It is concerned with the whole of society.

1.3 A definition of practical theology

Practical theology may be defined as "**the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society**" (Heitink 1999: 6). In essence practical theology is the theory of praxis. Praxis means "action, activity," not practice. The Greek title for the biblical book the Acts of the Apostles is "*praxeis apostolon*," which may be translated to mean, "the acts of God through the ministry of the apostles." This provides a good analogy for the meaning of praxis in practical theology (Heitink 1999: 7).

Further aspects that will help clarify the definition of practical theology are:

1. Its purpose is to examine those actions designed to ensure that God's word reaches people and is embodied in their lives (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 1).
2. It is a theory of crisis. Heitink (1999: 2, 3) proposes it as a theological theory of action developed to meet the crisis the church has faced since the 1960s. This crisis is a symptom of the problems produced by the modernization process in Western Society over the past two or three centuries.
3. Change is its direct object involving mediative action and transformation. It must help form and direct the life of the Christian community in this post-Christian and post-Western world (Ballard 2001: 11). This may be called its "strategic perspective" (Heitink: 1999: 3, 163).
4. It is the mediation of the Christian faith in society. "Mediation" means that it intentionally attempts to change the current praxis through planned interventions in reality. This may be called praxis 1 (Heitink 1999: 102). The societal context and interaction in pursuit of various goals in which these actions take place is known as praxis 2 (Heitink 1999: 8).
5. The formal object of practical theology is to relate theological insights to empirical facts in a methodological and systematic manner (Van der Ven 1994: 32). It borrows the methods of other sciences (usually the operational sciences) integrating them into a theological hermeneutical-empirical approach (Van der Ven 1994: 34; Heitink 1999; 7, 220 ff.).
6. The word 'modern' in Heitink's (1999:6) definition is used to mean contemporary and thus includes a study of 'post-modern' society.

1.4 Different approaches employed in practical theology

There are at least, four main methodological approaches to practical theology (Meeks 1979: 58 – 61). These different approaches stem from initial theoretical presuppositions concerning the relationship between the theological and empirical aspects of practical theology.

1.4.1 The actualization of systematic theology

Hiltner advocates this approach (Hiltner 1958: 22). The presupposition of this model is that practical theology is concerned with the application of the theories that come from systematic theology (Meeks 1977: 58). This is a deductive model. It is the approach used by Karl Barth (Meeks 1977: 58) in his first volume of Church Dogmatics (Barth: 1936: Vol. 1; 1: 218- 220).

He saw practical theology as simply a science of “how?” whereas the other theological disciplines were concerned with “what?” Systematic theology formulates what should be proclaimed. Practical theology is purely concerned with how it should be proclaimed (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 8). Practical theology becomes the discipline which compares the actually existing church with the proclamation of the Word using its scientific, reflective approach to identify shortcomings in praxis as compared with the church’s proclaimed essence (Meeks 1979: 58, 59).

The strengths of this model are that it takes God’s Word seriously, particularly the discipline of systematic theology. It does have several important shortcomings. Systematic theology is molded and formed by present and past historical experience as Küng (1989: 21-23) demonstrates with his Ecclesial Paradigm Theory. Theory must allow itself to be ruthlessly interrogated by conclusions drawn from reflection upon present praxis and modified if necessary. Moreover, in practice, it is usually an “interruption” (Störing) in the present praxis that initiates practical theological research rather than the other way around (Zerfass 1974: 167). The role of practical theology is to interact with theology so that it may result in new hermeneutical approaches and the modification of traditional theological theory (Zerfass 1974: 169).

1.4.2 Based upon the theories of the operational sciences

This inductive model assumes that it is best to derive the methodology and norms for practical theology from the operational sciences. Meeks (1979: 59) proposes Hiltner (1958) as a leading proponent of this model. Current praxis is not reflected upon from a theological perspective. Instead the approach “...asks how we can do what we are already doing more effectively and scientifically?” (Meeks 1979: 59). This has three dangers.

The first danger is that the findings, theories and hypotheses of the operational sciences, especially of psychology and psychotherapy, become the norm by which praxis must be judged. Whilst practical theology has much to learn from the operational sciences this is a dangerous model since it tends to reduce practical theology to counseling or an application of the best organizational models available in society (Meeks 1979: 59, 70). Hiltner’s (1958) position is rather subtler than this. Indeed Hiltner (1958: 24) defines practical theology as, “the operation-focused branch of theology, which begins with *theological* questions and concludes with *theological* answers” (my italics).

The second danger is that of allowing reflection to centre too much on the present situation in today's world. The present cannot be divorced from either the past or the future (Thiselton 1992: 604, 605). The mediation and continuity of the Christian faith depends upon the communicative actions of people who have traditions. Without a theological base practical theology may easily just become another operational (i.e. human) science in danger of being unconsciously influenced by the presuppositions of the post-modern world. A hermeneutical-critical approach is necessary because it helps practical theology achieve its goal of building bridges between past tradition and present experience in order to change the future (Heitink 1999: 5, 8 ff.).

The third danger arises because the epistemological and theological base of the researcher inevitably influences the research (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 74). Many who shaped operational sciences thought that religion was an illusion which man would out-grow, and tended to make reductionist and imperialist claims for their interpretation of behaviour (Tidball 1984: 15-17). Van der Ven (1994: 37) puts it very bluntly. "For me the hermeneutical approach comes first. For me it establishes the framework within which empirical research has to be conducted. Without saying that, the empirical interdisciplinary model would lead us to brute positivism, naked empiricism, stupid objectivism."

Thus as a model it has the following weaknesses:

1. It has its roots in the growing loss of confidence in confessional, creedal and biblical theology. This may even go so far as a loss of faith in the power of God to liberate human beings, narrowing freedom to psychological liberation.
2. It tends to conform to current culture by downplaying conflict and the confrontational elements of the gospel both within the individual and within society. Thus the goal becomes inner peace within the individual as a normative experience. This eliminates the experience of deep inner anguish and struggle which, as well as peace within, is also a part of the gospel (see Romans 7).
- 3 It tends to emphasize production, consumption and success. These are sometimes very wrong indicators of the effectiveness of a work of a God who, as a perceived failure, died on the cross!

1.4.3 The pragmatic interaction between systematic theology and the social context

According to Meeks (1979: 60) this view of practical theology follows Tillich's (1966) method of correlation as given in his Systematic Theology I. The aim of which is to correlate the penetrating, creative questions of secular culture with the answer of Christian revelation (Bloesch 1992: 217). Theology and the operational sciences are regarded on a par and neither provides the norm.

This model has led to a new sensitivity to the world and its needs. Yet it has serious weaknesses. It can produce theological theories that remain ideal and theoretical or it can tend to lead to a general accommodation of churches to the surrounding culture (Meeks 1979: 60, 72). The necessary interaction between the context and tradition (systematic theology, biblical theology etc.) is lacking and thus the insights of the operational sciences are not integrated within a theological context. Thus praxis becomes divorced from theology and its aim, which is the maturation of the congregation.

It is profoundly wrong to treat the relationship between biblical material and the present as fully symmetrical. From an objective perspective Christian theology focuses upon the cross and resurrection of Christ. These are foundational and transform any present criteria of relevance. Present criteria of relevance do not transform the cross (Thiselton 1992: 610). This would appear to be a danger in Van der Ven's approach. Although he takes great pains to link the church's codes (metaphors) with his sociological theory based on Parson's (1960) theoretical view of society and social institutions, he none-the-less initiates his ecclesiology from this sociological viewpoint. Thus he writes, "We, however, make a plea for the development of an ecclesiology proceeding from the cultural life of society" (Van der Ven 1996: 80).

1.4.4 The scientific examination of the church's praxis in the context of the Trinity

This is the model adopted in this study. This is an intradisciplinary approach based upon the insights of Moltmann's theology. It is the model that Meeks (1979: 61 ff.) proposes. It is considered below under 1.6.2.

1.5 The validity and credibility of its results

These approaches raise a fundamental question that will determine the eventual validity and credibility of this study. Namely; “How valid are the results obtained by treating any theological discipline (the “study of God”) as an operational science from a scientific point of view?” The answer to this question will be determined by the answers to five questions;

1. What is the relationship between scripture and practical theology?
2. Is practical theology a valid operational science?
3. How valid are the results from a theological perspective?
4. How may the differing approaches of theology and the operational sciences be integrated in a manner that is acceptable to both perspectives?
5. How far can the results obtained be used to predict the course of future change?

1.5.1 Its relationship to scripture

The theological hermeneutic used to test practical theological theory in this study will be a ‘biblical hermeneutic,’ as opposed to, say, a strictly biblical, romanticist, existential, phenomenological, ontological or socio-critical hermeneutic (Ferguson 1988: 296). It is a hermeneutic that accepts the authority of scripture in all matters pertaining to faith and conduct. The biblical hermeneutic adopted in this study means that all decisions and actions must be critically examined for their truth by the Word. It is based upon:

- An acceptance of the authority and general inerrancy of the scriptures.
- A confessional perspective based upon the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed and, in general, the Articles of Faith adopted by the Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1897.
- An evangelical perspective with four defining factors – biblicism (a reliance upon the bible as the ultimate religious authority), conversionism (a stress on the new birth), activism (an energetic individualistic approach) and crucicentrism (a focus on Christ’s redeeming work as the heart of essential Christianity) (Bebbington 1994: 6).
- A reformed perspective which may be identified by eight emphases. These are; the sovereignty of God and predestination, the polemic against idolatry, the working out of divine purposes in history, a life of holiness, the life of the mind in the service of God, preaching, church organization and pastoral care, the disciplined life and simplicity (Leith 1992: 5 ff.).

A *strictly* biblical hermeneutic must be rejected. This is the view that principles are inferred first of all in scripture and then applied to praxis which was the position adopted by Barth (Meeks 1979: 38). Scripture is always understood in terms of some experience. The text of the bible has to be interpreted in the cultural and historic context of its authors and its interpretation is influenced by the authentic long-term experience of Christian faith and Christian life. ***Thus context becomes text*** (Heitink 1999: Lecture notes). This means that practical theology is seen as the interaction of the interface between theological tradition, a biblical hermeneutic (as described below) and the social context in which the church finds itself, much as defined by Zerfass in his model (1974: 168).

Care must be taken lest the idea is adopted that the word of God is itself being tested by this practical theological study. This is certainly not the case. A distinction must be made between the written word of scripture and the theological interpretations of those words. This does not mean that there cannot be clarity of interpretation about primary issues. Grudem (1994: 108) in his Systematic Theology defines the clarity of scripture in the following terms, "...the bible is written in such a way that all things necessary for our salvation and for our Christian life and growth are very clearly set forth in scripture." It is unclear, however, when it comes to referring to many secondary issues that are not crucial to salvation. These include such issues as the organization of church life and government, methods of church growth, personal piety, and the method of baptism.

In order, therefore, to guard the authority of scripture, and not to clothe certain theories and praxis with illegitimate scriptural authority, it is best to see the flow as being between theology, as opposed to scripture, and praxis. Heyns and Pieterse (1990: 42-44) define theology as being interpretations of scripture influenced by personal experience or praxis and previously held theories. Out of a theology come theories that then influence praxis. There is no pure theory of praxis. Theory always receives the impact of history and is conditioned by society. It is always underlain by theory. The relation between theory and praxis is determined by a bipolar tension-filled critical combination. Theory must be constantly tested by praxis and praxis must receive a constant critical review from theory (Heitink 1999: 152).

The interactive spiral starts from the praxis (the situation). The praxis is reflected upon from a theological perspective (the theory). This theory, influenced by tradition, is unconvincing in present praxis, so this leads to a rereading of scripture and to a revision of theory. The new theory then questions the existing praxis causing it to be re-examined and so on. A progressive spiral is initiated, with a time dimension, in which research of the context leads to a new interpretation of the text, and this in turn casts new light upon the actual situation (Heitink 1999: 153, 154; Heitink 1999: Lecture notes). So the knowledge of God is “illumed and clarified by the study of situations and events where the gospel is preached and taught and lived out” (Purves 1998: 228).

1.5.2 Its validity as an Operational Science

Practical theology is a theological discipline and biblical, historical and systematic theology must form the basis for and the primary parameter against which to construct and test any theory (Zerfass 1974: 171). It is also, however, a scientific discipline as well. A consensus has been reached among many practical theologians that it is an operational science (Zerfass 1974: 164). God can neither be made into an object of scientific study nor captured in human language. Yet it is the contention of those who practice practical theology that, “one can scientifically study the encounter between God and human beings” (Van der Ven 1988: 15; Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 9; Heitink 1999: 111).

It may be classed as an operational science for the following reasons:

1. There is no knowledge of God that excludes the empirical component of the world and God’s engagement with it (Purves 1998: 224). The encounter between God and human beings takes place in our time/space continuum. This means that people’s conduct, experience and responses can be studied scientifically, reflected upon and theorized about (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 9).
2. It is concerned with praxis. It reflects critically on what happens in the congregation and on the religious actions of people within the church and society at large (de Gruchy 1987: 50; Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 12). It has been described as “*Kritische Theorie religiös vermittelter Praxis in der Gesellschaft*” - “The critical theory of religious actions in society” (Otto 1974: 201).

3. Its methodology, however, is probably the determining factor in treating it as an operational science (Zerfass 1974: 166). Any operational discipline requires a methodology to reach its conclusions. It must have ways of producing and analyzing data so that theories can be tested, accepted or rejected. Without a systematic way of producing knowledge the findings of the subject can be dismissed as guesswork, or even as common-sense made to sound complicated (Haralambos & Holborn 1991: 698). As Van der Ven (1994: 29) writes, “Without a sound and clear methodology, practical theology cannot fulfill its task: reflecting on the people’s praxis from the viewpoint of God’s revelatory praxis in a way that is as scientific as possible.” Three main factors characterize its methodology:
- It is empirical, wherever possible. It conducts practical-theological research with the help of empirical methodology, concepts, methods and means in order to build-up relevant and adequate practical-theological theory for achieving practical-theological aims (Van der Ven 1994: 34). Empirical methodology involves obtaining a clear definition of phenomena by measurement. This enables trends, associations, equations etc. to be constructed. “Numeric expressions render these more accurately than verbal descriptions” (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 69). Practical theology is mainly concerned with communicative actions that can be measured empirically.
 - Its schematization and systematization of praxis into *actions* and *operational fields*. (There is considerable disagreement as to how to define these. Zerfass (1974: 173) following Hiltner (1958: 20) defines them as organizing, communicating and shepherding. Heyns and Pieterse (1990: 13) expand the number of actions to include, preaching, instruction, care, celebration, and service. Van der Ven (1996: 81) has a very similar list that includes proclamation, catechetics, pastoral care, liturgy, and diacony. Heitink (1999: 280) calls them, “subdisciplines” and defines them as church development, catechetics, liturgics and homiletics.) The moment an action is accomplished, it establishes an operational field, defined by the parameters of time, place, circumstance and situation (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 13, 14). Practical theology studies the operations performed in these operational fields.
 - Its use of scientific, heuristic methodology employing models, which can be empirically measured (Zerfass 1974: 166, 170) as opposed to the scientific experimental methodology used in the pure sciences or the intuitive creativity of an arts discipline.

“Empirical” in practical theology means more than just numerical measurement. It begins with the normal experiential process whereby people interact with their environment through observation, trying out and evaluation. The process is conducted in a scientific fashion and is monitored and verified, and “entails three subprocesses: surmise, expectation and testing” (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 73). These processes are part of the “empirical cycle” which involves observation, induction, deduction, testing and evaluation.

A practical theological study attempts to collect data in a manner that will be up to the best standards of operational science. There are, however, limitations as how far a study may be accepted fully by the operational sciences. By its very nature, as a theological discipline, practical theology has a complete set of *obvious* presuppositions. These determine the questions asked to retrieve the data and its interpretation. This may cause problems when a multidisciplinary approach is tried between practical theology and the other operational sciences (Van der Ven 1993: 2).

1.5.3 The validity of the results from a theological perspective

There are major differences between the operational sciences and practical theology with regard to their respective formal objects, norms and the paradigms involved (Van der Ven 1993: 2). In that case how valid is the data collected from empirical research, and its theological interpretation?

It must be accepted that all ecclesiology is theory. “Ecclesiology is understood to be a theological theory of the church” (Clowney 1987: 14). It cannot be indisputable truth or raised to the same authoritative level as revelation. It is the result of man’s intellectual, experiential and emotive interpretation and must be constantly reexamined. The results of any practical theological research must be contextualised within the plurality and multiple interpretations that can be given to human activities. It must therefore be satisfied with medium range theories which will often compete with each other in order to identify different problems, which is a precondition for all epistemological process in the operational sciences (Zerfass 1974: 173).

The results of practical theological research will always be provisional. They must always be subject to the proviso that a Sovereign God can and does intervene miraculously at times to confound its the conclusions. This applies particularly to the heuristic function of models. Definite deduction is ruled out because we have no clear abstract concepts of the church (Dulles 1987: 26). “Any claim on behalf of empirical theology to formulate laws, either natural or empirical is untenable. At best it can formulate probabilities, that is hypotheses derived from approximate generalizations based on a number of different observations and specifying temporal and spatial restrictions and special circumstances” (Van der Ven 1993: 31). These hypotheses can only either be falsified or not falsified. They can never be verified, only corroborated. They remain hypotheses.

However, it certainly appears that the bible at times places a great deal of emphasis upon human wisdom and empirical results. Wisdom as the product of human reasoning (albeit a reasoning that fears God - Proverbs 1:7) is given a prominent place in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament – Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job and many psalms. Wisdom is to be used to decide upon plans, actions and strategies. Because God has made an orderly world the “wise” can determine profitable and successful courses of action (Brueggemann 1997: 337). This wisdom is not limited to that revealed to Israel in the Torah. The whole of God’s creation may become a source of wisdom. Both believers and unbelievers can study it in order to gain wisdom, and means that believers can gain much wisdom from the findings and insights of the unbelievers (Schwarz 1999: 226 ff.).

Empirical results were important in helping the early church decide whether they were right in what they were doing, although they never necessarily equated numbers with success. Indeed, as in the time of Jeremiah, decline may be indicative of an inner spiritual growth from God (see Jeremiah 1:10) (Möller 1987: 112, 113). Yet in Acts it would appear that the addition of men and women to the church is seen a sign of God’s favour because “right” decisions were being made and “right” practices followed (See - Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 9: 31; 11:18.) God generally works in an orderly and consistent manner (see 1Corinthians 14:33). The general witness of biblical revelation, and arguably of our own experience, is that the action of encountering him often operates within predictable parameters. Thus there is much to be gained from empirically examining this reaction.

There are tremendous advantages to be gained from this theological-operational scientific methodology. Churches often try to deal with problems that have arisen through spontaneous and intuitive solutions that are derived from “unconscious internalized patterns of behaviour, thought models and norms of behaviour which have been handed down in church confessions, in dogmatics and church law” (Zerfass 1974: 167). The problem with this approach is that:

1. These traditional patterns of response may no longer apply in the modern world.
2. It only sees a part of the total picture (Schwarz and Schalk 1998: 21).
3. It is primarily based upon subjective perception that is untested by more objective data.

One of the strengths of using empirical methodology is that it produces results that have greater medium term validity for determining the church’s effectiveness than purely intuitive, ‘untested’ reactions to problems in the praxis field (Zerfass 1974: 173). Praxis is subjected to empiric, scientific study providing more exact data to work with than purely personal experience and the interpretation of such experience (Heyns and Pieterse 1990 Foreword).

While it may not always offer better solutions, it is more effective in the long term because its presuppositions, methodology for obtaining those results and principles of interpretation have been clearly defined. Within the framework of the research parameters the results of the research can be estimated, controlled, corrected and evaluated as new data is received. Furthermore, such clear definition allows for the necessary fair comparison with other competitive theories if greater truth and reality in the context of the real world are to be established (Zerfass 1974: 172, 173).

1.5.4 The integration of the theological and empirical perspectives

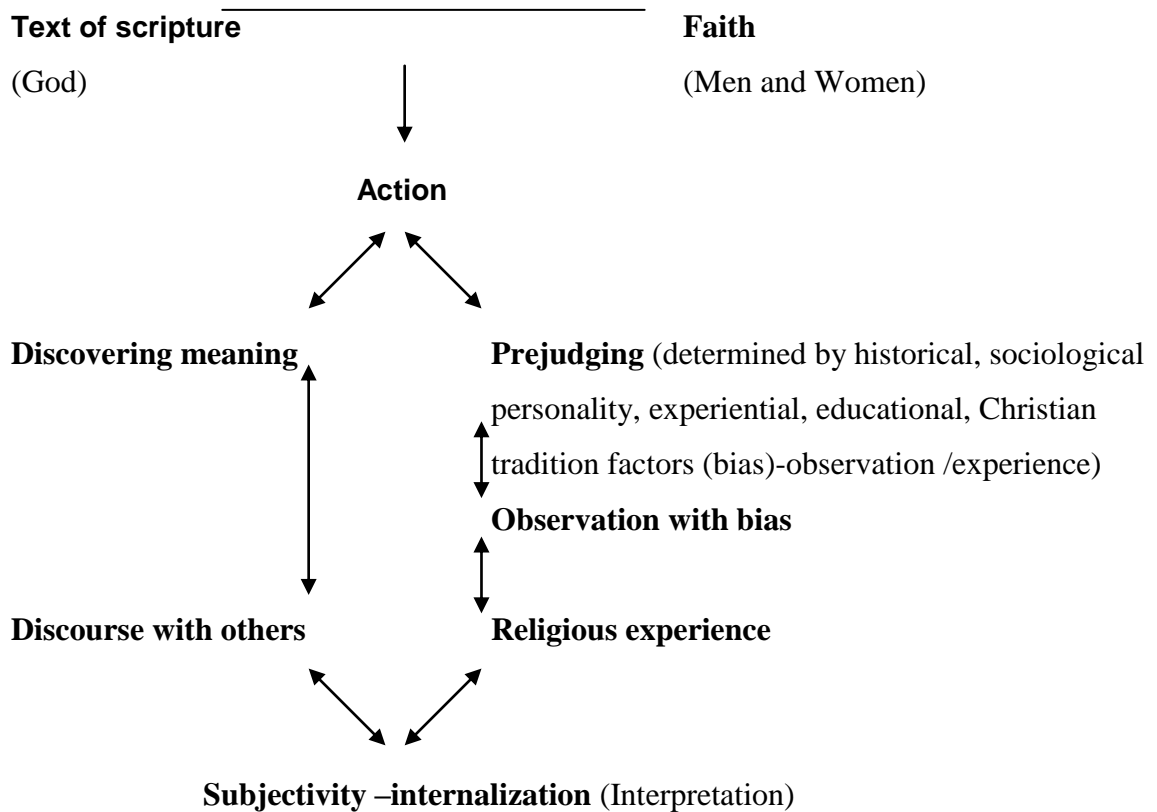
Practical theology is, “a theological operational science and an empirical theological approach” (Heyns and Pieterse Foreword: 1990). Its prime theological task is reflecting theologically and scientifically on the complex interweaving of the elements of Christian ecclesiological praxis (Zerfass 1974: 164). It must do justice to scripture and the social context within the parameters of a theological and biblical hermeneutic. This raises the challenge of integrating the theological and empirical approaches by means of a theory that is acceptable theologically and to the operational sciences. Habermas and Ricoeur offer theories that may fulfill this role.

Habermas (1981) creates a theory of communicative action in order to develop a hermeneutic that critically interprets the current empirical-analytical practice of the operational sciences. He seeks to link the intuitive, relational, cultural “lifeworld” with the rational “system” of bureaucratized society, the marketplace and science. Knowledge is perpetuated and mediated in society both by the “lifeworld” and the “system.” The “lifeworld” may be equated with the hermeneutical aspect and the “system” with the empirical aspect of knowledge. The latter provides the means whereby the lifeworld may be criticized and thus is the basis for a socio-critical hermeneutic (Thiselton 1992: 387). The theory provides an epistemological rationale for the integration of the theological and empirical perspectives in practical theology (Heitink 1999: 102, 135 ff.).

Ricoeur (1991: 144-145) proposes a theory of action that stresses the similarities between the interpretation of social reality and the interpretation of texts. “A text is detached from the spoken word and an inscription of a social phenomenon is detached from the original concrete acts” (Ploeger 1999: 75). This suggests that there is a dialectical relationship between the understanding of an action (the text) and its explanation (the context). Both understanding and explanation are necessary if the meaning of an action is to be discerned.

Heitink (1999: 163 ff.) equates understanding with the hermeneutical method of theology and explanation with the empirical method of the operational sciences. The hermeneutical perspective is integrated with the empirical perspective (understanding with explaining) using the hermeneutical circle of understanding, first developed explicitly by Schleiermacher (Thiselton 1992: 204; Heitink 1999: 180, 196). Thus an integrative theory is produced that is philosophically acceptable to the operational sciences (Heitink 1999: 102, 166). Heitink’s (1999: 110; 196 ff.) hermeneutical circle is set out below (Fig. 1). (Ploeger (1999: 73), for comparison, includes the elements of 1. Observing 2. Guessing 3. Predicting 4. Checking 5. Evaluating, in the hermeneutical circle he proposes which is very similar to Heitink’s.)

Fig. 1: Heitink's hermeneutical circle of understanding



Whilst this model is useful it does not adequately describe what is involved in the interaction between scripture and the individual or society. It makes no allowance for the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. Scripture emphasizes the incomprehensibility of its message by the wisdom of this world (see Mark 4:11–12; 1 Corinthians 1:25–26). There is a chasm between pre-understanding and understanding that can only be bridged by the work of the Holy Spirit (Newbigin 1986: 52 ff.).

1.5.5 The prediction of change

Practical theology is inextricably involved with change. It is a discipline that was born out of the changes the church is experiencing in the modern world, that seeks to understand these changes and to predict how these will effect the church in the future and if possible to manage them. It also seeks to produce prescriptive results that will help the church adapt to these changes. This begs certain questions. Can change be understood in a complex world? Can it be predicted? Can the results of any mediation or intervention in society or the church be predicted? Can it be managed?

Before considering the answers to these questions three assumptions must be made about change:

- Firstly that time and change are a normal empirical condition of the Universe we live in. Change measures time and vice versa. This applies not only to the physical realm but also to the social.
- Secondly change is a theological construct. “The bible and theology are full of “change” words and ideas: creation, recreation, conversion, salvation, redemption, born again, eschatology...” (de Jongh van Arkel 2001: 55). The bible begins and ends with change (Genesis 1:1-3; Revelation 21). God’s attributes are unchangeable but He is always doing something new (Isaiah 42:9; Revelation 21:5). Change is thus an inextricable part of human spiritual existence.
- This means, thirdly that individual human beings can and do change. The capacity of people to change is known as “human plasticity.” It is a basic theological premise that humans can and do change. “The Christian faith works from the presupposition that people can indeed be changed and that our society can be renewed from the eschatological perspective of God’s kingdom” (Heitink 1999: 202). This position is taken in this study but with the proviso that there are constraints on their plasticity (de Jongh van Arkel 2001: 48).
- As a result of these assumptions it follows that if practical theology is to embrace the empirical perspective it must seek to quantify change, understand it and produce theories of change. These theories will always be inadequate. Change is an extremely complex phenomenon in even the simplest of open sociological systems. From a sociological perspective methods for generating and managing social change must be naive and too generalized (de Jongh van Arkel 2001: 31, 46 ff.). The law of “unintended consequences” is always likely to apply to any mediated change.

Yet there is hope because change is a theological construct. Despite God’s sovereign mystery the patterns of change revealed in the scriptures can be applied to individuals, churches and societies in the modern world. For example the change which in the New Testament is called “conversion” has provided the church with a paradigm for experiencing, explaining and predicting the process of conversion for the last 2000 years. This makes it very important for empirical theories of change to be integrated with a theological hermeneutic of change in order to have any predictability.

This raises the question, “what standards can be used against which to measure the effectiveness of the church in today’s world?” The next two sections deal with this question. First the basic ecclesiological approach adopted is outlined and a framework defined in which the church’s actions can be conceptualised. Then in chapter 2 the standards used to question this conceptualized framework will be discussed. These are called “interrogative tools” for the sake of this study, since they are meant to be used by the church to question itself.

1.6 The ecclesiological approach

1.6.1 Biblically based

Theology must start with the character of God. Thomas Aquinas writes, “Theology is taught by God, teaches of God, and leads to God” (Ferguson 1988: 681). This must especially be the case for any theology that purports to be Reformed Theology. “*The centrality of God* is a theme that pervades Reformed theology, which developed under the compelling demand of God’s self-revelation in Scripture (Ferguson 1988: 569). Ecclesiology may be simply defined as the God revealed biblical doctrine of the church. It must begin with the teaching of the bible, and return to the bible again and again to deepen and renew understanding (Clowney 1987: 14; 1988: 140).

1.6.2 Trinitarian

To test how effective a congregation or cell (type of small group) is being, its purpose must be determined. Why did God establish the church? What did he intend it to do? What are its basic functions? The most profound way of determining this is to look at what the bible tells us about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in relation to the church since it is the result of a trinitarian intervention in the world. Thus any practical theology of the Christian God must be axiomatically trinitarian (Purves 1998: 224.)

Following Moltmann (1977: 50 ff.) the church is considered as a function of God’s trinitarian encounter (history) with the world. As a result practical theology is placed in the context of:

1. The Trinity, and is therefore saved from ecclesiocentrism (Van der Ven 1996: x).
2. The kingdom of God, because Jesus is a function of the ultimate lordship of God (Meeks 1979: 62).
3. The *missio Dei* by which God the Father, in love, sends God the Son in the power of God the Holy Spirit to bring the world into communion with himself (Purves 1998: 225).

A trinitarian approach provides the profoundest basis and the broadest horizon for practical theology. It helps to ensure that it is based in a biblical hermeneutic. It provides the only satisfactory theological hermeneutic whereby the world can be studied both empirically and theologically, allowing God to be seen as “other” than creation and in relation to it. The distancing of “otherness” provides the freedom necessary for man and society to act and observe as autonomous entities whilst still intimate with God (Gunton 1991: 132; Carson 1996: 229).

Moltmann’s trinitarian theory of ecclesiology is expounded in his works, *Theology of Hope* (1967), *the Crucified God* (1974) and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (1977) and expanded in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (1981). It provides practical theology with:

1. A Christological historical perspective which looks at everything from the perspective of the Son who manifests the liberating power of righteousness and faith. Jesus, the Word of God, came to earth to proclaim the promise and the freedom of the gospel. To be faithful to Jesus the church’s function is to proclaim the promise and the freedom of the gospel (**kerigma**).
2. An eschatological kingdom perspective which looks at everything from the perspective of the Father, the future of God, hope and mission. God the Father loves the world and gave his only Son as a sacrifice in order to serve and save the world. To be faithful to God the Father the church’s function and its mission is its self-giving in the service of the world (**diakonia**).
3. A pneumatological empowering perspective of the Holy Spirit which is revealed in the charismatic congregation. The Holy Spirit came to create a community of believers who had fellowship with each other and with the Father and the Son. Therefore to be faithful to the Holy Spirit the church must have fellowship within itself and with the Father. The church manifests this in **koinonia** and the creation and formation of a new humanity.

Moltmann’s ecclesiological approach leads to tension with the Reformed tradition because it:

1. Propounds a doctrine of divine passibility (see Moltmann 1974: 227 ff.) (Bauckham 1997: 217). Yet God’s suffering is the almost natural extension by Christian theology of “hints about God already voiced in the most pathos-driven witnesses of the Old Testament” (Brueggemann 1997: 311 ff.). Packer (1988: 277) redefines the doctrine to mean that God is only impassible in the sense that no created beings can inflict pain on him. Therefore the doctrine of divine passibility would not appear to be considered a very serious obstacle to accepting Moltmann’s theology.

2. Has developed a social theory of the Trinity (see Moltmann 1981: 156 ff.) (Bauckham 1997: 217) along similar lines to Pannenburg, Boff, Kasper and Gunton (Thiselton 1995: 156). This doctrine explains the relationship between the three persons as a perichoretic social interaction that determines how they relate to the world. It introduces relationality into the being of God and thus places within the Trinity the community-ness which under-girds mankind's need for society (McIntyre 1997: 27, 208 ff.). The approach must be used carefully. It departs from the sophisticated understanding given to the Trinity by the Greek and Latin Fathers and opens the doors for tritheism (Bloesch 1992: 251).
3. Appears to run the risk of reducing the theology of the Trinity to concerns that emerge from the particular challenges the church faces in the 20th century. In particular faith is brought into alignment with a theology of revolution and relegates transcendence to the future, as do many Marxists (Bloesch 1992: 237). Thiselton (1995: 156, 157) criticizes this as being a manipulative attempt to legitimize an egalitarian view of society.
4. Abandons the traditional distinction between the immanent and economic trinities (see Moltmann 1974: 239 ff.) (Bauckham 1997: 217). This is the most serious tension. "The idea of eternal equality in being but subordination in role has been essential to the church's doctrine of the Trinity since it was first affirmed in the Nicene Creed" (Grudem 1994: 251). It is the only satisfactory explanation yet formulated of how the three distinct persons of the Trinity have existed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit for all eternity.

There are, however, considerable advantages in using Moltmann's theology because:

1. Its trinitarian perspective is the framework upon which Calvin based his Institutes (Method and Arrangement: I, II, III) (Hesselink 1992: 379 ff.) and has been re-emphasized by Barth in his Church Dogmatics (Vol.1 1936).
2. It is rooted in the biblical hermeneutic of hope. The concept of hope as a foundation for life has a basis in the Old Testament, as shown by von Rad (1966) and Alt (1989) (Brueggemann 1997: 476). Hope and promise are needed when present circumstances are perceived to stand in opposition to what God has promised, as is the case today (Moltmann 1967: 103; Thiselton 1995: 145). It is thus contextually relevant, opening up hermeneutical structures for relating biblical faith to the modern world (Bauckham 1997: 223). The most important question it addresses may be the disintegration of "the self-hood of modernity" in the post-modern situation (Thiselton 1995: 122).

3. It produces a theology that takes seriously the paradoxes and tensions to be found in the relationship of an infinite God to a finite world. It has an “Openness to the world... which is not an accommodation to conservative, liberal, or radical values but has a critical edge and a consistent solidarity with the most marginalized members of society” (Bauckham 1997: 223).
4. It emphasizes pneumatology which is relevant in view of the growth of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (Blumhofer 1994: 351, 352; Hendriks 1999: 87, 88).
5. It concentrates, as does the bible, on the praxis through which God acts in the world (see Deuteronomy 28, Isaiah 58, Mark 3:35, John 3:21) (Tidball 1988: 527).

1.6.3 The basic functions of the church

There is disagreement as to the basic functions. Van der Ven (1994: 45 ff.) proposes four functions of *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *didache* and *diakonia*. Heitink (1999: 277 ff.) proposes one integrative function and that is *koinonia* which, “transcends, permeates and connects” (Heitink 1999: 278) the other functions of *martyria*, *diakonia* and *leitourgia*. This study adopts Meeks ecclesiology (1979: 63-74) which posits three basic functions of the church. The corresponding function for God the Father is *diakonia*; the corresponding function for God the Son is *kerygma* and the corresponding function for God the Spirit is *koinonia*.

The three basic functions do not operate independently of each other. They cannot be considered in isolation and all have a missionary dimension (Bosch 1991: 372). *Kerygma* must be intimately related to the functions of **koinonia** and **diakonia** and must lead to the creation of a new humanity in communion with Jesus and to service in the world. *Koinonia* must be intimately related to the function of **kerygma** and **diakonia** so that the charismatic congregation they develop gives itself to the world. *Diakonia* must be intimately related to **kerygma** and **koinonia** so that the mission of the church comes to life in the freedom of the gospel (Meeks 1979: 74).

Each function may be considered to entail certain actions. This study establishes the following actions - proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service. These actions have been chosen from among the roughly similar lists given by Van der Ven (1996: 81-83, 377-379), Meeks (1979: 74) and Heyns and Pieterse (1990: 12-18, 59-61). *Kerygma* will be seen as entailing proclamation and instruction. *Koinonia* will be seen as entailing celebration and care. *Diakonia* will be seen as entailing service rendered to the world.

- Description of actions

For the purposes of this study the above mentioned actions will be defined in the following way:

1. **Proclamation** is that action which involves the presentation and preaching of the gospel to unbelievers, both within and outside the church, encouraging obedience to the Word of God and the regeneration of the unbeliever (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 12, 59; Van der Ven 1996: 378, 379). Proclamation must not be limited to the preaching of the word within a worship service as it also takes place out there in the world (Long 1989: 47). Meeks (1979: 74) includes evangelism as an action component of kerygma. It is unacceptable in the Reformed Tradition to include preaching within the koinoniac function of the church. Preaching is proclamation. It is the proclamation of absolutely decisive events, of a new world embodied in Jesus Christ which can create a totally new world-situation (Heyns 1980: 74). As such it is constantly required to be heard by both believer and unbeliever. It is also artificial to distinguish between proclamation in the pulpit and evangelism in society on the grounds of the distinctions between the hearers (i.e. believer or unbeliever). The parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43) stresses that the kingdom of God will always contain believers and unbelievers. Those within the community of the church are always in need of evangelism that the grace of God may not be received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).
2. **Instruction** involves nurture which aims at building up the believer. It teaches Christian truths, forms Christian character, guides personal development in order to create enthusiastic, mobilized and committed disciples equipped for Christian living (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 60), caring for, serving, equipping, training and possibly leading others. It may also be called 'teaching' (as per Meeks 1979: 74) or 'cataketics' (as per Van der Ven 1996: 378). Van der Ven (1996: 378) sees this primarily, though not exclusively, as involving the cognitive learning processes. It includes the affective and modelling components of learning. It is aimed at the learning processes of individuals and groups in respect of questions of meaning, worldview, religion and Christian faith (Van der Ven 1996: 377, 378).
3. **Celebration** is that action where together people celebrate salvation in worship, sacraments, hymn, music, dancing, symbols and share in communion (or koinonia) with God and one another (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 60). The preaching of the word (which may be included either under the actions of proclamation or instruction) is an essential part of worship (Clowney 1987: 22).

4. **Care** is nurture aimed at healing, sustaining and guiding and may be called the shepherding function (Hiltner 1958: 28). It operates when Christians meet one another's spiritual and material needs, help with one another's problems and share their joys and sorrows (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 60). It deals in personal and relational crises, mourning, loss of meaning, and a need for an orientation in life and faith. It is often centred on important events such as birth, formation of relations and marriage, illness and death (Van der Ven 1996: 377, 378).
5. **Service** is defined as that action whereby the church gives itself to the world. This is based upon Meek's inclusion of the service function within the future of God, hope and mission. The congregation renders service to society and the world. It may include as a component the struggle for justice, peace and the wholeness of creation (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 60). It is recognized particularly in diakonal service of the poor (Moltmann 1979: 24, 25). Hiltner (1958: 28) includes the administration of the congregation under this action since the administration of the congregation is with the ultimate purpose of serving the world in mission.

The relationships between the persons of the Trinity, the functions of the church and their derived actions are set out below in fig. 2.

Fig. 2: The relationship between the Trinity, functions of the church and actions

Person of Trinity	Religious Function of Church	Action	Meaning
Jesus	<i>kerygma</i>	Proclamation	Presentation of gospel to unbelievers outside the congregation Preaching of the gospel to unbelievers within the congregation
		Instruction	The upbuilding of the believer through equipping, training and teaching involving cognitive and affective learning both at an individual and group level.
Holy Spirit	<i>koinonia</i>	Celebration	Sharing in public worship and ritual Sharing with God and each other Community events both at congregational and small group level
		Care	Nurture aimed at healing, sustaining and guiding
God the Father	<i>diakonia</i>	Service	Rendered by Christians to the church body to facilitate mission
			Rendered by Christians to society Organization and administration

1.6.4 Employing the ‘building up the church’ practical theological subdiscipline

The above functions of the church, kerygma, koinonia and diakonia will be integrated and applied to this study using the perspective of ‘building up the local church’. This awkward phrase is the closest English equivalent to the German- Gemeindeaufbau, Dutch- kerkopbouw and Afrikaans- Gemeentebou (Nel 1990: 1; Heitink 1999: xvii). It is a relatively new subdiscipline within practical theology (Nel 1990: 1; Heitink 1999: 285) although the term Gemeindeaufbau was first used in 1925 by the African missionary Gutmann in his book, “Gemeindeaufbau aus dem Evangelium” (Möller 1987: 19). The subdiscipline is biblically rooted in the Greek verb, oikodomeo, referring to the building of a house which gives rise to the biblical image of the church as a spiritual house with the church members as living stones (1 Peter 2:5; Heitink 1999: 285).

It is primarily concerned with the local church (Nel 1990: 2; Heitink 1999: 286). Christians in the Western world have been taught to interpret the bible almost solely on a private, individual basis. Yet many of the commonest expressions used in the New Testament to describe the church are plural nouns (Griffiths 1975: 23). The New Testament teaches that what happens to local congregations is of vital importance to God (See for instance, Acts 20:28-30, Revelations 1-3 and the stated reasons for the writing of 1 & 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians).

Its basic passion is to help local congregations discover their missional identity (Nel 2002: 55) through understanding the nature, purpose and functioning of the church. The church’s nature and purpose is found in christology, ecclesiology and in its trinitarian origin with Christ as the Head of the church (Nel 1990: 1). Schwarz and Schwarz (1984: 67) go so far as to say, “Gemeindeaufbau muß trinitarisch konzipiert werden” – “Upbuilding the congregation must become a trinitarian construct.” On this foundation ‘building up the local church’ seeks to help the church critically assess and change its functioning in the context of modern society.

Its aim is to assist the local congregation take responsibility to become a faith community that reflects more closely the discipleship of Christ and is being faithful to its missional identity in its involvement in modern society (Heitink 1999: 286). This it does by seeking the renewal of the local congregation in essence, existence and origin. This involves three dimensions- the theological-hermeneutical dimension (increasing insight into the nature of the local church), the agogical-teleological dimension (changing the local congregation into what the first dimension

reveals it should be), and a morphological-teleological dimension (this is establishing structures that will effect this change) (Nel 1990: 3).

1.7 The evaluative tools used - metaphor, models, paradigms

1.7.1 The need for self-critical examination of praxis

Practical theology, as understood in this study, is based on a transformatory ecclesiology. All effective ecclesiology is a transformatory ecclesiology. It places its emphasis on the praxis of the church, which is defined not just as its practice, but as practice in which a transformatory orientation is active (Van der Ven 1996: x ff.). Thus the church must always be prepared to be critical of itself and constantly interrogative of its theories and praxis both from the aspect of a biblical and social hermeneutic. “In its sameness, then, the Church must continually change its mode of expression (or praxis), for it is historically orientated to a constantly changing world” (Van Engen 1993: 74 - my brackets).

Schleiermacher first expressed this idea in modern times. He believed that the church is always in the process of becoming. Thus he did not interpret the Protestant Reformation as an attempt to restore the primitive or apostolic church because this is impossible. The church of the present is both the product of the past and the seed of the future (Bosch 1991: 422). His approach opened the way for the church to examine itself much more self-critically and to seek to become the church needed to communicate the Christian religion to each new age. Barth (1956:Vol. 4,1: 690) echoes these sentiments, “The Church stands in the fire of the criticism of its Lord. It is also exposed to the criticism of the world and this criticism has never been altogether false and unjust. It has always needed and always will need self-examination and self-correction. It cannot exist except as *ecclesia semper reformanda...*” The church’s traditional institutions and congregational forms can become a stumbling block for many people. The form of the church’s fellowship, public rituals, and the nature of its ministries are changeable. The church does not have to acquiesce to the pressures of a past external environment. The congregation has to realize the cultural, social and political potentialities of the period in which it exists in a way that is in accordance with the cause it maintains (Moltmann 1977: 290).

1.7.2 The development of the self-interrogatory tools

Since the beginning of the century ecclesiology, and thus practical theology, has been given certain tools which have been developed to aid it as an interrogative, investigative, interpretive and analytical discipline. These tools, unlike those in science, are related to the very nature and essence of the church and how it interfaces with society. In order to ask questions that have

validity from the perspective both of a biblical hermeneutic and that of society these questions must, first of necessity, arise from the researcher's theory of the church as developed from scripture and then be related to the society in which the church finds itself. Every researcher begins to research with some idea in mind of what the church ought to be like, either consciously or subconsciously. As Heitink (1999: 198) comments, "... there can be no question of just one practical-theological interpretation of reality."

The tools now commonly used to interrogate and understand the church's theory and praxis are:

1. The four "attributes" of the church as contained in the Nicene Creed – "one, holy, catholic, apostolic" used by, for instance, Barth, Moltmann, Heyns and Van Engen.
2. The metaphors for the church found in the New Testament, as used by, for instance, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Moltmann, Minear and Clowney.
3. The use of various church, kingdom and methodological models, such as those developed by Troeltsch, Niebuhr, Zerfass, Dulles, Snyder and Van der Ven.
4. The paradigm concept such as applied by Küng from science to theology and ecclesiology, and by Bosch to missiology.
5. Relating the church to the Trinity and seeing it as a function of God's trinitarian encounter (history) with the world in the manner of Moltmann and Heyns.
6. An analysis of the church and the social and cultural context in which it finds itself from a sociological perspective as used by, for instance, by Gibbs, Moltmann and Van der Ven. Using the covenant concept that emphasizes emancipation, human freedom and responsibility as used by Berkhof and Heitink.
7. The "Systems Theory" approach, which originates in cybernetics, and sees human society as a complex organization of inter-related systems of which the sum is greater than the whole and in which a change in one affects all the other systems. Some of these systems may be categorized as personality systems, social systems and communication systems (Heitink 1999: 217, 218).

The earliest constructs found in the New Testament, used various metaphors to stimulate local congregations into taking on certain characteristics, often those in which they were lacking (Minear 1960: 250; Van Engen 1991: 35). The apostle Paul seems to have arrived at many of his semi-conceptual ideas as a result of translating these metaphors into more abstract propositions (Ricoeur 1975: 135 –138). This continued to be the most used approach until the fourth century

when ecclesiologies based upon logical, a priori approaches began to be produced under Hellenistic influence in the Greek world.

The development of the creeds, beginning with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD.) enshrined the a priori approach, as did Augustine's work. These used the adjectives describing the church in the Nicene creed - una, sancta, catholica, apostolica - as their framework upon which to build, at first a descriptive and later an ascriptive, systematic super-structure (Van Engen 1991: 36). This remained, more-or-less, normative even through the Reformation and was passed onto the Protestant Churches. Many in the church today still use the norms of the four adjectives applied to the church (thus Barth 1956: 668 ff.; Küng 1971: 263 ff.; Heyns 1980: 112 ff.; Moltmann 1977: 337 ff.). Its influence is not reserved for theologians but has touched the average church member because the terms of this creed are still recited by many at their Sunday worship (Dulles 1987: 124).

The nineteenth century saw two developments. The first, chronologically, was that a renewed interest of the "Romanticists" in the Middle Ages led by some of the Roman Catholic theologians at Tübingen, of whom Johann Adam Möhler, 1796-1838, was one. They returned to the conception of the church as the mystical body of Christ, rather than primarily a structural organization (Jay 1978: 15). This paved the way for the re-entry of metaphor into the understanding of the church. The second, chronologically, was the development of the sociological approach towards theology which influenced ecclesiology through the work of Troeltsch (1912). in "*The Social Teaching of Christian Churches.*" This approach has valid insights to offer. Ecclesiality is determined by the identity, task and purpose of the church as defined by theological tradition (Van der Ven 1996: 310). In the Reformed Church this is defined by the interpretation of biblical principles. To be relevant and effective, however, it must also be built upon contextuality. This is where the elements of the surrounding societal formation are taken into the structure of the church, in so far as they are compatible with ecclesiality and serve the church's development (Van der Ven 1996: 310).

Bonhoeffer tried to combine the theological and sociological approaches. In his first major work in 1927, "*Sanctorum Communio*" (The Communion of Saints) he produced a theology of the church (Bethge 1963: Foreword). In this work, Bonhoeffer (1963: 80 ff. & 97 ff.) uses the metaphors of the church as the 'body of Christ' and as the 'people of God' as a basis for his ecclesiology.

Barth's approach was based upon a completely different premise, beginning with the Word of God which is in dialectical tension with the world. He surveys the entire field of ecclesiology from three perspectives, within the context of soteriology. After dealing with soteriology as justification, he deals with the Holy Spirit as the one who gathers the Christian community. His exposition on soteriology as sanctification leads him onto the Holy Spirit as the agent who builds up the Christian community. And his discussion on soteriology as vocation brings him to consider the Holy Spirit as the one who sends the Christian community (Bosch 1991: 373).

Moltmann followed Barth's dialectical approach, though with a much greater influence being given in his work to the sociological aspect of ecclesiology. He contends that because the church is the result of the work of the Trinity and more particularly of the redemptive work of the Christ, ecclesiology must evolve from christology and eschatology, which he sees as insight into the trinitarian history of God's dealing with the world (Moltmann 1977: 20). From this theologically sound matrix it can then be worked out as the interaction between ecclesial theology and contextuality. "Every doctrine of the church starts from experiences in the church and with the church in the world" (Moltmann 1977: 18).

Both Barth's and Moltmann's works are enriched by the new emphasis being once more focused upon biblical metaphors to describe the essence of the church of which Minear's (1960) *Images of the Church in the New Testament* was extremely influential. They also both use the four attributes of the church to evaluate and criticize it. The approach used proceeds from, "thinking projectively in pictures and images to thinking in terms of structured imageless relations" (Torrance 1980: 27).

Adding to the above, more traditional tools, has been the development of the concept of models. This has been under the influence both of the scientific method and since the 1980's the development of the paradigm theory by K ung (a comprehensive review of the theory is given in his, *Theology for the Third Millennium*) (1988).

This study will concentrate mainly upon the questions posed by the major metaphors, the emerging ecumenical paradigm, church models and a sociological understanding of modern society as perceived from a theological perspective. These tools will now be briefly examined and explained.

1.7.3 The role of metaphor

Metaphorical language forms an important part of any culture. Metaphor permeates people's lives and is a mechanism that has its foundation in human thinking structuring physical and linguistic actions (Vos 1998: 4). It promotes communication and community (Louw: 1998: 233). It has been considered foundational to science, "Perhaps every science must start with metaphor and end with algebra..." (Black 1962: 242).

The main function of metaphor is "to provide a partial understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 150). Metaphors function in three ways. The cognitive function provides new information by interpreting existing knowledge. The emotive function stimulates emotions, feelings and attitudes using this knowledge. The connotative function gives direction and helps in the implementation in reality of the concepts the metaphor carries. They help interpret history and social phenomena in reference to the salvation of God (Van der Ven 1996: 112- 129) and assist in the structuring of new experiences of reality within an existing perspective and open up new and creative ways of thinking (Vos 1998: 4).

As such they constituted an efficient way of communicating religious beliefs and social values in the world of both the Old and New Testaments. The writers of the bible were used to portraying abstract concepts in the form of metaphors, symbols and images (Heyns 1980: 42). Being embedded in this culture the first Christians also made use of metaphorical language to provide understanding of fundamental Christian concepts (Lassen 1997: 103). This is probably one of the reasons that the bible offers no systematic treatment of the church nor does it provide any abstract or synthetic definitions.

There are difficulties in taking this approach. The selection of a few key metaphors is complicated by the more than eighty metaphors picturing the church in the New Testament (Minear 1960: 28). It is not always easy to discern what or what is not a metaphor. At various times the same terms have been understood metaphorically or nonfiguratively, have been more influential than others and have been interpreted differently (Minear 1960: 18; Vos 1998: 4, 5). The dominant themes of the age tend to be read into them and they can be made to mean what people want them to mean (Tidball 1999: 11). They may hold us captive to a partial aspect of truth both cognitively and emotionally (Thiselton 1992: 367).

Nevertheless, in order to consider how the church understands itself it is necessary to begin at the base metaphorical level found in the bible. For the following reasons;

1. The bible pictures the church primarily in the form of metaphors (Dulles 1987: 19).
2. The church has been described for the last two thousand years not so much by verbal definitions as by metaphors (Weigel 1963: 730).
3. These metaphors have had a tremendous influence upon the theory and tradition underlying present church praxis. “Symbols transform the horizons of man’s life, integrate his perception of reality, alter his scale of values, reorient his loyalties, attachments, and aspirations in a manner far exceeding the powers of abstract conceptual thought. Religious images as used in the Bible and Christian preaching, focus our experience in a new way... To some extent they are self-fulfilling; they make the church become what they suggest the church is” (Dulles 1987: 20). The main reason, however, must be that metaphor provided the only way that the mysteries of the church and kingdom can approximately be described in language form. As Minear (1960: 222) comments, “Image after image points beyond itself to a realm in which God and Jesus Christ and the Spirit are at work.” How do you describe the ‘infinite-indescribable,’ of which you only experience a partial reality, other than by metaphorical comparisons?

The metaphors found in the bible relate more closely to the essence of the church than any other conceptualization. They should, of all the interrogative tools, help the practical theologian answer the questions, “How far does the church correspond to its name? How far does it exist as a practical expression of its essence? How far is it in fact what it appears to be? How far does it fulfill the claim that it makes and the expectation that it arouses?” (Barth 1958: Vol. 4,2: 641).

1.7.4 The role of models

Because metaphors are a complex set of conscious and subconscious expectations and attitudes they have to be simplified so that people can operate out of them. These simplifications are called “models.” Models have been defined in varying ways. Snyder (1991: 19) quotes McFague, “A model is in essence a sustained and systematic metaphor.” Dulles (1987: 23) writes, “When an image (metaphor) is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one’s theoretical understanding of reality it becomes what today is called a “model” ” (my brackets). Zerfass (1974: 166) defines a model as, “...a set order of signs and interconnections which should correspond to a certain number of relevant characteristics within reality, in real circumstances.”

Models are necessarily selective in applying biblical metaphor to reality and are simply working machines that it is hoped approximate to some aspects of reality (Snyder 1991: 19). Therefore,

“Pursued alone, any single model will lead to distortions” (Dulles 1987:26). Three main types of model are used in practical theology:

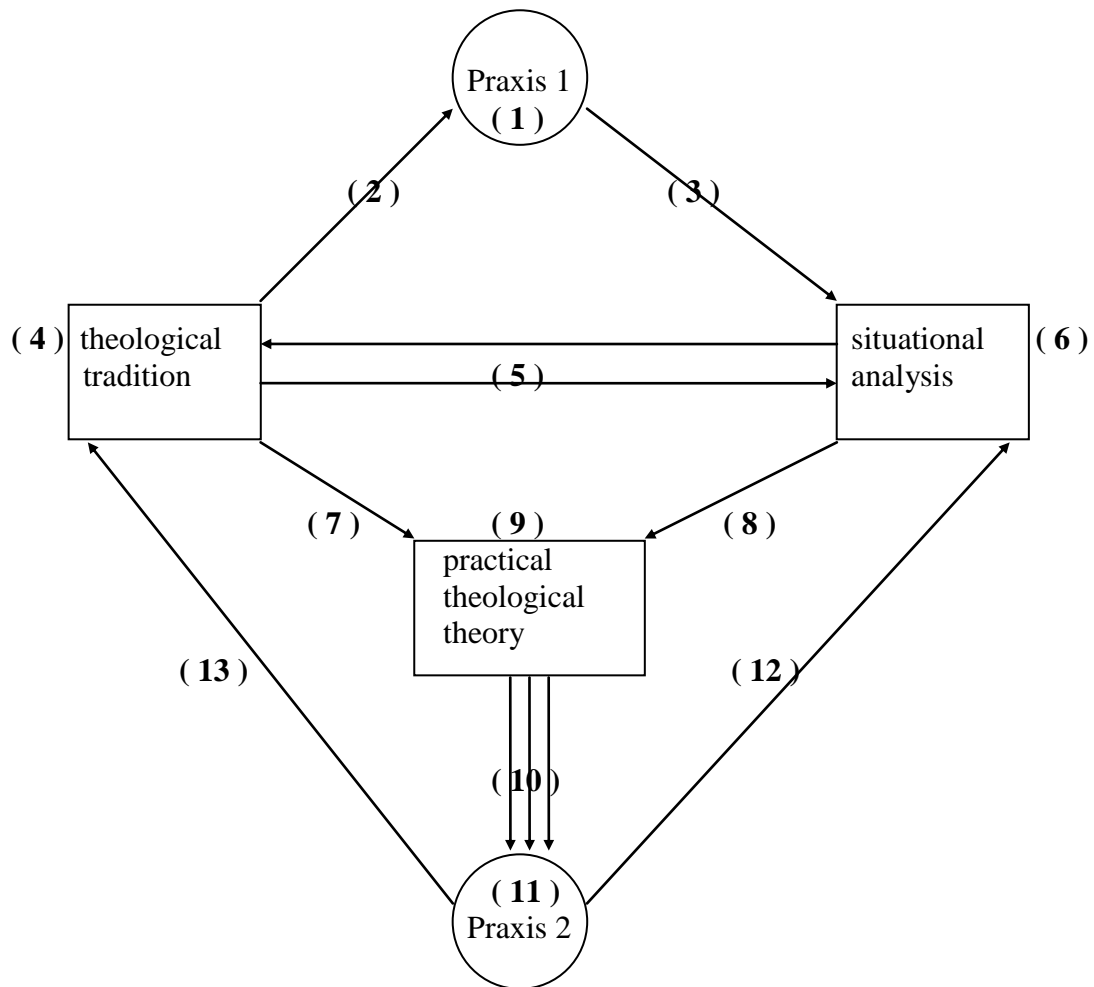
1. The explanatory model helps to clarify truth by synthesizing what we already know or believe. It is accepted if it accounts for a large number of biblical and traditional data, and accords with history and experience (Dulles 1987: 24, 25; Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 33). The exploratory model is used heuristically to lead to the discovery of new theological insights (Dulles 1987: 25; Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 33).
2. The methodological model, which depicts a method of facilitating and promoting the traffic between theory and praxis (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 35).

They are useful in that they:

1. Are realities with a sufficient correspondence with the object under study so that they provide a conceptual framework and the language with which the concepts can be described and understood (Dulles 1987: 23). In fact, like cartographic maps they simplify the seemingly important elements of structural relationships in a specific context (Zerfass 1974: 169).
2. Presuppose diversity in belief and theory (Snyder 1991: 15) helping to contrast and compare unconscious presuppositions about reality. The formulation of different church models suggests other better models may exist facilitating a self-critical awareness (Brueggemann 1994: 263).
3. Concretize and clarify theological issues and theory and are first levels of abstraction for praxis (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 33; Snyder 1991: 15).
4. Facilitate interaction (traffic) between theory and praxis (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 33).
5. Are able to hold together facts that would otherwise seem unrelated (Dulles 1987: 23).
6. Indicate the possible strengths and weaknesses of any church or kingdom structure that can be identified with that model.
7. Provide a clear framework indicating how the conclusions based on that study have been reached and thus facilitates evaluative judgment of the research concerned.

Zerfass’ (1974: 166 ff.) model interrelates theological tradition, praxis, situation analysis, practical theological theory and redefined praxis. It will be used in this study and is reproduced below:

Fig. 3: Diagram of Zerfass' Model



Explanation

- Praxis 1 = the situation as found at present, as a concrete Christian and ecclesiological action
- Arrow 2 = the influence theological tradition (4) has on praxis 1
- Arrow 3 = the investigative procedure required to arrive at an empirical, situation analysis (6)
- Arrow 5 = the influence theological tradition has on the current situation and vice-versa
- Arrows 7 } the influence that theological tradition and the current situation have on the development
of }
- & 8 } a new practical theological theory (9).
- Arrow 10 = the influence that 9 has on a new praxis (11) (Zerfass calls this "operational impetus"
(Handlungsimpulse) which perhaps may be better translated as "operational influence.")
- Arrows 12 } the testing required of the new praxis against both theological tradition and
& 13 } the current situation and the influence that the new praxis may have on both.

The core feature of the model is the triangle at its centre composed of theological tradition, situational analysis and operational influence. This triad is activated by the construction of a practical theological theory and then acts as a self-regulatory, heuristic “control” system, each element influencing the other in something that corresponds to a servomechanism. Thus praxis, the interpretation of theological tradition and situation analysis will be constantly adapting to the needs of the present situation through relating to each other.

1.7.5 The role of paradigms

Kuhn (1970: 175) calls paradigms, “concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science.” Although “paradigm” was originally a scientific term, many use it today to mean a model, theory, perception, a basic underlying assumption, world view or a frame of reference (Beckham 1995: 18, 19). Covey (1991: 67) emphasizes the shift from one paradigm to another, “The word paradigm comes from the Greek *paradigma*: a pattern or a map for understanding and explaining certain aspects of reality ... quantum leaps in performance and revolutionary advances in technology require new maps, new paradigms, new ways of thinking about the world.” Every significant breakthrough in the world of science is a break with an old way of thinking and leads to the establishment of a new one.

The human mind in its quest for explanations seeks simplicity and unity. In theology, as in science there is always a searching for a unified field theory that will explain everything. At times it has seemed possible to construct a total ecclesiology on the basis of a single ‘unified-field-theory’ super-model. Dulles (1987: 29) defines this as “paradigm.” A model rises to be a paradigm when it has proved successful in solving a great variety of problems and is expected to be an appropriate tool for unraveling unresolved problems and predicting future trends (Dulles 1987: 29).

The paradigm concept is a helpful way of conceptualizing the history of ideas that gives insight into the history of ecclesiology. It explains why certain ways of thinking or models were so powerful and influential to the exclusion of others. It helps to understand the rapid changes that have occurred when one paradigm is replaced by another. It provides an analytical tool for examining what and how past and present paradigms are affecting church praxis.

1.7.6 The role of sociological context

Because theology is reflective we understand God's revelation better as our experience widens and varies our perspective (Clowney 1987: 14). Calvin (Institutes 1: 1) writes, "Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.... these are connected by many ties, and it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other." Thus a sociological perspective is extremely important to ground theory based on revelation in a contextual and relevant world situation.

Practical theology distinguishes itself from a purely sociological theory of the church by its formal object. The material object of both exists in the church where it can be found in a historical and empirical sense. The formal object of ecclesiology is expressed in the description and explanation of the church in the light of its future from the perspective of the gospel. The vision and mission of the church lie within this perspective. Ecclesiology is concerned both about the future of the church and about the church of the future (Van der Ven 1996: x).

1.8 The research methodology of practical theology

1.8.1 Discovery of the problem

"Scientific progress happens only when problems are noticed and are soluble by means of some scientific methodology" (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 74). The "non-empirical" short term strategies that are often adopted to solve problems must give way to the more precise methods of operational science (Zerfass 1974: 168). The researcher's task is therefore to "dialogue with the subjects concerned to specify the problem in such a way that it becomes a scientific theological question ...distinguished into certain dimensions and aspects and implying a perspective on the way to deal with it" (Van der Ven 1994: 39). Therefore the goal of the research has to be clarified and stated.

1.8.2 Exposition of the theory

Observation must always be grounded in theory (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 75). Theory evolves out of the tradition and experiences of the researcher as a result of an inductive and semi-intuitive process. In the inductive process patterns, correlations and causal relationships between phenomena are constructed from a mass of details and observations. It requires that the researcher has a synoptic knowledge of the literature relevant to the subject and knowledge and understanding of the pertinent empirical literature (Van der Ven 1993: 115, 123).

A real research question can be formulated from this process of induction (Van der Ven 1994: 40). The insight gained into the problem helps to understand the nature of that problem against its theoretical and theological background so that the appropriate research design can be chosen.

1.8.3 Determining the research design

Two decisions have to be taken in determining the research design:

1. Should a qualitative or quantitative approach be adopted? (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 76-78; Van der Ven 1988: 21-23)?
2. Should an inductive or deductive study be undertaken (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 77, 78; Van der Ven 1993: 114, 115)?

Two questions determine whether a qualitative or quantitative approach is to be adopted. These two questions may be termed, 'knowing that' and 'knowing how.' A 'knowing that' question may be used if the theory is limited and the research is interested in what is in fact happening in practice. This indicates that a survey design for the research would be more applicable. A 'knowing how' question may be used if the theory is broadly based and the research object is to determine what would be the effect of any intervention in that situation. This indicates that an experimental design should be more applicable. It is not always possible to be so precise in delineating which question is more pertinent. Combinations of the two approaches may in fact be desirable for some research (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 77, 78; Van der Ven 1988: 21).

An inductive study involves drawing generalised conclusions by proceeding from the particular. Observation is directed by reflection on phenomena in the empirical reality. A deductive study involves inference from the general to the particular. In deductive studies general statements are made for which the validity is tested in individual cases. The idea being to establish whether the hypothesis is valid in all individual cases (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 77; Van der Ven 1988: 115).

1.8.4 Conceptualization

This is the foundation for all that follows. Conceptualization is normally a deductive process. At this stage the main concepts of the theory that is to be tested need to be logically and systematically worked out. Theory should consist of clearly defined concepts that cohere logically and systematically forming an integrated whole. They must be placed schematically in a conceptual framework, highlighting their interrelationship and their mutual influencing (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 75, 76). The author's convictions concerning the biblical tradition and

theological interpretation underlying the theory should be clearly stated, along with the existing ecclesiastical tradition and praxis in which the theory is grounded in both church and society.

Van der Ven (1993: 116) gives a formula whereby the deductive process may be formulated. Deduction is applied in the form of specific arguments containing two premises and a conclusion. The first premise is a general statement containing the conjecture to be tested. The second premise serves as a description of the case in hand. The conclusion represents the application of the general statement to the case in hand.

The final step in conceptualization is the construction of, or use of, a previously existing model by which the conclusions may be tested. This needs to show the concepts, variables and relationships between the concepts, variables and the research units (Van der Ven 1993: 131).

1.8.5 Operationalisation

The theological ideas obtained from conceptualization cannot be applied to empirical reality directly. A process called operationalisation makes the bridging step. This defines the hypothesis in terms of empirical concepts that are observable, measurable, scientifically acceptable and testable in the area of praxis (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 78; Van der Ven 1993: 134; 1994: 41). This involves:

1. The creation of an instrument to measure the praxis.
2. A random sampling of the population under investigation (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 79).
3. The data collection stage (Van der Ven 1994: 41).

1.8.6 Data analysis and interpretation.

This involves proceeding from the empirical system to a numeric one (Heyns and Pieterse 1990: 80). Then data analysis follows after data inspection and data cleaning, by means of descriptive statistics, like frequency tables and cross tables. The research is checked for statistical reliability and correlations by means of inferential statistics such as factor analysis, reliability analysis, association analysis, variance analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, path analysis and so on (Van der Ven 1994: 41).

1.8.7 Correlation and amended theory for praxis

The findings of empirical research into praxis are reflectively and hermeneutically related to the existing practical theological theory that has been operationalised.” In Zerfass’s (1974: 169) model this corresponds to the “follow-up” analysis, which is in effect a new situational analysis

in order to fine tune the new theoretical framework and produce a deeper understanding of tradition. This leads to the crucial interaction between theory and practice in which the theory may be modified. The goal is to produce a theory for praxis which is true to scripture and a specific communicative action for the propagation of the gospel.

Chapter 2 The means of evaluation

The following metaphors, and criteria established from them, models and paradigms will be used to question and evaluate the present ecclesiological praxis of the church in South Africa and the practical theological theory of the cell church. A brief section will be included on the theory of change as it relates to the transitioning process from a traditional to a cell church structure.

2.1 The church metaphors and paradigms employed

From among the many church metaphors in the bible there are two upon which there seems to be almost unanimous agreement as to their importance. These are the church as the ‘people of God’ and as the ‘body of Christ’. Opinions differ as to the next most important. Minear (1960) selects the church as the ‘new Creation’ and the ‘fellowship of Faith’. Watson (1978) adds the church as the building of God, the bride of God and the army of God. Whereas Heyns (1980) selects the ‘elect’, the ‘bride of Christ’, the ‘temple of the Spirit’ and the church as ‘witness.’ Bosch (1991: 372) selects “sacrament of salvation”, “assembly of God”, “kingdom of God”, “temple of the Holy Spirit”, “community of the faithful.” Küng (1968) chooses the church as the ‘creation of the Spirit,’ and Van der Ven (1996) selects the ‘Jesus movement’, the ‘building of the Spirit’ and the ‘church of the poor.’

It is necessary to select more than one metaphor because, “So long as one metaphor is isolated and made a model; men are free to tailor the church to their errors and prejudices” Clowney (1984: 105). It expands dialogue with the biblical text and thus makes the results a more objective interpretation. For this reason five major biblical metaphors have been chosen as making a significant contribution to church theory and praxis in the present era and as being particularly pertinent to this study. These are;

1. The Kingdom of God
2. The people of God
3. The body of Christ
4. The disciples of Christ
5. The building of the Holy Spirit

2.1.1 The Kingdom of God

Since the research of Albert Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss at the beginning of the twentieth century the theme of the Kingdom of God has dominated theology (de Gruchy 1986: 197). The significance of the Kingdom of God for the church and practical theology is seen in:

2.1.1.1. *Its dimensions*

Jesus preached the Kingdom as a central theme of his ministry (Ladd 1974: 57; Gaffin 1988: 368, Bosch 1991: 31; Dunn 1998: 190). It is an entity whose essence is conveyed metaphorically (Minear 1960: 119). Its time-space dimensions are pictured as eternal (Psalm 145:13) and universal (Psalm 103:19). It is a “now and not yet” realisation of the future in the present (Ladd 1974: 93). Its growth (Mark 4:26-29), comprehension (Matthew 13:11-17), and value (Matthew 13:44–46) are mysterious. “The cluster of pictures that centred in God’s Kingdom all add to the sense of the mysterious magnitude of that Kingdom...” (Minear 1960: 123). It is greater than and distinct from the church, preceding, shaping, containing and creating it (Ladd 1974: 113; Watson 1978: 1; Heyns 1981: 22; Wagner 1981: 9).

2.1.1.2 *Its desired manifestation*

Although the phrase ‘the Kingdom of God’ (‘malkuth Yahweh’ = rule of God, in Hebrew) does not occur in the Old Testament, the concept of God as King and his kingly rule over all creation is central to Israel’s faith. More particularly he is king over his covenant people (Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 41:21) (Gaffin 1988: 367; Bosch 1991: 31; Brueggemann 1997: 238 ff., 493 ff.). At the core of prophetic expectation of the Old Testament is a desire for a manifestation of this rule through the nation of Israel (Gaffin 1988: 367). The Old Testament is a history of disappointment in this regard. The Kingdom neither manifested itself as world domination through the Davidic dynasty nor through the temple priesthood. This led to the expectation that the Kingdom of God would be manifest apocalyptically (see Daniel 2:44) when God would sovereignly established his rule through Israel over the world (Bosch 1991: 31).

2.1.1.3 *Its definition*

By the time Jesus burst on to the scene proclaiming, “The time has come... the kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15), the Jewish nation was at fever pitch of desiring this political manifestation. However, Jesus redefined the meaning of the kingdom of God for his followers. He uses it in a sense that is drastically at odds with the narrow militaristic and nationalistic interpretations found in Jewish inter-testamental literature (Gaffin 1989: 367). He reveals the Kingdom as the future rule of God invading the present (Bosch 1991: 32) in a manner that establishes his power and authority in the lives of men and women regardless of specific geographical areas, such as Israel. It brings about the active realisation of Israel’s past covenantal promises because “the time has come,” (Mark 1:15) (Gaffin 1989: 368). It does this in a way that changes the present so that

Jesus can say, “The kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:21 NIV alternate reading) and anticipates the future bringing it “near.”

2.1.1.4 Its demonstration

Jesus demonstrated God’s eschatological kingdom in the now of present reality through “inexplicable” miraculous events (Watson 1978: 52, 53; Welker 1994: 263; Dunn 1998: 191). He exercised kingdom authority when he overcame the power of evil by healing the sick, driving out demons, dying on the cross and rising from the dead (Snyder 1991: 147; Welker 1994: 196). Deliverance from demonic power was an expression of the rule of God (Dunn 1992: 11) that offered irrefutable evidence of the Kingdom’s presence to all (Matthew 12: 28; Luke 11:20) (Bosch 1991: 33). Jesus delegated this authority to the disciples who also demonstrated the Kingdom through preaching the Kingdom, healing the sick and casting out demons (Matthew 10:8; Luke 10:17).

2.1.1.5 Its divisiveness

The Kingdom is coextensive with God’s light (Minear 1960: 127). It highlights the existence of an evil, opposing kingdom of darkness that is the kingdom of Satan, as a reality (Ryken, Wilhort & Longmen 1998: 480). Between the two kingdoms there can be no compromise or appeasement (Heyns 1980: 7, 8; Minear 1960: 120; Snyder 1991: 149, 150). Although Jesus overcame the kingdom of darkness, it is still active and can even seem to win some victories (Bosch 1991: 32, 33; Snyder 1991: 148). Men and women are under its power unless they have been transferred into the kingdom of God (Acts 26:18; Ephesians 2: 1-2; Colossians 1:13). This happens when they become like little children (Matthew 18:3) and are born again (John 3:3,5) (Carson 1996: 261, 262). They then become part of that community called the church which, as a sign of the Kingdom, shines into the darkness (Matthew 5:14-16) (Minear 1960: 129; Heyns 1980: 23).

2.1.1.6 Its dynamic

The Kingdom is dynamic. It “grows” (Mark 4:26-29), “leavens” (Luke 13:20) and energizes (Matthew 13:44-6). It is “coming” and the church, as it now exists on earth, will give way to a new age that will last forever (Minear 1960: 122). It will gain ultimate victory over the evil and sin in the world when all the kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdom of God (Revelations 11:15) (Snyder 1991: 148; Heitink 1999: 204). This will involve the final destruction of the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), the formation of a redeemed society

unmixed with evil (Matthew 13:36-43) and perfected fellowship with God at the messianic feast (Luke 13:28-29) (Ladd 1974: 64).

2.1.1.8 Conclusion

The kingdom of God establishes a perspective that, “comprehends all Gods’ acts, disclosing their essential significance, and at the same time indicating the ultimate purpose of all things” (Heyns 1980: 4, 5). These perspectives reveal that:

1. The Kingdom, not the church, must be the starting point for a practical theological study. Everything in practical theology should relate to the church’s mission, “in the ultimate horizon of God’s Kingdom” (Meeks 1979: 67). It enlarges its scope, since God is king over all the earth, to include the society in which the church finds itself.
2. The church’s structures and institutions are only temporary. The church is the community of those whose lives are determined by the expectation of the coming Kingdom (Moltmann 1967: 326). Therefore its structures must be flexible (Watson 1978: 62).
3. Intellect, persuasion and method are insufficient for the church to fulfil God’s kingdom purposes. It is opposed by the implacable power of darkness that blinds spiritual sight. Victory will only come as the church seizes hold of the Kingdom’s resources by aggressive faith, courage, and determination (Matthew 11: 12) (Snyder 1991:155; Eaton 1995: 24).

2.1.2 The people of God

This metaphor has its roots in the Exodus event. Moses stands before Pharaoh and says, “*Let my people go!*” (Exodus 5:1). He is not using the word “people” to refer to the 2½ million individuals in Egypt who just happen to be descendants of Jacob. He is referring to a group of people that have been chosen by God to be the unique people of God. They are different from every other people on the earth having a separate and unified quality all of their own (Minear 1960: 67, 68). God is calling his chosen people out of Egypt to make covenant with them as they gather to experience and worship Him in joyful assembly (Exodus 5:1; 7:16b; 19:5; 24:1). It clarifies their identity.

It roots the church’s God given missional purpose in the Old Testament and emphasises the constant need for change. Whilst the Jewish nation will always be special to God, and are his people according to physical ancestry, He has disinherited them spiritually. Now all those, whatever nationality, who confess Jesus as the Son of the living God are the people of God. Paul

in Romans 9:25 writes, “*I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people...*” (Ladd 1974: 537 ff.; Clowney 1987: 31). In Galatians 1: 13, where he speaks of the “church of God,” he indicates that the church, is in a direct line of continuity with the people of Israel meeting in assembly (Dunn 1993: 124,125).

Thenceforward the church in each generation receives the promise of being the people of God. In making this transition there is a shifting and broadening of the meaning of the terms that oscillate around the metaphor so that they may be applied in a more allegorical sense. It thus becomes a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. It links every Christian generation with both the New Testament church and through them with the history of the people of Israel. It relates, “... the contemporary Christian generation to that historic community whose origin stemmed from God’s covenant promises and whose pilgrimage has been sustained by God’s call” (Minear 1960: 67). Thus the history of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament becomes the history of the Church of the New Testament and the history of the contemporary church.

The metaphor emphasises missional purpose, the need for adaptability, the experienced presence of God, mobilization through the priesthood of all God’s people and community building through discovering and reinforcing identity and multilevel assembling

2.1.3 The body of Christ

This metaphor as crucial in integrating the ministries of the church, community formation (Van der Ven 1996: 231 ff.), encouraging mobilization, and the experience of God.

2.1.3.1 The metaphor in church history

Primitive Christianity had the appearance of each local congregation leading its own separate life, with its own structure and officers and each called a church. However all these communities were conscious of being parts of one universal church. Ignatius implies these parts are related to Christ as the body is to the head and which extends to the ends of the earth (Kelly 1968: 189). Augustine developed the body of Christ metaphor stressing the mystical and invisible communion that binds the members together. For Aquinas the church essentially consisted of communion with God brought into being by supernatural grace flowing from Christ as the head (Dulles 1987: 50- 51).

After a period of strong institutionalism in ecclesiology this metaphor began to reemerge particularly in the works of Bonhoeffer, then in Protestantism in general and finally impacted

Vatican II (Dulles 1987: 51). Dulles (1987: 52) describes the position of Vatican II, on the inter-relation between the body of Christ and the Institution as, "...the two are related to each other in a way comparable to the human and divine natures of Christ. The structure of the church is described as an instrument serving Christ's Spirit, who vivifies it in building up His Body."

2.1.3.2 The origin of the metaphor

Describing the church as Christ's body is unique to the apostle Paul, although it is indirectly alluded to in Mark 14:22; John 2:19-21; Hebrews 10:5,10; 13:3; 11-12; 1 Peter 2:24. It oscillates around the three terms: body, members, and head (Minear 1960: 173). Its origin is uncertain.

Barth (1956: Vol. 4:1, 662, 663) emphasises that the term $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ refers to a corpse. This is the classical Greek usage, as found in Homer (Dunn 1998: 55). It also means a living body as compared to the soul or to the individual parts. It is the medium of man's experience or suffering, the instrument of his activity (Barth 1974: 192; Clowney 1987: 51), by which the person relates to and interacts with the environment and other persons mentally, socially, spiritually and physically (Dunn 1998: 55, 57). It may be used metaphorically to apply to the church, when compounded with 'Christ', but it always carries overtones of interaction with the painful reality of human existence.

The metaphor may have originated in Rabbinic Judaism (Küng 1971: 226; Yorke 1991: 3), Gnosticism (Bultmann 1951: 182 ff.), Graeco-Roman Philosophy via Paul's adaptation of the secular fable of Menenius Agrippa in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 (Bittlinger 1967: 54; Barth 1974: 194; Yorke 1991: 3, 4; Dunn 1998: 550, 551), Paul's Christophanic encounter on the Damascus Road (Robinson 1952: 52), Paul's Eucharistic Christology based on 1 Corinthians 10:16 ff. (Küng 1971: 211-224; Barth 1974: 196; Yorke 1991: 6; Van der Ven 1996: 269; Ryken, Wilhort & Longmen 1998: 109); Paul's doctrine of vital union with Christ as expressed in Romans 7: 4 (Clowney 1987: 55) and as a new Christian interpretation of the OT concept of corporate personality and covenantal headship found in the Old Testament as implied in Romans 5:1-22 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 (Barth 1956: Vol. 4:1, 663; Minear 1960: 173 ff.; Clowney 1987: 53).

2.1.3.3 The use of the metaphor in the Pauline corpus

Ladd (1974: 545), O'Brien (1987: 105-108), Van der Ven (1996: 268) and Dunn (1998: 540, 541) argue that the metaphor is developed by the Pauline author from its first use. In 1 Corinthians and Romans it means the church primarily as the local assembly, containing all the

Christians who met in a particular city. The emphasis is on mutual relations and collaboration in community. In Colossians and Ephesians it is used with a more universal reference. Development may even be seen between Colossians and Ephesians. In Colossians the church is a local house-church (4:15), the church of a city, Laodicea (4:16), as well as the cosmic body of Christ (1:18, 24). In Ephesians, the church is seen only against the cosmic significance of God's action in Christ (Sampley 1993: 7).

The metaphor assumes that our relationship with Christ is both individual and corporate. Individuals are chosen and called by God. Yet there is no salvation apart from Christ, so there is no salvation that does not join us to one another in Christ (Clowney 1987: 57; Dunn 1998: 550, 551). Thus the metaphor describes a group of people who identified themselves by their relationship with each other. They are part of a larger whole. Belonging to Christ's body means belonging to others (Dunn 1998: 405, 407). It means being prepared to be used by Christ and serve him.

2.1.3.4 The relationship of the head in the metaphor

The Pauline corpus pictures a body with a head (κεφαλη). The origin of the κεφαλη metaphor is disputed. It may come from a physiological extension of the σωμα metaphor in 1 Corinthians and Romans to Colossians and Ephesians (Robinson 1952: 56 ff.; Küng 1971: 231; Grudem 1994: 858, 859) or independently of the σωμα metaphor from the leadership connotation of κεφαλη in the Greek world (Ridderbos 1975: 378 ff.; Gundry 1976: 228; Yorke 1991: 9 ff.). The precise meaning of κεφαλη is also disputed. One school of thought tends to focus on the "authority" aspect (Marcus Barth 1974: 192; Clowney 1987: 54; Louw and Nida 1989: 739; Yorke 1991: 89; Grudem 1994: 459 ff.; Van der Ven 1996: 270) and another on the "relational" perspective (Bedale 1954: 211- 215; Richards and Hoeldtke 1980: 21; Fee 1987: 503).

This tension between relationship and authority is balanced by Minear (1960: 219) who writes, "Christ acts as head in various ways: he exercises Lordship and authority over his body, he loves it and gives himself for it, he sanctifies it and washes it so that it may become glorious and holy. He nourishes and cherishes it...The life of the body is characterized in a correspondingly free fashion. It lives as the body by its subjection to Christ's authority, by co-operating with his desire to present it in glorious perfection, by full acceptance of this mysterious union, by men treating one another as members of his body."

2.1.4 *The Disciples of Christ*

This is recognized as a metaphor with multiple meanings and conveying many images (Minear 1960: 145; Dulles 1987: 209). In many ways it equates with Van der Ven's 'Jesus movement' code (Van der Ven 1996: 209 ff.). The discipleship narratives encapsulated in the Jesus traditions as recorded in the gospels are the prime source for the establishing, forming and maturing of the character, attitudes and motivations of a disciple (Dunn 1992: 4). They are considered to be metaphorical because when seen in their full context it requires imaginative reflection into their deeper implications in order to apply them to daily experience (Minear 1960: 145). It was not a new practice in Jesus' day having developed as a concept in both the Old Testament and Inter-Testamental periods (Nel 1990: 42). The Hebrew for disciple is 'limud', meaning a pupil or learner. The word is not frequently used in the Old Testament. Kittel (1967: 427) explains this absence as due to the particular use of the verb 'lāmmad'. It is used for the whole community's learning relationship with God and not for one individual's.

This development occurred only under the influence of Hellenistic culture some time in the era dating from Ezra (c. 450 BC) to the beginning of the Maccabean period (c. 200 BC). "In the Hellenistic culture, "discipling" was considered the only true way of teaching" (Ligon 1979: 35). From Socrates onward the word, "μαθητής" was used to describe this teaching method. Thus in Jewish culture, "The circle of 'talmidim' around a teacher becomes a fellowship under his influence, and this is controlled both outwardly and inwardly by his message and conduct" (Kittel 1967: 435). The individuals in this circle came to be called, "μαθητής." It may be defined as meaning, "A follower or a disciple of someone, in the sense of adhering to the teachings or instructions of a leader and in promoting the cause of such a leader" (Louw and Nida 1989: 470).

"The situation in Israel at the time of Christ was that of rabbinic Judaism and its concept of teacher-student (Rabbi-disciple)..." (Nel 1990: 44). In the Jewish community groups of people went by the name, 'disciples of Moses' and 'disciples of the Pharisees' or considered themselves to be the disciples of individuals such as Gamaliel (See John 9:28; Mark 2:18; Acts 22:3).

Jesus' ministry significantly enlarged the meaning of discipleship. A disciple of Jesus becomes someone who has been called by Jesus (see for instance Mark 1:16-20, Luke 5:27-28, Matthew 10:1), the initiative coming from Him through grace (Watson 1983: 20), to relate to himself and renouncing all be with him (Dulles 1987: 209; Bosch 1991: 38) and be in community with other disciples (Watson 1983: 35; Dunn 1992: 92 ff.). This involves unconditionally obeying him

(Minear 1960: 147; Watson 1983: 23), serving him and others as he directs and modelled (Mark 10:41-45) (Watson 1983: 27), proclamation and mission (Bosch 1991: 38), a simple life-style (Matthew 6:24-34), suffering with future hope (Bosch 1991: 39), modelling His life and ministry in a way that is consistent with our humanity and relevant to the context of our lives and culture (Bosch 1991: 74), and making yet more disciples (Watson 1983: 66).

The discipleship metaphor provides a vital link between pre- and post-Pentecost experience of discipleship. The gospel narratives were normally understood in the early church as archetypes or paradigm of the dilemmas and opportunities that later disciples experienced (Minear 1960: 146). After Pentecost there has to be a stretching of the discipleship metaphor so that Christians can learn from it, through the pneumatological revelation of Acts and the Epistles how to relate to the glorified Christ. It now involves prayer, submission to the Word (Watson 1983: 147), worship (Dulles 1987: 215), community (Watson 1983: 41), spiritual warfare (Watson 1983: 180-184), simple life-style (Watson 1983: 187) and evangelism (Watson 1983: 187).

2.1.5 The building of the Holy Spirit

2.1.5.3 Reason for choice of metaphor

This study follows Van der Ven (1996: 425 ff.) in using the building of the Holy Spirit as a major metaphor. There is considerable overlap between it and the ‘Body of Christ’ and the ‘people of God’ metaphors, see for instance Ephesians 2: 11- 22; 4:11-16 (O’Brien 1987: 98). It does, however, contain important emphases that pertain to this study. For instance, Van der Ven (1996: 333 ff.) uses it to motivate the continuous renewal and change of the church’s policy, programs, projects and organizational structure. It also emphasises mission, mobilization, community building, integration and the experience of God.

2.1.5.4 Biblical origins and usage of the building metaphor

The building metaphor has its roots in the Old Testament. “The root of the verb “to build” is to be found approximately 390 times in the Old Testament” (Nel 1990: 52). The Hebrew trilateral root is ‘bnh.’ According to Roberts (1997) the word has three main sets of usages. The literal usage carries the meaning of building, making, erecting, bringing about, repairing and creating. There is a semi-literal general usage that refers to the building up of a family by having descendants, as in Ruth 4:11. (Indeed the Hebrew word ‘ben’, meaning ‘son,’ is part of the ‘bnh’ word group.) Then there is the metaphorical usage. For the prophets building up and planting came to refer the building up of people and nations by God.

It came to include the idea of demolition (Clowney 1987: 67). Jeremiah is told by Yahweh (Jeremiah 1:10), “See today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.” God begins Jeremiah’s ministry of building up by uprooting, tearing down, judging and destroying human building work if it is not worthy (Möller 1990: 228). God has to clear the ground so he can create possibilities out of nothing in situations that seem hopeless (Jeremiah chapters 30–33) (Brueggemann 1988: 24, 25; 1991: 39).

In the New Testament the use of the concept *oikodomein* (to build) is very similar to its use in the Old Testament. A major distinction, however, is that whereas in the Old Testament God builds Israel, in the New Testament he builds the church. “The Messiah builds the new temple and *the new fellowship (community)*. The subject is God - He builds and supports what is built upon the Messiah, namely *a fellowship of believers. God builds a church (people) for himself, amongst whom he can live and through whom he can work*” (Nel 1990: 54) (my italics).

The link is that Jesus’ body is seen as the fleshly tabernacle or Temple (John 1:14; 2:19, 20). The image of God’s dwelling among His people becomes a reality in the incarnation. Jesus says of Himself, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19 cf. Mark 14: 58) (Clowney 1987: 26; Dunn 1998: 545). The church as Christ’s body is then seen as God’s dwelling and thus becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. This develops the image of the church as the community of the redeemed, which through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, is constituted as the dwelling place of God (O’Brien 1987: 99). No longer is God’s dwelling a literal building because believers themselves are now the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-18; 2 Corinthians 6:16) (Minear 1960: 97; Heyns 1980: 61; Fee 1996: 18, 19; MacIntyre 1997: 63; Dunn 1998: 545; Ryken, Wilhort & Longmen 1998: 850).

2.1.5.3 *The person and work of the Holy Spirit*

The Old Testament speaks of God’s Spirit as “ruach.” Ruach has several meanings other than spirit, such as “a storm wind,” “breath,” “vitality,” or “life.” It is not clear how the Spirit (ruach) of the Lord is related to God. The Spirit may be either the invisible activity of God in power or his presence in revelation and wisdom (Turner 1999: 4). In the Intertestamental period the Greek word, “pneuma” was used to translate the Hebrew “ruach” of the Old Testament in the LXX (Baumgärtel 1968: 359). The emphasis began to be placed upon the Spirit, as the Spirit of prophecy. The Spirit was believed to be experienced primarily through various types of

charismatic revelation, wisdom and invasive charismatic speech and in a secondary way with different kinds of acts of power, such as healings and raisings from the dead (Turner 1999: 20).

There is a progressive unfolding of the Holy Spirit's person and work in the New Testament. With the Pauline and Johannine corpii there emerges an implicit trinitarian doctrine of the Spirit, experienced as a person (Fee 1996: ix; Turner 1999: 174 ff.). The building (*oikodomein*) metaphor is most intimately associated with the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 2: 21-22 the church is pictured as being built up like the Temple (in fact to become "a holy temple") by the Holy Spirit (Hodge 1964: 154; Clowney 1987: 67, 68; Fee 1996: 18).

2.1.6 The modern emerging ecumenical paradigm

Küng (1989: 157) subdivides the history of Christianity into six major paradigms:

1. The Apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity
2. The Hellenistic of the Patristic period
3. The Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm
5. The Modern Enlightenment paradigm
6. The Emerging Ecumenical paradigm

In the first paradigm (P1) the dominating influence was that of the Jewish Christian Church with its apocalyptic imminent expectation. This was unobtrusively replaced by a hellenistically conceived idea of Christ as the central theme within salvation history as the centre of time, which may be called the Hellenistic model of the Patristic period (P2) as seen in the present Orthodox Church. The Medieval Roman Catholic (P3) paradigm grew out of the rejection by the Roman church of the imperial authority of Byzantium and a separation of Late Roman and Hellenistic culture. At the height of its development, it emphasized scholasticism and canon theology. It became the defining paradigm of the Roman Catholic Church until Vatican II. The Protestant paradigm (P4), based on the inerrancy and authority of scripture, emerged in the sixteenth century. The Modern Enlightenment Paradigm (P5), as typified by Schleiermacher, arose in the nineteenth century emphasizing philosophy, science and reason. Today a new Ecumenical paradigm (P6) is emerging which is post-modern, dialectical, existential, hermeneutical, incorporating liberation, feminist, black and third world theologies (Küng 1989: 21-23, 219).

Loren Mead (1991:8) postulates another classification comprising three paradigms. These are;

1. The Apostolic paradigm (30 AD to +/-313 AD)
2. The Christendom paradigm (+/- 313 AD to +/- mid-1900 AD)
3. A new Emerging paradigm

There is a correspondence between the two schemes. The Apostolic paradigm corresponds to the Apocalyptic paradigm. Mead's (1991) Christendom paradigm corresponds with K ung's (1987) second to fifth paradigms. K ung's (1989) second to fifth paradigms may be regarded as incorporated in the Christendom paradigm. Yet this resemblance can obscure the difference between the two. K ung's (1989) scheme focuses on intellectual and conceptual worldviews, whilst Mead's focuses on the operating assumptions of the church structures. He is highlighting the fact that the church is undergoing its first major structural paradigm shift for 1500 years.

“The two (structural) paradigms that prevailed from the birth of the ancient church to the present are: *the Apostolic paradigm* and *the Christendom paradigm*. The Apostolic paradigm prevailed from the time of Jesus until the year 313 AD. In 313 AD the Emperor Constantine was converted and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. This Christendom paradigm lasted until the mid-1900s. Now in the late 1900s, it is clear that the Christendom paradigm is giving way” (my brackets) Shawchuck and Heuser (1993: 223). The exact nature of this new paradigm is unclear, neither has it fully arrived (Mead 1991: 22).

Out of these paradigms the following have directly influenced the present church praxis of Protestant Churches in South Africa:

1. The Christendom paradigm (as per Mead)
2. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm (P4)
3. The Modern Enlightenment paradigm (P5)
4. The Emerging Ecumenical paradigm (P6, and as per Mead)

Of these the emerging ecumenical paradigm will be used as an evaluative criteria. This paradigm has been influenced by the same factors that have led to the emergence of post-modernity and in some cases may be seen as an attempt to dialogue with it with a missionary purpose. The main features of the emerging Ecumenical paradigm that concern this study are:

- The missionary nature of the church (Bosch 1991: 389 ff.).
- The centrality of the local congregation in ecclesiology (Moltmann 1979: 21).
- An emphasis on relational community-witnessing evangelism (Bosch 1991: 414).

- An attempt to make the gospel relevant and meaningful in society (Dulles 1987: 93).
- Ministry by the whole people of God (Bosch 1991: 467).
- The rediscovery of the church as community (Barth 1958: Vol. 4: 2, 641 ff.).
- The trinitarian experience of God (Moltmann 1992: x).
- The recognition of God's preferential option for the poor (Moltmann 1977: 129).

2.2 The interrogative criteria suggested by the evaluative metaphors and paradigms

The above evaluative metaphors and paradigms suggest the following interrogative criteria pertinent to this study that will be used to judge the effectiveness of the local congregation.

2.2.1 Adaptability

The organisation of the church changed rapidly during the period covered by the accession of Constantine to the death of Augustine. These changes included the identification of the church with the state, bureaucratisation, institutionalisation, and the development of the diocesan/parish system. The pattern of "one man, one building, and one territory" was extended throughout the whole empire. This proved to be a very effective formula for the growth of the church throughout much of the age of the Christendom paradigm (Heitink 1999: 94).

However, Augustine's day marked, "a watershed period when the Church's self-understanding moved from categories of self-examination and criticism to categories of self-congratulation and static definition, culminating in the triumphalism of the Council of Trent" (Van Engen 1991:36). As a result the Constantinian era, "...determined the shape of the church in most Christian countries down to the present day" (Moltmann 1979: 39). This "fossilisation" meant that the church became increasingly unable to adapt to function effectively within a society experiencing the momentous changes that occurred first in Europe then in other first world countries during the 20th century.

Whilst the Enlightenment brought into question the historical truth of the bible (Regele 1995: 64), this same critical attitude has freed the church to realise that its institutions and traditional congregational forms can become a stumbling block for many people (Moltmann 1977: 290). Schleiermacher set the tone for the Modern theological paradigm in which the church is always in the process of becoming. He interpreted the Protestant Reformation not as attempting to restore the primitive church because this is impossible. Instead he saw that the church of the

present is both the product of the past and the seed of the future (Bosch 1991: 422). This opened the way for the church to examine itself critically and to seek to become the church needed to communicate the Christian religion to each new age. The forms that the church's fellowship and public rituals take, the shape and nature of its ministries are far less important than its purpose.

The need for continuous development is emphasised in the people of God metaphor that portrays the church as God's pilgrim people (Bosch 1991: 373). God's people are the "Exodus Church" on a journey (Moltmann 1967: 304 ff.). In Hebrews the idea of God's people on the move is the central conception (Hebrews 3:7- 4:11; 11:39,40; 13:13 ff.) (Schweizer 1961: 113). "Stagnation is anathema" (Nel 1988: 5). God has a way he wants them to go. "There is a will for the people just as there is for the individual" (Bonhoeffer 1963: 83). The movement is into a future that is in continuity with Israel's. Thus the church finds its place in the divine plan throughout history in the light of the world's end (Nichols 1989: 56).

Because the church is a people on a pilgrimage it is not yet perfect. It must not be idealised. The church is God's sinful people (*communio peccatorum*) who often fall short. It is marked by "defect, shortage, finiteness and guilt" (Van der Ven 1996: 199). The phrase "*ecclesia semper reformanda*" is God's daily demand for greater faithfulness to Him through change (Küng 1968: 130). This sets the church free to restructure Christianity so that, "modern people feel the church to be their church, or their people of God" (Van der Ven 1996: 197). Thus, "At a time like this the church is challenged to think radically about its origins, to lay hold decisively on its charge, and to return to Christ's future from its now flawed and dying form" (Moltmann 1977: 2).

Adaptability within the church is encouraged by:

2.2.1.1 Constant re-evaluation in the light of biblical tradition

As God's pilgrim people the church needs constant re-evaluation where "excellent mistakes" are valued and honoured (Callahan 1987: 94 ff.). It is not change for change's sake. The People of God metaphor provides the church of today with a narrative that provides a component for change that connects present and future with the past thus providing a basic hermeneutic for understanding and working through the tension between "stability and change, between tradition and innovation" (Dreyer 2000: 31). This implies that any new development within the church must be tested by the scriptural and theological interpretations traditional to the ecclesiastical community amongst whom it is to be implemented (Van Engen 1991: 74; Van der Ven 1994: 151).

Nowhere, perhaps, is the need for change and adaptability that embraces both tradition and innovation more readily apparent than in the church's mission into today's world. Dulles (1987: 221) comments, "As the community of disciples, the church must carry on, *with appropriate adaptations*, the forms of mission enjoined by Jesus upon his original followers" (my italics).

2.2.1.2. A contextualisation of the gospel

The Emerging Ecumenical paradigm stresses the need for the gospel to be made relevant to the local culture and understood in the thought concepts of that culture in order to penetrate it (Bosch 1991: 452). This appears to have been one of the reasons for the secular thrust to Bonhoeffer's theology (Dulles 1987: 93) resulting in the two famous assertions about, "religionless Christianity" and "man coming of age" (Webster 1988: 108). The world was ignoring the Church while the Church assumed that it already had all the answers to the world's problems from revelation. He tried to get the Church to take seriously the secular achievements of modern man seeking to ground a positive attitude towards the world in theology and Christology (Dulles 1987: 95). A danger in this is that mission as inculturation may take contextualisation too far. In North America there is a tendency to commercialise religion arising from a failure to see the need to contextualize the message so that it speaks to the issues of the day. The gospel is edited so that only those elements that affirm culture and meet people's aspirations are emphasised (Gibbs 1993: 174).

2.2.1.3 The exposure of traditional influential paradigms and myths

"Transformation of congregational identity is impossible if the congregation remains in the isolation of the spiritual world created by its own myths" (Buchanan and Hendriks 1995: 145). The church must face up to and break out of the 'ghetto' created by its own myths to become relevant and meaningful in the post-modern era. "Our views are always only interpretations of what we consider to be divine revelation, not divine revelation itself (and these interpretations are profoundly shaped by our self-understandings)" (Bosch 1991: 182). Once we have begun to break out of our former paradigm then the local church can begin to contextualize its ministry to a particular culture, which will enhance its evangelistic effectiveness (Gibbs 1993: 152).

2.2.1.4 *Single-generation discipleship*

Jesus' call to discipleship was eschatological. Men and women were called to follow him in view of the coming kingdom (Dunn 1989: 245). This suggests that Jesus saw discipleship in terms of a single generation (Dunn 1992: 118). The next generation saw discipleship from the same temporal perspective. Paul's concept of the charismatic community began to disappear. Neither Jesus' community nor Paul's churches had structures that endured. They were constructed for and were effective in their generation and operated on a short time horizon. "Perhaps we need to revive the one generation perspective lest we bestow on our successors the sort of entrenched structures and traditions which have proved so inhibiting for the present generation" (Dunn 1981 & 1989: 252).

2.2.2. Missional purpose

The above criteria suggest that the church will become more effective in mission as it:

2.2.2.1 *Discovers the centrality of the local congregation in mission*

The Christendom paradigm, that influenced Western Christianity until the end of the 20th century, identifies the church with the state. This began with Constantine, and was then consolidated in the legislation of the Emperor's Theodosius and Justinian. It meant, "the Christian religion took over the social place of the old Roman State religion" (Moltmann 1967: 306). A citizen of the Empire was automatically a member of the church. Gone was the animosity between the government and Christianity (Shawchuck and Heuser 1993: 223, 224). "The concept of the congregation became that of the parish, a piece of territory assigned to the parish priest. The mission of the parish was no longer to witness to one's neighbours (because all of the neighbours were already members of the church)" (Shawchuck and Heuser 1993: 224).

As opposed to this, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm emphasizes mission as inherent in the nature of God and therefore of the local congregation. "Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God" (Bosch 1991: 389 ff.). This had its roots in the ideas of Schleiermacher who developed a self-consciously church theology. His account of revelation in the *Christian Faith* is thus knowledge of God mediated through the church's corporate experience of redemption rather than a body of doctrine propositionally revealed (Webster 1988: 619 ff., Küng 1996: 710).

This has been reinforced, firstly, since the 1930's, as missiologists have called for a closer relationship between the concept of 'mission' and the idea of 'church.' Secondly, sociologists of religion have recently begun to stress the strategic importance of the local congregation. Thirdly, modern ecclesiologists, since Barth and Bonhoeffer, have called for a new way of envisioning the church, suggesting a new paradigm that has far-reaching missiological implications for the local congregation (Van Engen 1991: 26).

As Barth (1962: 762-763) comments "The community of Jesus Christ is itself creative and therefore exists for the world. Hence as it exists for men and for the world, it also exists for itself... It saves and maintains its own life as it interposes and gives itself for all other human creatures" The natural implication of this is that mission is part of the ontological nature of the church and thus the local congregation. "The Church is the Church only when it exists for others" (Bonhoeffer 1953: 203).

This means that every congregational activity has either a missionary dimension or a missionary intention. The missionary dimension of a local congregation is fulfilled through the functions of *kerygma*, *koinonia* and *diakonia*. This does not, however, excuse the church from fulfilling its missionary intention. There needs to be intentional and direct involvement in society as the church engages in missionary points of concentration such as evangelism (Bosch 1991: 372 ff.; 511 ff.).

Likewise Moltmann (1979: 21) sees the congregation as the place where the future of the church will be decided. "The local congregation is the future of the church." This is because:

1. God as love can only be witnessed to and experienced in a congregation small enough for members to know each other and accept one another as they are accepted by Christ (Moltmann 1979: 40).
2. The Spirit gives the community of the congregation the authority for its mission. "The congregation is the place where the Spirit manifests itself (1 Cor. 14) in an overflowing wealth of spiritual powers (charismata)" (Moltmann 1977: 294). It will be open for the diversity of the Spirit's gifts and will experience them in direct correlation to which it is involved in mission into the world (Moltmann (1977: 294 -300).
3. Reforming congregational worship is one key to the church being renewed in mission. Bosch (1991: 385) makes the point that mission is anchored in the church's worship, to its gathering around the word and sacraments. The experience of the presence of God is the most joyful

thing in this world and this must be reflected in our worship services. Reform of worship and reform of the congregation therefore belong together (Moltmann 1978: 64 ff.).

2.2.2.2 Establishes a missionary identity

The people of God metaphor stresses the importance of His people having a missionary identity that begins with God's purpose in election. The purpose was first revealed when God chose Israel in love through Abraham to bless the nations of the world (Genesis 12:3). God's chosen people fail in this and consequently are judged by God leaving only a remnant. Jesus Christ claims this remnant for himself (Clowney 1987: 30). The status and the mission of the church are now defined in Christ. It gives the church an inheritance in the traditions of Israel and a direction consistent with it, which is to continue the mission of the suffering servant to the peoples (Van der Ven 1996: 195). Matthew uses this missionary purpose to all nations, culminating in the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28, to clarify and define the church's identity (Bosch 1991:80).

It must also define the identity of the local congregation. God has a purpose for each assembly or congregation of His people. In love he has chosen them to bless the world. It becomes the basis for the church's identity as expressed in its convictions, vision and mission. Every congregation needs to have this sense of calling from God as part of its identity and know that he has placed them where they are for a particular purpose that only they will fulfil (Callahan 1983: xvi ff.).

Jesus is pictured as Head of the cosmos in Colossians 1:18,19 and in Ephesians 1:22-23. This gives the church its missional identity. "The church is His instrument, the channel, the exalted Head employs to address himself to the world.... The deepest theological reason why the church is entitled to take the message of salvation to the world is the cosmic comprehensiveness of the Kingdom" (Heyns 1980: 57). The actualization of Christ's dominion is the preaching and spread of the gospel through the entire world (Ryken, Wilhort & Longmen 1998: 109).

This identity must be consciously appropriated. "How can it be the Body of this Head if it tries to be a house with closed doors and windows, if it tries to exist like a ghetto, if as the Body of Christ it wants to be defined by its own limits? God has purposed Him and desires Him to be the Head of all things (ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι τα παντα) not just the church as Ephesians 1:9 boldly proclaims" (Barth 1956: Vol. 4:1, 665). Those who are filled with the Spirit become members of Christ's body and pass on Christ's message. They help others know their lostness, deliverance and calling as witnesses to the power of the crucified Jesus (Welker 1994: 310).

2.2.2.3 Facilitates evangelism by disciples into the community

Jesus saw discipleship as involving “a community organized to support missionaries reaching out to others with evangelistic urgency” and “witnessing by the very quality of the community life” (Dunn 1992: 115). In the New Testament as Christians made disciples, people were brought together to form new relationships. A new force for mission was established as a people settled in community lived, worked and carried on the routine responsibilities of life (Getz 1994: 58).

A community of disciples has Jesus’ promise that he will be present with them in a special way (John 15:1-7). This is in an “anamnetic-pneumatic sense” (Van der Ven 1996: 220). Anamnetic means that the church keeps his memory alive. Anamnetic-pneumatic means that Jesus is actively present in this memory. His presence is independent of this memory. It is not created by the community but is promised as a result of it. It is a dynamic and effective presence, empowering the community for mission and causing its labours to bear fruit (Matthew 28:18-20).

Great emphasis is placed in the Epistles on corporate responsibility for evangelism. Verbal presentation was subordinated to maintaining a dynamic relationship within the church and maintaining a loving, exemplary relationship with the world. Opportunities to present the gospel verbally were to grow naturally out of the saturation of the community with love. The love that existed within the community of believers was to be so forceful that unbelievers would notice it (Getz 1994: 58). Small groups are the ideal method for facilitating such an evangelistic strategy (Watson 1983: 80).

2.2.2.4 Makes and mobilises disciples

Discipleship is central in God’s design for the local church in mission. The ‘disciples of Christ’ metaphor gives the church a kingdom vision for this age and a vision of hope for the age to come. It orients itself towards the great metaphors of eschatology: the resurrection of the body, the new city, the kingdom of God, the new heaven and the new earth (Van der Ven 1996: 221). Disciples are therefore called to radical commitment as the church is turned away from itself to the world in the light of the coming Kingdom (Nel 1988: 48, 49; Van der Ven 1996: 221).

The Greek verb “μαθητευειν”, ‘to make disciple’s is the principal verb of “the Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20) and the heart of the commissioning. It may be interpreted as

the winning of all people to the status of being true Christians. The two participles “baptizing” and “teaching” are clearly subordinate to this verb (Bosch (1991: 73). “Discipleship sums up Christ’s plan for the world... This was his (Jesus’) one master plan for the salvation of the world, brilliant in its simplicity.... His disciples were to make disciples who would make disciples ad infinitum” Watson (1983: 18, 66). Thus evangelism becomes more than seeking decisions or adding new members, it becomes a call to discipleship, with all that this entails.

Discipleship is vital because evangelism is essentially “witnessing to what God has done, is doing and will do” (Bosch 1991: 412). Therefore to be effective it must begin with a personal existential experience. “Until faith in God becomes a personal experience of God, it is not a conviction of the heart, but merely one’s intellectual assent to an idea... Our belief in God will lack power and appeal if it is not based upon personal experience. The only legitimate statements about God are those which express an existential relationship with God” (Armstrong 1979: 34). It aims for a response which is a turning from a life characterized by sin, separation from God, submission to evil and the unfulfilled potential of God’s image, to a new life characterized by the forgiveness of sins, obedience and renewed fellowship with the Triune God (Bosch 1991: 413).

Making disciples means that those who come to faith come into the church. “The evangelistic function also includes the process of preparing people for membership and assimilating them into the life of the church (Armstrong 1979: 66). Wagner (1983: 21) defines evangelism using a formula composed by Anglican Archbishops in 1918. Evangelism is, “so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that men and women shall come to put their trust in Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.”

2.2.2.5 Empowers members to use their gifts in serving the world

Leaders of growing churches concentrate upon empowering other Christians for service by using their gifts. They do not just empower lay workers to attain the church’s vision but to attain to the spiritual potential God has for them (Schwarz 1996: 22). Thus ministry will be directed not only towards service in the church, but also toward service in the world’s daily life. Its implementation will include preaching and worship, pastoral duties, and Christian community, but also socialisation, democratisation, education toward self-reliance and political life (Moltmann 1975: 11).

2.2.2.6 Emphasises relational evangelism

There seems to be an emerging consensus that for evangelism to fulfil the *missio Dei* it must concentrate upon being relational and addressing the context of people's lives. Relational evangelism may be defined as sharing the gospel with those you already have a relationship with, care about and to whom you have already demonstrated God's love (Woods 1996: 43). In the post-modern dysfunctional (relationally speaking) society, in which we live, many are looking for meaningful relationships, outside of their nuclear family groups. The modern city dweller is searching for community (Neighbour 1990: 134). Thus community and compassion will have the greatest impact on people, not crusades or aggressive 'cold-turkey' evangelism. Faith takes time to develop in a loving compassionate community.

Relational and non-confrontational evangelism will concentrate much more upon the actions of fellowship, care and service. It communicates the gospel of the Kingdom of God through the entire church congregation, in its own environment through fellowship, *diakonia* and participation in the struggle for justice (Heitink 1999: 304). Although not every Christian has an evangelistic gifting this relational, need-orientated approach has the advantage of allowing every Christian to use their gifting in evangelism (Schwarz 1996: 34, 35).

This relational approach is particularly applicable to witnessing and evangelism in a pluralistic society. We are entering an age in which Christians must learn to live in a society in which all religions are seen as equally valid. Christians must face up to the tension that is involved in living in harmony with those of other religions, whilst witnessing effectively to the uniqueness of Christ. A new attitude towards these religions is needed that demonstrates the love, affirmation and acceptance of Christ and yet does not compromise Christianity's exclusive claims.

2.2.2.7 Expects growth

Seeing the church as an organism in the body of Christ metaphor, "leads naturally to the idea that it must grow, since it is the property of every living thing" (Richards and Hoeldtke 1980: 45). Healthy bodies grow (Küng 1971: 231). The building of the Holy Spirit metaphor clarifies this growth concept. "The term growth (*αυξειν, αυξεανειν*) is one which in the New Testament is parallel to the main concept of *οικοδομη*. □□ Sometimes indeed, the two seem to cross and the idea of growth seems to confuse the sense in which the bible speaks of building. In fact, however, it clarifies it" (Barth 1958: Vol. 4: 2, 644).

It reveals that the growth and upbuilding of the local church “comprises two aspects, on the one side inner strengthening in might and knowledge, and on the other outer side winning and convincing”(Kittel 1967: 142). Inward growth, which Barth (1958: Vol. 4:2, 648) describes as “intensive” growth, is defined as the individual believer being built up, leading to “completeness (a Christ-like maturity), to a self-reliant spiritual functioning” (Nel 1990: 57). The term “self-reliant” does not imply independence from God but that the disciple accepts responsibility for his or her own spiritual growth and functioning (Ephesians 4:13). If this happens then the church will grow numerically (outward growth); the Holy Spirit adding to it people who want to serve Jesus (Acts 9:31). This is what Barth (1958: Vol. 4:2, 645) calls, “extensive growth.”

This inner and outer categorisation of growth is not always as simple. Mead (1993: 12, 13) identifies four different categories of church growth. *Numerical* growth is primarily growth in numbers. *Maturational* growth is growth in stature and maturity of each member that involves a growing faith and ability to nurture and be nurtured. *Organic* growth is the growth of a congregation as a functioning community and *incarnational* growth is growth in the ability to make the gospel real in the community, the world and society.

Extensive growth includes the addition of new members. In God’s sight the numbers of those who are found and reconciled are very important (McGavran 1980: 38). Whilst caution must be exercised, there is a degree of measurability about how effective a church is being in mission. Provided church membership figures are examined critically, making allowance for ‘transfer growth’, there is a relationship between how well congregations are doing in mission and the addition of new members by conversion. The figures become a more accurate reflection of what is happening when they taken at national level, since transfer growth is cancelled out as a factor.

2.2.2.8 Depends upon the Holy Spirit

As the one who builds the church the Holy Spirit is associated with mission. In the Old Testament this is particularly so in the book of Isaiah, notably Isaiah 11:1-5,9-10; 42:1-4,6-8; 61:1-11. In these verses the messianic bearer of the Spirit is established and recognized universally. He brings righteousness, the establishment of justice, mercy and peace and the knowledge of God that is not confined to Israel but overflows to the nations. These nations then model themselves upon and orient themselves towards Israel. They take the God of Israel as their own God (Welker 1994: 111 ff.). In the New Testament “the mission of the Spirit is the mission

of God who draws men and women to himself through Jesus Christ” (Clowney 1987: 80). In Acts it is the Spirit who calls, empowers and directs the outward thrust of the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) (Clowney 1987: 80).

2.2.3 Mobilization of all the people of God

In the Apostolic paradigm period the early church was “an oddity indeed – religious groups without priest or sacrifice” (Dunn and Mackey 1987: 123). With the development of the Christendom paradigm the pagan conception of religion of late antiquity was transferred and adapted to Christianity. The clergy became of central importance for the Empire. The priesthood came to be understood in terms of Old Testament themes (Shillebeeckx 1985: 143).

This meant that the ordinary believer was forced into the background producing two churches. So that at the end of the twelfth century Etienne de Tournai could write that there is not one people but two within the church, namely the people of the clergy and the people of the laity (Van der Ven 1996: 198). The church became identified with the ‘clergy’ as they became the prime vehicles for its work (Burrows 1981: 38). This meant that, “For almost nineteen centuries and in virtually all ecclesiastical traditions ministry has been understood almost exclusively in terms of service of ordained ministers” (Bosch 1991: 467).

In contrast the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm stresses the mobilisation of every believer for ministry. “The movement away from ministry as the monopoly of ordained men to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God, ordained as well as non-ordained, is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the church today” (Bosch 1991: 467). The whole congregation has the power and potential to be involved in mission and ministry, not merely its spiritual pastors, because every member has the necessary spiritual and charismatic gifts. These need to be consciously reclaimed if renewal is to occur (Moltmann 1977: 8 ff.; 1979: 21).

The people of God metaphor emphasises the unity of the new covenant people of God and thus the priesthood of all believers. All the people of God are now priests - in fact a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). In the New Testament the whole people of God receive the anointing Holy Spirit. The concept of priesthood is not used to refer to a special form of ministry within the church. The community as a whole is priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Every member of the people of God is the bearer of mission (Bosch 1991: 472). It is the

manifesto for bridging the gap between the clergy and the laity, since there is only *one* people of God not *two* (Moltmann 1977: 302, 303; Van der Ven 1996: 198).

The body of Christ metaphor also enjoins the total mobilisation of every member. It stresses the importance of the members correctly relating to each other and focuses attention upon the mutual service and support of members for one another (Dulles 1987: 53; Van der Ven 1996: 276). The church is pictured as a living organism, in which every part or member is involved and working (1 Corinthians 12: 12–31; Ephesians 4: 9-16) (Richards and Hoeldtke 1980: 32). The members have responsibilities not only to Christ but also to each other (O'Brien 1987: 113).

The building of the Holy Spirit metaphor reinforces this. In the Old Testament God uses instruments to do the building work associated with 'bnh'. This entails the mobilization of some of God's people to build up the temple and the nation. The building work of physical restoration, salvation, righteousness, mission and experiencing God's presence in the cultus is both the work of the Spirit and Spirit-inspired human agents. It is noteworthy that Exodus 35:21; Haggai 1:1 and Ezra 1:1,5 all make a connection between the action of man's spirit being stirred up by God and the mobilization of people who willingly want to build up the tabernacle or the temple (Welker 1994: 102 ff.).

This mobilisation is empowered by:

2.2.3.1 The gifts of the Spirit

The building of the Holy Spirit metaphor begins with Old Testament hints that God looks forward to a time when all his people will be equipped and inspired by the Spirit to be mobilized in God's building work (for instance Numbers 11:14 ff.; Isaiah 61:6; Joel 2: 28-32). In the Numbers account the Holy Spirit falling upon the elders draws attention to the fact that God has recruited them as his deputies to help Moses in leading the people. Two men who did not respond to the recruitment process began to prophesy as God's Spirit moved sovereignly in the selection of leaders and Joshua cries out, "Stop them!" (This is the response of many in the "institutionalized" church to unordained leadership.) But Moses says, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put God's Spirit on them!" (Welker 1994: 81 ff.).

This was realized in the New Testament. Every member of Christ's Body has received gifts from the Holy Spirit with which to serve others (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11) (Heyns 1980: 55, 58) by

mediating to each other, “God’s revelation and attestation” (Welker 1994: 241). The church is built by living men, “each with his own original and spontaneous life; each different from all the rest; each having his own place and nature... Each with his own freedom, with his own thoughts and speech and attitudes and acts...”(Barth 1958: Vol. 4: 2, 631). There is no passive membership in the body of Christ. Every member of the body should conceive of himself or herself as an active member (Käsemann 1964: 73; Dunn 1998: 559). The greater the mobilization of the members of the body in using their gifts the more effectively the body is able to accomplish the purposes of its head (Dunn 1998: 560).

Some churches have emphasised the communal nature of the gifts through praying for others with the accompaniment of the laying-on of hands. The rationale is not only that Jesus did this sometimes (see for instance Matthew 8:15; Mark 6:5) but that appropriately touching another person is a faith act. This enables God’s power to flow more readily into the needy person whilst demonstrating love, inter-dependence and acceptance (MacNutt 1974: 182; Wimber 1986: 196).

2.2.3.2 A commitment to discipleship

In Acts people who became followers of Jesus were immediately called disciples (Getz 1994: 48). There was no distinction between ordinary Christians and disciples. Being a church member equates with discipleship (Watson 1983: 231; Nel 1990: 41). Church membership necessarily involves a discipleship that means accepting the full demands that Jesus made. This was the reason that many of the crowds who flocked after him eventually left him (Watson 1983: 231).

This brings a tension that is reflected in Matthew’s gospel, between church and discipleship. Matthew defines “church” as where disciples live in community with one another and with Jesus, where they seek to do the Father’s will and have an eschatological expectation (Bosch 1991: 82, 83). Every church member should be a true disciple but this has never been the case. Discipleship is costly and many church members find its demands frightening and have avoided them. This has led to constant calls throughout the church’s history for renewal through following the costly road of discipleship.

The application of this metaphor to the church presents difficulties. It tends to accentuate the features that set Christians apart from the world, imply that the societal power of the church to realise justice is restricted (Dulles 1987: 224; Van der Ven 1996: 222), make excessive demands on the average Christian and be too individualistic and volunteeristic (Dulles 1987: 225). Yet this

metaphor is increasingly coming to the attention of the church as it strives to interact with the secular society and finds that its previous models are now ineffective. The very counter-culture weakness of the discipleship metaphor gives it an inner strength to motivate those are committed to influence this society. The history of the church has known many movements with the prophetic-pneumatic charisma that has revitalized it, such as that of Francis of Assisi (Van der Ven 1996: 227). “At a time when the general culture gives little support to Christian values it is particularly important for the Church to visualize itself, as it originally did, as a contrast society” Dulles (1987: 222). As Bonhoeffer (1963: 99) comments, “When Christ calls someone, he bids that person come and die.”

2.2.3.3 Members equipped by God’s gifted people

The building of the Holy Spirit metaphor reveals that God uses people that he has specially gifted to equip and mobilise the saints. To ‘build up’ means to equip God’s people for works of service. In Ephesians 4:12 *katartismos* (equipping) implies the “making capable” of the believers for their works of service. This involves bringing them to effective functioning and helping them become capable of answering their calling (Nel 1990: 54).

2.2.4 Discipleship

Christ is seeking the maturation and growth of his body. As well as the addition of new members this includes the growth of all members more fully into Christ (Ephesians 4:15), their cleaving more closely to Him and being more firmly bound to one another (Heyns 1980: 56). This growth process will be to some extent a natural and unconscious one as members are intimately linked with one another and share sustenance and strength with one another (Richards and Hoeldtke 1980: 32). At the same time it is a conscious process in which Christians are urged to build better and more Christlike communities in which human relationships will grow as they experience healing and enrichment (Dulles 1987: 62). Discipleship therefore involves:

2.2.4.1 The maturation of the whole community of faith

The discipleship metaphor directs the attention of the church towards the goal of being built up to spiritual maturity (Nel 1988: 55). As God disciplined the ‘people of God as a whole’ in the Old Testament so he disciplines ‘the new people of God’ as a whole in the New Testament church (Nel 1990: 43). The term upbuilding is first used of the Christian community not the individual (Barth 1958: Vol. 4: 2, 627). Growth is primarily corporate. The Temple grows as a structure composed of living stones (1 Peter 2:5) and as a body (Ephesians 4:11-16) (Clowney 1987: 67, 68). From

this perspective the church is still under construction (O'Brien 1987: 103). Thus the attention of the church is focused upon the job that must be completed which is the bringing of the whole congregation to maturity. Meeks (1978: 15) calls this, the "unfinished work of the congregation".

2.2.4.2 Transformation and maturation of character

"The goal of Christian nurture and discipleship is transformation" (Dettoni 1993: 29). This is called "becoming mature" in Ephesians 4:13 and involves:

- i. Experiencing spiritual birth, spiritual growth, gifts and power (Watson 1983: 96).
- ii. Growing in relationship with the Risen Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:10).
- iii. Developing this relationship with Jesus through prayer both "in secret" (Matthew 6:6) and corporately (see Acts 1:14, 4: 23- 31 etc.).
- iv. Increasingly bringing our lives into submission to the Scriptures in the context of today's world. This involves acquiring a knowledge of the Scriptures (1 Peter 2:1; Hebrews 5:11-14) that leads to a changed life-style (Getz 1994: 110 ff.).
- v. A growing ability and desire to worship God individually and corporately (Ephesians 5:19,20), community worship becoming an "inspiring experience" (Schwarz 1996: 30, 31).
- vi. A transformation of character resulting in increasing Christ-likeness.
- vii. Paul's objective was that those to whom he ministered became like Jesus as the Holy Spirit produced his character in them (Galatians 4:19; 5:22,23) (Dunn 1993: 118 ff.). This resulted in increased openness, reality in relationships, tolerance, love, availability to others and to forgive them and to accept God's forgiveness (Matthew 18: 21-22; Luke 17:3-4; Ephesians 4:14-16) (Barth 1956: Vol. 4:1, 570; Dunn 1992: 85 ff.; Fee 1994: 111 ff.).
- viii. A simplification of life-style and less attachment to money, possessions, career and power (Matthew 6:19-24) (Watson 1983: 264).
- ix. Increased effectiveness in facing the forces of darkness (Ephesians 6:10-20).
- x. An increased desire for and effectiveness in serving Jesus and others (Mark 10:35-45; Ephesians 4:11-12) (Dunn 1992: 87 ff.; Getz 1994: 115 ff.).
- xi. Making other disciples because of a commitment to and vision for world mission (Matthew 28:19,20) (Watson 1983: 66).
- xii. Increased generosity and giving of financial and material resources to the poor and to the church, in response to Christ's sacrifice, to help achieve the objectives of the Kingdom in the world – 2 Corinthians 9: 8; Galatians 2:10 (Watson 1981: 106).

2.2.4.3 Total dependence upon God

The building of the Holy Spirit metaphor stresses that it is God alone who builds. Man puts the bricks together but it is useless unless he experiences God's grace and activity. As Psalm 127:3 puts it, "He gives to his friends while they sleep" (my translation of the German text). Unless men are prepared to trust God (as when asleep) their plans even get in the way of what God wants to do (Möller 1990: 228). Both the building up of the nation of Israel and the church is something which only God can do (Ezekiel 36:36; 1 Corinthians 3:6,7). "Who is the true builder? And there can be no doubt as to the answer. In the strict and primary sense it is God Himself and God alone" (Barth 1958: Vol. 4: 2, 632).

2.2.4.4 The relational and affective component of learning

Since the third or fourth century AD truth has more often been perceived as communicated in cognitive and propositional terms under the pervasive impact of Greek philosophy on Christianity, with its ever-growing tendency to define faith and systematize doctrine (Bosch 1991: 194). This was consolidated in this period as epitomized by the councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).

The churches of the Reformation reinforced this emphasis by raising preaching to a pre-eminent position and subordinated other aspects of the church's life (Meeks 1979: 57). This had a very positive impact upon the general Christian population and made the bible and its doctrines well-known and influential in many Protestant countries. However, Protestant descriptions of the church concentrate upon the correctness of teaching and the sacraments (Bosch 1991: 248). So in effect a trend that had begun in the Hellenistic period, to view the 'faith' solely in terms of propositional truths, precepts, doctrine and dogma, was accentuated by the Reformation paradigm. Doctrine was written down in the form of propositional truths as a confession to be learnt by the average church member, sometimes leaving little room for a personal experience of salvation (Bosch 1991: 261).

Küng (1996: 618) summarizes the end process of this period in these words, "So generally speaking the theological basis of both Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy was less the message of the Bible, the gospel, Jesus Christ himself... than biblical statements taken literally, relating to quite definite doctrinal points and incorporated into a closed philosophical and theological

system in part even with the help of Aristotle and countless borrowings from Scholasticism.” The discipleship metaphor challenges this reliance upon propositional truth to instruct. The believer, by accepting the call to discipleship, accepts the role of being a constant learner “from a relationship with the living Lord himself” (Nel 1990: 47). The disciple learns to dialogue with the Spirit Person of Christ. Thus discipleship becomes the pre-eminent method Jesus uses both to upbuild individuals and congregations. If this is not recognized arid intellectualism or unsatisfying scriptural dogmatism can easily replace what is meant to be a living dynamic relationship of excitement, exploration, growth and adventure in the believer’s life.

The informal interpersonal dynamics of group life are a powerful influence for change and spiritual growth (Wuthnow 1994: 259) as they employ affective and relational learning. A small group exerts the tremendous pressure of socialization upon every member. (Socialization is the process whereby individuals learn the culture of a group or society into which they have been born or have joined (Haralambos and Holborn 1990: 4)). Jesus appears to have used these primary group dynamics to socialise his disciples (Dudley and Hilgert 1987: 24). They include: loving and caring being seen in action; influential feedback received when personal stories are told, picking up new ideas from others in the group; being shown areas they need to focus on and a desire to model themselves on others (Wuthnow 1994: 26; 221 ff.; 259 ff.).

“The “disciples” of Matthew’s own time ...are modelled on Jesus’ first disciples, just as those first disciples are modelled on Jesus himself” (Bosch 1991: 74). Jesus expected his disciples to model Him and then he expected others to be modelled on them and so on. Jesus used a show, tell, deploy and supervise method of modelling. Then after he thought the disciples had seen and learnt enough to try for themselves, he commissioned, empowered, instructed and sent them out to do the same things (Matt 10:1, 5-8) (Wimber 1986: 181). Jesus expects the church to continue this process today. When this modelling becomes a personal relationship between a more experienced and less experienced Christian it is sometimes called, “mentoring” (Clinton 1988: 130; Shawchuck and Heuser 1993: 178; Gibbs and Coffey 2001: 74).

2.2.4.5 An eschatological dimension

Building has an eschatological dimension as seen in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. The church will inevitably include wood, hay and stubble that will be burnt up on the day of judgement (Barth 1958: Vol. 4: 2, 637). Building up is not something that just concerns the present. It must avoid complete enculturation because the work is for future generations. Only Jesus knows what his

purpose is for the church. “He cannot be nailed down to any intention or procedure supposedly known to those who take part” (Barth 1958: Vol. 4:2, 631). It is something that will be judged by God when Jesus returns in the light of its conformity to the foundation - Jesus Christ.

2.2.5 Community Building

As the Christendom paradigm developed in the late Roman Empire two developments occurred that mitigated against the church being perceived as the community of faith as had been the case in the Apostolic paradigm. The first was a wholesale institutionalisation and bureaucratization (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 45; Van der Ven 1996: 89; Dunn 1998: 563). One indication of the results of this trend for the role of the clergy in the Christendom paradigm is that Gregory the Great (who was Pope from 590-604) considered “*ruling*” or *governing* the Christian community to be the principle pastoral function (Meeks 1979: 57).

The second was that the building rather than the community became the temple of God (Shillebeeckx 1985: 143; Branick 1989: 14,15; Küng 1996: 211). Dedicated meeting places soon became called *ecclesia* on the basis of ancient cultic religion (Shillebeeckx 1985: 143). This was but the first stage in the identification of “church” with sacred space and thus a building in the Christendom paradigm.

The pervasive influence of the Christendom paradigm over the centuries is suggested by the common word for ‘church’ in the Germanic, Norse and Anglo-Saxon family of languages. The words, ‘church’ in English, ‘Kirche’ in German, ‘kyrka’ in Swedish probably come via the Gothic from the Byzantine *vernacular* form *Kyriake* (or *Kurike*). *Kyriake* means “‘belonging to the Lord’, (‘kyrios’), viz ‘house or community of the Lord’” (Watson 1978: 65; Küng 1996: 78). Although the emphasis may have initially been on the social and spiritual community, the common association with a building or “house” arguably also started at this stage. Thus it appears that at an early stage the concept of the church as a physical building may have been imported into their languages and thus into their thought forms.

Barth (1956: Vol. 4: 1, 651, 652) suggests that the word “church” is a mutilated rendering of the adjective “κυριακή” or that it comes from the same root to which the Latin words *circare*, *circa*, *circum*, *circulus* belong. These indicated the circumscribed sphere in which the gathering of the community takes place or the half-circular apse with its altar and bishop’s chair on which

the congregation focused its worship. As a third guess he suggests that they may come from the word κηρυσγεια □(the office of a herald). He is not satisfied with any of these explanations!

The Reformers rediscovery of the Pauline message of justification gave them a new understanding of the church. In theory, they returned to the ecclesiology of the early church Fathers understanding the church as the community of justified and sanctified sinners. For them a church without this community is no church of Christ (Moltmann 1978: 118). Martin Luther, for instance, sought to establish the communion of saints as the basis and strength for all individual Christian life (Bonhoeffer 1963: 129). He no longer saw the church as an institution or bureaucratic apparatus of power but as a community and the universal priesthood of believers (Van Engen 1991: 105; Küng 1996: 540; Heitink 1999: 95). “This true church was a spiritual communion called by God through the gospel and gathered in a crowd (Hauffe), a convocation (Versammlung), an assembly (Sammlung), or a congregation (Gemeinde). The communion of saints gathered around the Word was the true church” (Van Engen 1991: 105).

The next generation of Reformers after Luther, such as Zwingli, Bucer and Calvin sought for a radical reformation of church life. Küng (1996: 567) writes, “Zwingli stands for that consistent type of Reformation which for Jean Calvin was then to be really reformed Christianity: not only a more or less thorough renovation but a systematic rebuilding of the church, a reform not only of doctrine but the whole of life of the church.”

Many argue this aim was never achieved, not even to the extent that the opportunities the time of offered. From an operational perspective, the new paradigm did not make as much a difference to the praxis of the church as might be expected (Snyder 1975: 48; Moltmann 1978: 119; Meeks 1978: 14; Van Engen 1991: 37; Schwarz 1999: 87). The Reformation paradigm retained many operational and organisational features of the medieval Catholic paradigm (Bosch 1991: 240; Heitink 1999: 94; Schwarz 1999: 87). Even though the leaders of the Protestant Reformation sincerely intended to break with the traditional Roman Catholic conception of the church, they did not succeed in making that break (Hart 1972:30).

The effects of the Enlightenment paradigm prevented any further advance in seeing the church as a community. As a result of faith in the power of the logical rational individual, human reason was elevated in the councils of the church (Hendriks 1998:6). This meant that:

1. Authority often rested with those theologians and leaders who could most ably defend their point of view in rational debate (Hendriks 1998: 6). The emphasis was therefore placed on knowledge rather than community.
2. The institutional church model, which flourishes in a rational environment, was reinforced.
3. Clericalism was reinforced. “Protestant pastors became the ministry in the church, princes in the pulpit, managers of the congregation and executives of the denomination, even if not Cardinals within a medieval Curia” (de Gruchy 1987: 28). Thus the church was seen as a clerical organization rather than a community.

The Enlightenment also detracted from community by reinforcing individualism. Individualism may be defined as perceiving the primary unit of community as the autonomous individual (Van der Ven 1996: 231). It is a trend that can be traced back to Augustine. He may be regarded as responsible for the individualization of salvation. The human soul is lost therefore it is the human soul that must be saved (Bosch 1991: 215). Anselm (1033 -1109) also took this approach. In answer to the question, “Why did God become human?” he replied that God became human to save souls that are hurtling to destruction. Not the reconciliation of the universe but the redemption of the soul is at the central reason for God’s plan of salvation (Bosch 1991: 216). This salvation of the individual is necessary to preserve rational existence, other than God in the Universe. “Now if it be understood that God has made nothing more valuable than rational existence capable of enjoying him; it is altogether foreign to his character to suppose he will suffer that rational existence utterly to perish” (Anselm 1968: 242).

During the Renaissance and the Reformation the individual once more came to the forefront. When Luther asked, “How do *I* get a merciful God” church and society broke out of the collective and became concerned with the individual. This led to increasing self-reflection which may be seen as culminating in the Pietist movement with the arrival of “the modern subject” (Heitink 1999: 29).

Until the Enlightenment this individualism was balanced by the corporate nature of society and thinking in general. The Enlightenment tipped the balance by teaching people to see themselves as emancipated, autonomous individuals, masters of their own lives, choosing and making decisions which authenticated personhood (Bosch 1991: 263, 267; Küng 1996: 671).

The identification of church with the building thus is still very influential today. In the minds of the majority of its members, and the public at large, the word “church,” in its local context, is mainly associated with the building where they meet to worship. The evidence for this is that;

1. The dictionary definition of ‘church.’ Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines, as its primary definition, the word “church” as, “*a building for public esp. Christian worship*”. Likewise the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1974 edition) defines it, again as its primary definition, “*Building for public Christian worship*”. This reflects common public attitudes and sentiment.
2. Even in the newer Evangelical churches that emphasize evangelism, “...many Christians in these churches have their eyes focused on the church as a meeting place. They hear and experience so frequently that the church is the place for spiritual renewal that they become building orientated” (Getz 1994: 265). In fact, for most churches the building is the focal point of church life. In the case of most local congregations the majority of the programs of the church are located in the dedicated church premises (Finnell 1995: 15).
3. This is often the perception of those who are influenced by the kingdom as institution model of church life. The church building is seen as “God’s house”, the place where God’s reign is especially experienced (Snyder 1991: 69).

The concept of the church as community re-emerged with Schleiermacher. He recognised that the individual has a life which is solely in the community, and that the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit is primarily directed towards the life of the church (Bonhoeffer 1963: 231, 232). It was further emphasised by Bonhoeffer (1963), Barth (1958) and Moltmann (1977).

Bonhoeffer’s (1963) identification of the Church with community was revolutionary and was based on the empirical data of sociological theories of his day (William Kuhns 1967: 253; Heitink 1999: 78). “Communal life is again being recognized by Christians as the grace that it is...Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ” (Bonhoeffer (1954: 10). Barth (1958: Vol. 4: 2, 641 ff.) saw that, “the upbuilding of the community is the communion of the saints (*communio sanctorum*),” and the practice of community was central to the upbuilding of the church. Moltmann’s (1977: 385) identification of the church with the local congregation at worship is no less radical. “...the ecclesia is, by definition and nature, the community that gathers together. ‘The visible coming together of visible people in a special place to do something particular’ stands at the centre of the church. Without the actual visible procedure of meeting there is no church.”

This concept of community has a biblical foundation in the people of God metaphor. Central to Israel's view of reality as God's people was the covenant concept and relatedness. This sense of relatedness means Israel saw human beings not as isolated individuals but as members of a community "of those authorized by the life-giving breath of Yahweh, and so *have humanity only in that membership*" (my italics) (Brueggemann 1997: 453). Thus, "...the individual in Israel can see his existence only in terms of membership of his tribe, and outside that circle knows no viable way of life" (Eichrodt 1967: 236). This meant that the "people" defined the person and almost totally determined an individual's self-perception (Minear 1960: 68).

The New Testament church identified itself with the people of God and its Jewish roots yet the absence of any clearly recognised name for the Christian community is indicative that they struggled to determine their identity as a group. Racial, national and religious ambiguities complicated this sense of identity precipitated by the inclusion of gentile believers. In this situation the church responded in two ways that are essential for community development. They developed a Christian 'jargon' from their experience that shaped their theology and they developed a communal life style that allowed them to be both intimate in their personal relations and institutional in organization (Dudley and Hilgert 1987: 10, 11).

Christian community is built up by:

2.2.5.1 An understanding of the church as the Body of Christ

The body of Christ metaphor gives insight into the specific nature of the church (Van der Ven 1996: 275). It derives its life, nature and mission from the person of Christ (Van Engen 1991: 54). It is an organism where each member participates in Christ, who is the head, with whom he is united in Spirit and in covenant. This is not just symbolic but a spiritual reality. Members have a "religio-ontic" status (Heyns 1980: 57). This distinguishes it from other social formations and makes it unique. "The community is not $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ □ because it is a social grouping which as such has something of the nature of an organism, ... It is $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ □ because it actually derives from Jesus Christ, because of Him it exists as his Body. The relationship to him, or rather from him is everywhere evident... He is the "Head" of this body, the centre which constitutes its unity, organizes its plurality, and guarantees both (Col. 1:18, Eph. 5:23)" (Barth 1956: Vol. 4:1, 663).

One of the implications of this metaphor is that a Christian cannot possibly be an isolated individual. “To be a Christian is to be a member of the body of Christ”(Brunner 1970: 131). Indeed as embodied beings we are social and need to enter into relationships, not as an optional extra, but as a dimension of our very existence (Dunn 1998: 78).

2.2.5.2 An individual response to the grace of God in election

It must be noted that the body of Christ metaphor also leaves room for the church to be seen as a community of persons each of whom is individually free and personally responsible for repenting and receiving the grace of God (Dulles 1987: 53). When applied to the local congregation this aspect of the metaphor stresses the importance of establishing a strong congregational corporate identity based upon its individual members confessing Jesus as God, repenting and having a personal relationship with Christ. It is as the individual responds to the grace of God in election and surrenders to the faith proclaimed by the community that a real, responsible, self-reliant personality is created (Brunner 1970: 132).

2.2.5.3 The conscious development of Christian relationships

Using Paul’s concept of the open, welcoming congregation, as reflected in Romans 15:7, Moltmann introduces the idea of the congregation as a free association of friends seeking fellowship with each other (Moltmann 1977: 314-317). Friendship is a personal relationship based on respect, affection, trust and faithfulness that arises out of freedom. Christian friendship has a vital difference from that normally experienced, in that it is an open friendship. It cannot be lived within a closed circle of the faithful and pious (Moltmann 1978: 61).

God is looking for congregations who as a result of realising His passionate love begin to experience a new kind of living together. In this congregation no one is alone with his or her problems, neither the old or young are isolated, yet one can be private when that is needed. In this congregation no one has to conceal his or her disabilities. In this congregation people can disagree with each other and still love each other (Moltmann 1978: 33).

2.2.5.4 Multi-level assembling

The regular assembling together of the people of God formed a sense of community and relatedness. “The concept of the people of God as assembly has its Old Testament roots in the gathering of Israel before the Lord at Mount Sinai” (Clowney 1987: 16,17). This was an assembly for covenant making, festival and worship. It was in this assembly meeting for worship

and not with intellectual activity that Israel worked out its peculiar identity and sustained it in the world. Corporate worship is a vital means of establishing, protecting and maintaining a common identity (Brueggemann 1997: 653). The Hebrew for the assembling of the people of God, “qahal” is directly taken over into the New Testament as “ekklesia” (see for instance Matthew 16:18). Christ expanded the metaphor by claiming he came in order to gather God’s assembly (Matthew 9:36; 12:30; 16:16) and announcing that the feast is prepared (Luke 14:17) (Clowney 1988: 140).

Paul evidently saw the new Christian assemblies as an extension of the assemblies of the Old Testament people of God and drawn directly from Israel’s self-identity (Dunn 1998: 537). They gather to celebrate and experience the presence of the Head in worship. Christ is present in the entire life of the Church. But Christ is above all present and active in the worship of the congregation where God speaks to the Church through his word and the church speaks to God by its prayers and songs of praise. God’s new people are reminded of the great deeds and promises of God, which are joyfully proclaimed aloud. Thus they are built up as a body, as the body of Christ (Küng 1968: 235).

The New Testament perception of the church and its assembling together is extremely flexible (Clowney 1987: 22), being a multi-level concept. It includes the concept of the universal church found in Colossians and Ephesians, which was probably a later development in Pauline and early Christian ecclesiology (Clowney 1987: 22; O’Brien 1987: 91, 92; Dunn 1998: 541). Then it refers to the church in a particular city, which is reflected in Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth and Jesus’ messages to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Clowney 1987: 23). At the next level it is used to refer to the local congregation meeting in Laodicea and then to house churches meeting in the house of Nympha, also in that city (Colossians 4: 15) (Clowney 1987: 23, 24).

2.2.5.5 The participation of every member according to their gifting

Effective community building as pictured in the building of the Holy Spirit metaphor, must include participation by every member using his or her gifts. It is through the charismata that the equality of church members is expressed (Van der Ven 1996: 436). They are as equally available to the laity as to the clergy. Paul saw all ministry and service on behalf of the gospel as priestly ministry in which all believers could engage. Thus the church as a community-without-a-cult was to function without any category of priestly work different in kind from the priestly ministry of all who served the gospel (Dunn 1998: 547).

The body of Christ metaphor implies that different members have different functions. These functions are called ‘spiritual gifts’ by Paul and are gifts of the Holy Spirit to the community. They are focussed on in Romans 12: 3- 8; 1 Corinthians 12 - 14 and Ephesians 4. They are so important that, commenting on 1 Corinthians 14:12, Minear (1960: 193) writes, “To discern the body of Christ in the assemblies for worship was tantamount to the discernment in all the gifts of their true function in serving the community. These gifts were understood by the apostle to cover a vast range of activities and attitudes (Minear 1960: 195; Dunn 1998: 557).

The experience of God through the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts must not be defined too narrowly or in culturally conditioned terms (Welker 1994: 15, 47). They need not be spectacular or even perceived as being supernatural (Schwarz 1999: 181). Käsemann (1960: 112) writes that a gift is not discerned by whether it appears supernatural or not but by, “... the modality of proper use.” “Proper use” in this connection is the building up of the church (1 Corinthians 14: 3 – 6, 12, 26). “This is what distinguishes charismata from heathen πνευματικά: □they are validated not by the fascination of the supernatural but by the edification of the community” (Käsemann 1960: 112).

The body of Christ metaphor reveals that it is vital that the gifts of the body must not be separated from the body’s Head- the Lord Jesus Christ. “The gift when isolated from the giver, loses the character of being a claim made by the Lord and leads to self-portrayal of the uncommitted, making churches into hotbeds of religious talent, and producing disorder which is the reality of the old world, and thus opposed to the peace of Christ” (Käsemann 1960: 119).

2.2.5.6 The work of the Holy Spirit

“The Holy Spirit is the awakening power in which Jesus Christ has formed and continually renews His body” (Barth 1956: Vol. 1, 643). It is the Holy Spirit who makes a community a Christian community and by which it must be continually renewed. There can be no body without the experience of the Holy Spirit. “The day of the founding of the church made actual remains Pentecost” (Bonhoeffer 1963: 11).

God has created human beings with the desire for community and relationship (Crabb 1987: 110) and building community as pictured in the building of the Holy Spirit metaphor is the goal of

God's life-giving spirit. (Moltmann 1992: 219, 225). The Holy Spirit is concerned with building a community where individuals are, "liberated from individualization and solitariness in order to have a place in this new fellowship" Berkouwer (1976: 77).

This is seen in the earliest biblical examples of the experience of God's Spirit found in Judges 3: 7-11; 6: 33-35; 11:14, 27, 29; 12:7 which record God's deliverances of Israel through Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah and Saul. When the Holy Spirit "comes upon" these men he uses them to deliver Israel by restoring internal order, a new sense of community, solidarity and loyalty within the nation. "Even the early experiences of God's Spirit are experiences of how a *new beginning is made toward restoring the community of God's people*" (Welker 1994: 65).

It is promised in Joel 2:28-32 that the different groups of people on whom the Spirit is poured will open God's presence to each other for each other. Through prophetic knowledge they enrich each other to form a united yet diverse community testifying to God's intense presence. In this community the Spirit energizes a process of mutual illumination, strengthening, edification, deliverance and enlivenment of individuals by each other resulting in joy and the glorifying of God in worship and praise (Welker 1994: 151, 156).

Community begins with an invitation to the individual to enter into fellowship with the Trinity through a relationship with the Holy Spirit. "Fellowship... is in the eternal essential nature of the Spirit himself. His nature is fellowship. He himself issues from his fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the fellowship into which he enters with believers corresponds to his fellowship with the Father and the Son, and is therefore a trinitarian fellowship. In the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the triune God himself is an open inviting fellowship in which the whole of creation finds room (John 17:21)" Moltmann (1992: 218, 219).

2.2.6 Organizational integration

Differentiation raises effectiveness and efficiency in a heterogeneous society (Van der Ven 1996: 413). The body of Christ metaphor portrays successful, willingly given integration of diversity in a world that experiences either dictatorial, regimented uniformity or rebellious, chaotic fragmentation. Thus the church functioning as a charismatic community, that involves unity in and through diversity, becomes a model community for wider society through the integration and interdependence, caring and sharing, respect and responsibility it demonstrates (Dunn 1975: 265; 1998: 735 ff.). In 1 Corinthians 12, "The image of the body articulated the reality of the unity in

the plurality of suffering and glory, and both unity and plurality to the service of Jesus, the work of God, the gifts of the Spirit in the new age”(Minear 1960: 192).

Yet only a strong experience and expression of corporate identity provides a secure foundation for the church to experience and allow for a diversity of giftings without it endangering unity. The body of Christ metaphor thus also stresses the need for structure and organization in the church (see for instance- 1 Corinthians 11:17-22; 14:26-33, 40.) A human body needs a skeleton and ordered arrangement of muscles and ligaments to function properly and achieve its goals. All its efforts need to be integrated through relationship contained by structure. The life of the Body must be served by an institution for it to achieve the purpose for which it exists. “For that which is thus organized is precisely the human fellowship of the friends of God, and the mystical Body is the ecclesiastical *societas* itself” (Congar 1939: 80).

Although Christ is the Head, human leadership is needed to achieve integration. As the book of Judges proclaims chaos and disorder abounded when, “everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 21:25). “As its Head Christ rules His church, not by sporadic dictates to the inner devotion of its pious members, but by employing the offices created for the purpose, and concretely through the Word and through the Spirit who operates the Word” (Heyns 1980: 58). In Ephesians 4 it appears that Paul conceived of these offices exercising authority in dynamic terms as an ongoing dialectic between charismatically gifted leaders and the community (Dunn 1975: 299).

Integration will only occur if the leadership spells out its purpose by means of strong concrete missional objectives (Callahan 1983: xxii ff.; Gibbs 1993: 242 ff.). The church must live out of a vision that comes from the senior pastor and leaders and yet incorporates the aspirations and dreams of the members. An organizational ministry vision is a must. No church will survive the twenty-first century without a single focused vision. To attempt ministry without a significant, well-articulated vision is to invite disaster (Malphurs 1994: 133).

Integration needs strong leadership, discovering the calling and purpose of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, administration and organization, communicating a shared vision and a sense of corporate identity.

2.2.7 The trinitarian experience of God

The people of God metaphor stresses the unique privilege of God dwelling among his people. This is a promised presence to be claimed by faith and also to be experienced in the cultic worship, through the prophets and in the signs and wonders that both redeem and judge Israel. His dwelling with his people is extremely important. The bible again and again states that the birth and survival of his people are due alone to his presence with them (Minear 1960: 69). Thus the nation of Israel regard it as a calamity when the Lord says to them through Moses, “Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But *I will not go with you...*” (Exodus 33:3).

At Sinai God when came to dwell with his people an immediacy of meeting occurred that evoked fear and invited communion. Israel cannot stay long with such directness and so moved to mediated modes of presence (Brueggemann 1997: 569). This was symbolized by the construction of the tabernacle, which was a “sanctuary for me” God says to Moses, where “I will dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). Solomon’s Temple had a similar reality and symbolism for the people of God now living in Canaan (2 Samuel 7:5).

In the New Testament Jesus is seen as the fleshly tabernacle (John 1:14; 2:19, 20) who by dwelling in individuals and the church makes them to become Temples of God (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16). The church, as the assembly of the saved, is thus seen as the dwelling place of God. Without the experience of and dependence upon that presence for its very survival the assembly of God’s people becomes no more than a club, mechanically going through the motions of worship and covenant renewal. The people of God will experience no salvation from the continuing presence of sin and thus lapse into nominalism. “If a man must say that he cannot find God in the reality of his own present life... then his belief in God will be a theoretical speculation or dogma; and however great the force with which he clings to this belief, it will not be true faith, for faith can only be the recognition of the activity of God in his own life” (Bultmann 1958: 113 ff.).

It is through the Holy Spirit that Christians primarily experience Christ and, through him, God the Father (Calvin Institutes III, ch. 1, 1). The experience of God is a trinitarian experience of God the Father, Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit. This trinitarian experience of God requires:

2.2.7.1 An epistemological framework that permits the experience of the supernatural

The Reformation stressed the subjective dimension of salvation, the personal and subjective experience of the Holy Spirit called the new birth and that God was no longer a matter for abstract speculation but one who is concretely gracious ‘for us’ (Küng 1996: 540). Justification by faith became a foundational doctrine (Bosch 1991: 241; Küng 1996: 534; Schwarz 1999: 83). Luther wrote in 1531 in his commentary on Galatians, “For by this only doctrine the church is built, and in this it consisteth” (Dillenberger 1961: 107). It was a doctrine that was to be a conviction and an experience. What, “had been habitually believed became a matter of urgent conviction; what had been taught as ancient and accepted doctrine was realized as vital experience...” (Niebuhr 1959: 18). Thus personal values replaced the objectivist categories of the Roman Catholic Church (Lohse 1983: 165).

Despite this renewed emphasis on experience the rationalism of Descartes combined with the empiricism of Locke (Brueggemann 1997: 8) produced a reaction against “experience” as a valid religious category in the Enlightenment paradigm. Its epistemological model was that only scientific knowledge is factual, value free and neutral (Bosch 1991: 266, Küng 1996: 671). This led to the idea that only that which can be proven by the scientific method is worthy of rational consideration and even real. The laws of cause and effect exclude miracles and unverifiable subjective experiences by definition. The next step is to believe the theory that either they cannot happen or do not happen. The subject-object scheme of the modern paradigm made it impossible to consider experiencing God objectively. “The limits of reason itself have actually made it impossible for him to reveal himself and to manifest himself in the world of experience. In the human world of experience he can never make himself known” (Moltmann 1992: 31).

Yet the church today is confronted with the great metaphors of the church in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements which all have a strong experiential component. In response the theologians who are influencing the Modern Ecumenical paradigm are coming to increasingly stress the role of experience in the church. Moreover although it is very difficult to define the word, “experience”, most Christian theologians throughout the ages have included it along with scripture and reason as one of the authoritative bases for religion (Cox 1995: 314).

Moltmann (1992: 31-38) has attempted to make experiencing God once more become academically and intellectually respectable in Christian circles by developing a new theological-epistemological concept of the “immanent-transcendence” of God. This aims to explain how he may be experienced objectively by Christians and Christian communities. Schweizer (1980: 130) comments that a community with no room for experiencing God through the manifestations of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues or healings is not experiencing the Spirit or his guidance. Schwarz & Schwarz (1984: 159) go so far as to say that without the gifts of the Spirit church development (Gemeindeaufbau) will just lead to degeneration.

In the New Testament there is an unexpectedness, newness and freshness about the experiences of the first Christians that tends to authenticate them. The fact that they struggle to verbalize the experiences in traditional categories and can only use metaphors points to a powerful reality behind them. It must be remembered that the very term “ruach” (Spirit) in Hebrew is an experiential term denoting that invisible, numinous, mysterious, awe-inspiring force which is the breath of God (Dunn 1998: 428, 429).

The witness of the New Testament is that the Holy Spirit is not just to be received unconsciously through the sacraments or cognitive illumination as the scriptures are read. For the first Christians it was the experienced Spirit that made the greatest impact on their lives rather than their baptism in water (Dunn 1998: 453). “Through the Paraclete, Jesus and Jesus’ word are made present in *many* experiential contexts in an authentic and concentrated manner (see John 14:16). In this way Jesus’ powerful “heavenly” manner of existence can be present in an earthly way” (Welker 1994: 222, 223).

Thus Moltmann (1992: 2) writes of, “The Spirit which people experience personally in their own decision of faith, in believer’s baptism, in the inner experience of faith in which they ‘feel their hearts strangely warmed’ (as John Wesley put it), and in their own charismatic endowment....” This is the witness of the bible, the experience of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and what many in the new emerging paradigm are searching for.

2.2.7.2 A structure that facilitates it at every level of meeting

Although the experience of God through the Holy Spirit is not structure dependant, some structures do seem to facilitate this experience. “God is encountered not merely individually, in the encounter of the individual, solitary soul with itself. He is experienced socially too, in the

encounter with others” (Moltmann 1992: 220). Multi-level assembling facilitates the trinitarian experience of God at all three levels recognised by Gibbs (1981: 276 ff.). The informality and intimacy of a small group may allow a completely different aspect of God to be experienced than in the larger congregational and the even larger celebratory meetings that must be much more controlled and organised (Snyder 1975: 94 ff.).

2.2.7.3 The experience of God the Father

The people of God metaphor links the experience of God in the Old Testament with that in the New where it embraces the Hebrew idea of a personal relationship and is characterised by detecting, feeling and learning (Dunn 1998: 46,47). Paul’s experience of God was characterised, at an individual level, by a sense of His grace and power transforming and sustaining his daily living (1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9). The same sense of familiar relationship with God is evident in Paul’s constant prayer dialogue with Him. He speaks of this relationship in terms of personal intimacy, giving thanks to *my* God (Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4, Philippians 1:3; Philemon 4), referring to God as “our Father” and as “Abba” (Romans 1:7, 8: 15) (Dunn 1998: 48, 49). He expected every believer to desire and cultivate this (Philippians 3:15-17).

2.2.7.4 The experience of the Risen Christ

The body of Christ metaphor expresses the idea that Christians are joined to Christ and are in vital union with him (Ephesians 4: 12-16, Colossians 2:6,7). This is more than just a forensic relation. Christ is in them by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8: 10,11). His resurrection power is a living power transforming their existence. It is an experienced indwelling (Clowney 1987: 51 ff.). It is mystical far surpassing any human relationship yet at the same time it is personal. It takes place both in the gathered community and in the heart of the individual believer (1 Corinthians 3: 16; 6:19) (Fee 1996: 15, 20 ff.; Van der Ven 1996: 429; Dunn 1998: 545).

The essential core of Christian experience is therefore a relationship with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples of Christ metaphor provides a picture, which gives an indication of how the Risen Christ may be experienced this side of the resurrection and ascension in the lives of those who have never seen him. The notion of discipleship underwent a shift after the ascension of Jesus because he is no longer incarnate in our time-space dimension. Once he ceased to be visibly present in his human nature, discipleship in the pre-Easter sense became impossible (Dulles 1987: 210). But it was able to continue, in a much more advantageous manner for the individual disciple by the mediation of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7).

After Pentecost Christians related to Jesus as a Spirit-person through the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 16:14, 14:23). “The Paraclete assumes the place of the “fleshly,” physical-finite presence of Jesus in the world” (Welker 1994: 222). He translates how Jesus related to the disciples in the gospels in the first century into our every day discipleship experience at the end of the twentieth (Christenson 1971: 141 ff.). The presence of Jesus was universalized and he could be followed by any number of people without them having to go to Galilee or Jerusalem. As a result the concept of discipleship was extended to all Christians. In many New Testament texts, therefore, the term disciples is a virtual synonym for believers (Dulles 1987: 210, 211).

2.2.7.5 The experience of the Holy Spirit

The body of Christ metaphor emphasises that the Christian life begins with an experience of the Spirit when the gospel is positively responded to which is called conversion (Bosch 1991: 125 ff., 488). (Conversion is called by many names in the bible that are reflected in contemporary evangelical theology. Armstrong (1979: 102 ff.), describes it as “coming into a personal relationship with Jesus,” “believing in Jesus” or “being saved.”) It was recognized within the Pauline mission that reception of the Spirit was the decisive and determinative factor in the crucial transition of conversion.

The first generations of Jewish and Gentile Christians saw the gift of the Spirit as a gift of Jesus the Messiah and as a sign of the eschatological happening in reality (Van der Ven 1996: 426, 427). This presence of the Spirit was an *experienced* reality. “For Paul the Spirit as an experienced and living reality was the absolutely crucial matter for Christian life from beginning to end” (Fee 1994: xxi). He repeatedly refers to the reception of the Spirit as a vivid experience at the beginning of Christian commitment (Dunn 1998: 452). It was recognized that the presence of the Holy Spirit was the most distinct and defining characteristic of a life reclaimed by God (Dunn 1998: 425).

The gifts of the Spirit were a crucial secondary evidence, after the primary evidence of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23), to the presence of the Spirit within both the individual and the congregation. Membership of this body therefore means charismatic membership. “Charismatics” may be defined as, “believers through whom the Spirit of grace may manifest himself in diverse ways at any time” (Dunn 1975: 263). To be Christian is to be charismatic; one cannot be a member of the body without sharing the charismatic Spirit as indicated by 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11, 27-30 (Dunn 1975: 263, 264).

The various gifts and experiences of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament are described as:

1. Ecstatic and miraculous phenomena (Acts 2:4, 8:18-19,19:6; 1 Corinthians 1:5,7; Galatians 3:5; Romans 15:9) (Dunn 1998: 430, 431).
2. Emotional experiences (Romans 5:5; 8:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:6) (Dunn 1998: 431).
3. Deep conviction (1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 2:4) (Dunn 1998: 431).
4. Intellectual illumination (2 Corinthians 3:12-16) (Dunn 1998: 431, 432).
5. Moral transformation (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) (Welker 1994: 220; Dunn 1998: 432).

The spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit were active in the early Christian communities especially in the liturgical gatherings (Van der Ven 1996: 430). They can be considered to be a part of the force field of the Spirit of God. He is able to enact a “multitude of experiences of help in concrete powerlessness, experiences of deliverance from entrapment with no escape point... so that lives are changed in an unimaginable way” (Welker 1994: 215, 217, 248).

These experiences often involve “unpredictable, unforeseeable, emergent processes, breaks in life processes and in routines,” as evidenced in the book of Judges (Welker 1994: 99). They challenge the smooth flow of institutional development and progression towards its self-conceived or traditional goals. The Spirit breaks in and forces both leadership and people to reconsider and redirect along new and innovative paths (Van der Ven 1996: 436-439). It forces the leadership to examine and see what the Spirit is doing rather than setting rational goals and then asking the Spirit to bless them.

No true work of God in building up the church can be done without the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet in many congregations His work is neither emphasised nor consciously experienced in a way that is interpreted as being done by Him. This sometimes means that He is not consciously experienced at all. It thus becomes essential for the church to maintain an awareness of the presence of the Spirit and to experience that presence, because it is the Holy Spirit who builds (Van der Ven 1996: 435). The church needs to be constantly aware of its dependence upon the Holy Spirit and his outward looking purposes (Nel: 1990: 57, 58; Van der Ven 1996: 435). What we need is the reality of God and his presence here and now (Schweizer 1980: 8). It is therefore vital, although embarrassing, to ask and answer the question, “When did you last feel the workings of the Holy Spirit?” (Moltmann 1992: x).

2.2.8 A recognition of God's preferential option for the poor

In the modern paradigm, salvation was seen as either coming into a personal vertical relationship with Christ that brought the blessing of eternal life or as a horizontal relationship with others that would change the world. Yet the Christian missionary movement has been motivated throughout its history, by the desire to bring salvation to all (Bosch 1991: 393).

In this light, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm seeks to amalgamate the two emphases in a much more holistic and comprehensive framework. In a world in which people are dependent upon each other and everyone exists within a web of inter-personal relationships it is totally untenable to limit salvation to the individual and his or her personal relationship with God. Hatred, injustice, oppression, war, and other forms of violence are manifestations of evil. Salvation therefore also involves concern for humanness, for the conquering of famine, illness, and meaninglessness (Bosch 1991: 397). This is a Kingdom centred activity that expresses the unselfishness of God, since church growth research has shown that involvement in meeting the needs of the poor does not influence growth rates (Wagner 1981: 37).

God's preferential option for the poor is deeply rooted in the Old Testament testimony of Israel. It is so basic that it belongs to the inalienable core testimony as to the character of Yahweh (Brueggemann 1997: 144). Jesus preached the gospel to the poor and called captives into the liberty of the coming kingdom (Moltmann 1977: 78, 79). Liberation theology draws attention to the fact that the poor are the first, though not the only ones, on which God's attention focuses. Therefore the church has no choice but to demonstrate solidarity with the poor (Bosch 1991: 436). "If the church appeals to the crucified and risen Christ, must it not represent this double brotherhood of Christ in itself, and be present with word and Spirit, sacrament, fellowship and all creative powers among the poor, the hungry and the captives" (Moltmann 1977: 129). Indeed it is both the church of the poor and for the poor (Bosch 1991: 436; Pieterse 2001: 95 ff.).

Who are the poor? The word $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\varsigma$ was used in classical Greek for the abjectly destitute without resources. In the Septuagint the word was extended to include those who were suffering

sheer insecurity (Psalm 34:10; 37:14; 86:1, 14). With the exile it came to apply to all that were despised and oppressed by the world (Dudley and Hilgert 1987: 15). Matthew and Luke's definition of *πτωχος* is derived from the Septuagint but is broader. Jesus equates the poor with those that are marginalized by the Jewish establishment. The poor are the blind, the lepers, the hungry, those who weep, the sinners, the tax-collectors, those possessed by demons, the persecuted, the captives, those who are weary and heavy laden, the rabble, the little ones, the lost sheep of the house of Israel and prostitutes (Bosch 1991: 27). They are the oppressed, abused, exploited and impoverished economically, materially, physically, socially, morally, religiously and spiritually (Moltmann 1977: 79). They are those who were the victims of society (Bosch 1991: 436).

2.3 The church and kingdom models employed

2.3.1 Influential kingdom models

As the Kingdom is primary and inclusive of the church it seems logical to start with kingdom models and then move on to church models. In the 1930s Richard Niebuhr (1937) used the metaphor to show how various models of the Kingdom of God had dominated the theological understanding of North American Protestantism (de Gruchy 1986: 196, 197). Snyder (1991: 18) has expanded this concept and has discerned, in fact, no less than eight Kingdom models that have impacted present church praxis. Of these five have particular relevance to this study since they have been influential in determining present church praxis. These are:

1. The Kingdom as future hope
2. The Kingdom as inner spiritual experience
3. The Kingdom as mystical communion
4. The Kingdom as institutional church
5. The Kingdom as countersystem

2.3.1.1 The Kingdom as future hope

This model (Snyder 1991: 25) emphasises the coming age metaphor of the Kingdom as found in the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:10). It stresses the hope of a "new heaven and a new earth" (Snyder 1991: 25), the final judgement and the Second Coming (Snyder 1991: 26). The God who reigns eternally over the entire cosmos will inaugurate the Kingdom, leaving little scope for a public, socially oriented role for Christians in extending it. The sole beneficiaries being the true Christians who will inherit it (Snyder 1991: 27).

The positive assets of this model are that:

1. It has considerable biblical foundation (see - Matthew 24:44; John 14:23; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:10; 1 John 3:2; many references in Revelation, which ends with Jesus' promise in 22:20).
2. It strongly maintains the future accent that is an indispensable part of the gospel.
3. It has provided a hope in times of persecution (for instance see 1 Peter 1:3-9).

The weaknesses of the model are:

1. It tends to be pessimistic concerning the present order and may produce an unbiblical passivity towards society (Snyder 1991: 38).
2. It tends to neglect organic metaphors of the church, such as the church as a body, and thus is lacking in its ecclesiology and thus its praxis (Snyder 1991: 38).
3. The signs of the kingdom are interpreted in too narrow a sense, being confined to supernatural events and miracles or else those political, economic and natural events that foreshadow the parousia (Snyder 1998: 38).
4. It tends to neglect the Holy Spirit's work in culture, science or technology (Snyder 1998: 38).

2.3.1.2 The Kingdom as inner spiritual experience

The Kingdom is viewed as a reality to be experienced in the heart of the individual believer. God's sovereign grace works in the hearts of men and women awakening conscience and creating new life in the soul (de Gruchy 1986: 196). Thus for Martin Luther justification by faith was not mere doctrine it was a profound life-changing experience (Bainton 1955: 49, 50). It has been the dominant, though seldom exclusive, model of the Kingdom in Protestantism (Snyder (1991: 46). Wesley was very much influenced by this model, although he rejected it as his primary model of understanding salvation (Snyder 1991: 50). It has continued to exert an extremely strong influence in much Christian popular piety.

Its strengths are:

1. It gives intimate personal meaning to the Kingdom (Snyder 1991: 52).
2. It can claim considerable biblical support from those passages of scripture that speak of the indwelling of Christ (e.g. John 15), the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5) and an inward communion with God (John 14-16).
3. It accents the spiritual nature of God's kingdom (Snyder 1991: 53).

Its weaknesses are:

1. It undervalues the believer's present life on this earth (Snyder 1991: 54).
2. It is very individualistic (Snyder 1991: 54, 55).
3. In most forms this model is overly otherworldly and escapist (Snyder 1991: 55).

2.3.1.3 The Kingdom as mystical communion

This may be understood as the Kingdom as inner spiritual experience but in a less individualistic more social sense. It is closely associated with the idea of the communion of saints as a communion between the church on earth and that in heaven. It equates with Dulles' (1987: 47-62) model of the church as mystical communion as both models emphasize community.

The concept of the church as mystical communion has its roots in the metaphors of the church as the body of Christ and the people of God (Dulles 1987: 50). But it has also been influenced by the sociological 'metaphor' of *Gemeinschaft*, which is an informal or interpersonal community. This was developed by Cooley into the idea of society being built up of "primary groups" (Dudley and Hilgert 1987: 32, Dulles 1987: 47). The chief characteristics of a primary group being; face-to-face association, unspecialised character of association, relative permanence, the small number of persons involved and the relative intimacy among the participants (Cooley 1933: 55-56). They become an important source of the individual's personal identity and provide emotional support, standards of personal behaviour and significant others to emulate (Wuthnow 1994: 168, 169).

It has drawn support from among such theologians as Brunner (1952: 17) and Bonhoeffer (1963) who developed the notion of the church as an interpersonal community (Dulles 1987: 480). This model of the church may be defined as, "a communion of men, primarily interior but also expressed by external bonds of creed, worship, and ecclesiastical fellowship" (Dulles 1987: 55).

The positive assets of this model are its:

1. Ecclesiology which has a good basis in biblical metaphor and the biblical concept of community (Dulles 1987: 58). It is undergirded by the four major church metaphors.
2. Profound sense of the social aspects of the Kingdom (Snyder 1991: 66).
3. Strong experiential element. One can participate now in the heavenly Kingdom, tasting the powers of this present age (Hebrews 6:5) (Snyder 1991: 66). It accents the personal

relationship between the individual Christian and the congregation in relation to the Holy Spirit and thus allows room for the charismatic dimension (Dulles 1987: 59).

4. Appeal in our day because it is an interpersonal model. These models "...meet a human need.... people find meaning in their lives not in terms of... institutions but in terms of the informal, the personal, the communal" (Dulles 1987: 59).

The weaknesses are that:

1. It can be seen as an over-spiritualization of biblical truth which tends to exalt or divinize the church (Dulles 1987: 60; Snyder 1991: 65).
2. It often shows little concern for positive social change (Snyder 1991: 65).
3. The institutional structure of church organization can appear superfluous (Dulles 1987: 60).

2.3.1.4 The Kingdom as institutional church

From Augustine to the Reformers, the prevalent view was that the Kingdom of God was coterminous with the church (Ladd 1974: 58; Bosch 1991: 32). This model tends to have become the model, by default, for most churches. It came to be the dominating model in the Roman Catholic Church from the late Roman period circa 500 AD (Snyder 1991: 71; Van der Ven 1996: 89) until the Reformation, and in the case of the Roman Catholic Church until Vatican II.

It equates with Dulles' (1987: 34-46) model of the church as institution because its characteristic feature is that it identifies the Kingdom of God with the church as a visible institution. Therefore it is appropriate to consider both Dulles' model and Snyder's in conjunction. It also equates with Van der Ven's (1996: 89, 90) perception of the church as bureaucracy.

The institutional church model is not the same as having the institutional element present in a church structure (Dulles 1987: 34, 35). The church of Christ could not perform its mission without some stable institutional and organisational features. In the institutional church model, however, the institutional element is treated as primary. In this deformation of the true nature of the church, the church is defined primarily in terms of its visible structures especially the rights and powers of its officers (Dulles 1987: 34). The church is seen as an 'hierarchical' organization. It is not conceived as a democratic or representative society but one in which the fullness of power is concentrated in the hands of a ruling class that perpetuates itself by adoption (Dulles 1987: 38). The members of the church are those who profess the approved doctrines,

communicate in the legitimate sacraments and who subject themselves to the duly appointed pastors.

These basic premises have given rise to the following features:

1. A greater amount of attention paid to functions fulfilled by people than to people themselves (Getz 1984: 252; Van der Ven 1996: 89).
2. A hierarchical distribution of functions (Getz 1984: 252; Van der Ven 1996: 89).
3. A multiplication of rules for fulfilling functions and the impersonal, official character of their execution (Getz 1984: 252; Van der Ven 1996: 89).
4. A strong emphasis on sacred space, such as the church building and on what happens there, worship and sacrament (Snyder 1991: 67-70).
5. The success of the church is often judged by its prosperity and evangelistic achievements (Snyder 1991: 67-70).

The churches produced by the Reformation soon degenerated into the institutional model and in fact, “The Protestant church at large is institutionalized” (Getz 1984: 255). This is due to the fact that Christians in every tradition tend to move towards this view through the gradual force of traditionalism and institutionalism and through their own success within a given cultural context. This view is held in many denominations, infecting not only “mainline” churches but also distinctly Evangelical and Pentecostal groups (Snyder 1991: 71-76).

The assets of this model are:

1. Its emphasis on continuity it provides a sense of stability for church members in a rapidly changing world (Dulles 1987: 42; Snyder 1991: 75).
2. Its institutional strength and resultant clear goals give a strong sense of corporate identity (Dulles 1987: 42, 43).
3. Its clear goals mean that it can plan for and implement mission effectively (Snyder 1991: 75).

Its weaknesses are:

1. Perhaps, most importantly, it might be considered opposed to the real nature of the church - tending to minimise the religious aspects of the organization (Van der Ven 1996: 90).
2. It has a meagre basis in Scripture and in early church tradition (Dulles 1987: 43).
3. It tends to produce an oppressive hierarchical system that ignores the biblical organic charismatic metaphors of the church (Getz: 1994: 252; Snyder 1991: 74).

4. It produces a clericalism that tends to reduce the laity to passivity (Dulles 1987: 43).
5. It tends to induce triumphalism and lack of self-criticism (Dulles 1987: 39; Snyder 1991: 74).
6. It emphasises juridicism and ecclesiastical obligations (Dulles 1987: 43).
7. It is out of phase with the demands of the times. While people are willing to dedicate themselves to a cause or a movement, they do not wish to bind themselves totally to an institution. Institutions are seen as self-serving and repressive and as needing to be kept under strong vigilance (Dulles 1987: 44, 45).

2.3.1.5 The Kingdom as counter system

This sees the church as a way of conceiving of society that is counter to its dominant form (Snyder 1991: 77). It appeals to those who have rejected the institutionalism of existing church structures and have deconstructionist tendencies. It rejects all compromise with current social norms if they are seen as unbiblical, producing a “movement” mentality. Movements live out the definitions of a differing internal reality from that prevailing in the cultural context. They have the goal of being “the church” for their adherents and, very often, of converting as many as possible to their viewpoint (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 94, 95).

A congregation influenced by this model will have strong prophetic, discipling, missionary, spiritual warfare and ministry to the poor emphases. It shares many features with the discipleship metaphor and thus reflects the strengths and weaknesses of that metaphor when applied to church life. This model has been criticised for rejecting the issues of culture and politics as a valid sphere for influence (Snyder 1991: 82, 83). It may also overlook the importance of structure in an organization failing to appreciate the strengths of the organised church (Snyder 1991: 83).

Its strengths more than compensate for these weaknesses:

1. Jesus’ life and call to discipleship are the basis of this model (Snyder 1991: 83).
2. It encourages prophetic vision and an attitude that sees Christian action within the horizon of the Kingdom of God inspiring active, costly discipleship (Snyder 1991: 83).
3. It has a strong sense of the church as a social community visibly embodying the reality of the kingdom (Snyder 1991: 83, 84).
4. It provides the impulse for the congregation to be a faithful witness (Snyder 1991: 84).
5. The tension between the community and society engendered by this model produces a remarkably high energy. This was a feature of the early church. “This tension between

church and society is so significant that we can trace the growth and strength of the church by its opposition to the surrounding culture” (Dudley and Hilgert’s 1987: 38).

6. The congregation is judged by its achievements in the light of its objectives rather than from how “my” needs are being met (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 94,95).

2.3.2 Influential church models

In the same way that Snyder (1991) has constructed models of the kingdom so Dulles (1987) constructed models of the church. He identifies five main models that have influenced Christian’s perceptions of and consequent behaviour concerning the church. It is not always easy to distinguish the difference between the two approaches. There is much overlap. This is inevitably so because the church is a sign of the Kingdom. Dulles (1987) presents three models that are particularly applicable to this study. The models of the church as mystical communion and as institution have already been covered in conjunction with Snyder’s (1991) models. The other model (applicable to this study) that he presents is:

2.3.2.1 The Church as herald

This views the church as gathered and formed by the word of God. The mission of the church is to proclaim that which it has heard, believed, and been commissioned to proclaim. It emphasises faith and proclamation over interpersonal relationships and mystical communion (Dulles 1987: 76). This type of ecclesiology is radically centred upon Jesus and on the bible as the primary witness to him producing the church as a kerygmatic community (Dulles 1987: 76, 77).

It is difficult to see which kingdom model of Snyder’s this corresponds to. This is not surprising since, because the emphasis is on the proclamation of the word, it is less on what is being proclaimed. Thus congregations who variously perceive the kingdom as future hope, inner spiritual experience, or institutional church can all have this as their primary model of church life, since all these tend to neglect inter-personal relationships in their models of kingdom life.

The strengths of this model are:

1. It has a biblical foundation in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament (Dulles 1987: 84).
2. It gives a clear sense of mission and identity to the church (Dulles 1987: 84).
3. It is conducive to a spirituality that focuses on God’s sovereignty (Dulles 1987: 84).

Its major weakness is that it focuses too much on witness and not enough on action and the structures required to cause that action to happen (Dulles 1987: 87).

2.4 The transformation process involved in implementation

Many churches were not founded as cell churches. They therefore have to go through a transition process in order to incorporate its values, ecclesiology and structure. Transition has to happen before they arrive at ‘praxis 2’, which is designated by the number 11, in Zerfass’ model (not to be confused with Heitink’s praxis 2) (Heitink 1999:9). Obviously how this transition is handled will effect the ultimate success of the implementation of the model and thus must be factored into any research into the viability and effectiveness of the model.

2.4.1 The sociological dynamics of change

The four dynamics of “memory, change, conflict and hope” affect the present moment in the life and work of a local church (Callahan 1987: 107). To these must be added the attitudes of those in the congregation to change, the minister’s character, godliness and behavioural identity and the process adopted to implement change (Malphurs 1993: 43 ff., 127 ff.).

- ***The role played by memory***

Memory is defined as recollection of those past events that contribute to the congregation’s present understandings and hopes (Callahan 1987: 108). If many of these hope-fulfilled events concern values that are contrary to those of a cell church then they will act as a brake on the transition process and may even make it an unfeasible proposition. Human beings are very reluctant to lose a world that was in equilibrium and which is passing away (Ricoeur 1975: 114-124). Most human beings do not function well in such times and struggle against such situations with all the energy they possess (Brueggemann 1995: 8 ff.). The religious factor seems to magnify the losses in the eyes of those that grieve and lead to seemingly irrational overwhelming anger, depression and stubbornness (Mead 1994: 108, 109). Because most congregations are rooted in the Christendom paradigm the transition process will have to take a considerable period of time if it is to be successful, probably at least four or five years (Neighbour 1990: 405 ff., 413; Beckham 1995: 225 ff.; Warren 1995: 179, 180; Virgo 2001: 254).

- ***The role played by change***

A compelling force that may help the transition process is the pain caused to the congregation by external changes. These may be “economic, social, political, vocational, recreational, religious, demographic and geographic” (Callahan 1987: 109). Facing up to the effects external change is

having on church membership or finances, may cause sufficient pain to overcome resistance to change. It becomes less painful to implement change than to stay where you are.

- ***The role played by conflict***

The third dynamic that affects change is conflict. In transitioning the main source of conflict is the dislocation of power. Conflicts over power have been a feature of church life ever since Jesus called the twelve to follow him (for instance see Mark 10:35-45). If those in power perceive that they have nothing to gain from the change, and will indeed lose their power, then they will very often become angry and oppose it, unless they have altruistically bought into the change for the sake of ‘the greater good’ (Callahan 1987: 113 ff.). The loss of power may also threaten the status of clerical leaders. As Congar (1973: 144, 145) points out, “Think of the church as a huge organization, controlled by a hierarchy, with subordinates whose only job it is to keep the rules and follow the practices. Would this be a caricature? Scarcely!”

- ***The role played by hope***

Memory is not the sum total of human existence. Moltmann (1977: 281) brings another factor into the equation, that of hope. He sees the work of memory and the work of hope as a two-sided hermeneutical process in the history of a person’s life. Because Christians have been reborn to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3) then memory must be directed towards hope. This may even cause some in the power structures to buy into a change that will involve them losing power. The Psalms witness to many who through faith turn from resentful remembering of an old order to a fresh anticipation of a genuinely new future equilibrium from God (Brueggemann 1995: 12). Others see no hope in the future but cling onto the past. They negate their rebirth with its eschatological orientation, letting their essential “I” be dispersed into mere reactions to actions from the outside (Moltmann 1977: 282). Most fall somewhere in between these two poles.

2.4.2 The role played by attitudes towards change within the congregation

A helpful model is to see the change process as a “diffusion of innovations.” A new idea seeps slowly through a group because from the individuals observing its benefits in the lives of others they see how it will benefit in their own lives (Neighbour 1990: 409; Malphurs 1993: 100-106).

One analysis of this process sees people as falling into four categories according to their response; *early adopters*, *middle adopters*, *late adopters* and *never adopters*. (Armour and Browning’s (1995: 121-132) system’s analysis of congregations and leadership styles reaches

similar conclusions categorising people into eight modalities regarding how they operate and what they expect from an organization or social grouping and how they react to change.)

- *Early adopters* compose anything from 5- 15% of a congregation. They may be divided into *innovators* (2.5%) and *early adapters*. The innovators are those who are constantly coming up with creative, new ideas. *Early adapters* are those that will very early see the advantages when an innovator poses a new idea. They are **impatient** for change because they have seen the status quo sap the energy of the church (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 182 ff.; Malphurs 1993: 100-106; Warner 1999: 100).
- The *middle adopters* (or *early majority*) compose from 34% to 40% of a congregation. They **readily** accept change and come into line behind any proposed change suggested by the leadership. They do not naturally think of change but have come to accept it as a part of life (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 182 ff.; Malphurs 1993: 100-106; Warner 1999: 100).
- The *late adopters* (or *late majority*) tend to be conservative and as a result **cautious** about change. They will not act until they have seen the benefits that the change or new idea is bringing. They make up from 34% to 40% of a congregation (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 182 ff.; Malphurs 1993: 100-106; Warner 1999: 100, 101).
- The *never adopters* (or *laggards*) will be the last to change and often will never change. They are by nature **opposed** to any change. These tend to comprise 5-16% of a congregation (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 182 ff.; Malphurs 1993: 100-106; Warner 1999: 101).

The relative proportions of those in each category are to a large extent influenced by the age range and nature of that organization. Therefore these proportions may well be in the process of changing. For many today who have been influenced by the post-modern paradigm change is a normal experience of life and needs to be delivered in order for them to trust and accept any leadership (Warner 1999: 102). More early adopters may be found in one of the newer independent churches than in a well-established main-line congregation from which there has been a leakage of this category, due to frustration with the slowness of the change process.

2.4.3 The role played by the leader

While lay leadership is important the role of the leader in the is crucial to the success or failure of the change process (Malphurs 1996: 43 ff.; Ammerman 1997: 326). “Leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or a woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of

God's people towards his purposes for the group" (Clinton 1989: 14). Malphurs (1996: 58 ff.) discerns four criteria that will determine success or failure:

1. The leader's integrity, personal holiness and godliness (Malphurs 1996: 58-60).
2. The leader has the spiritual gifts that naturally go with change-giving-persons who implement change in established churches. They include the gifts of leadership, faith, exhortation, mercy, preaching, administration and evangelism (Malphurs 1996: 60-62).
3. A burning passion fuelled by a vision to renew the church and see it become more effective in the world. This provides long-term direction and motivation (Malphurs 1993: 63-64).
4. A temperament that is suitable for leading a church into change. Malphurs (1993: 64-68) contends that these are ministers who have high dominance and influencing personality types as discerned using the DISC behavioural analysis or are "Intuitive Thinkers" using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. (The DISC behavioural survey measures perception of self along important dimensions of behaviour and identifies the pattern (Geier 1977: 1, 6).)

An equally important aspect of leadership is the involvement of the senior pastor in the change process by leading their congregations into growth and evangelism through:

1. Becoming involved in the cell life of the church. Senior leaders must model the community they are expecting everybody else to live in and must participate in discovering and implementing it (Beckham 1995: 168).
2. Modelling how to evangelise in a secular society in order to motivate the rest of the flock to do likewise. Unless pastors are willing to adopt an evangelistic lifestyle that their people can observe and emulate, it is doubtful whether the membership will make much progress in evangelism (Greenaway 1987: 133).

2.4.4 The procedure adopted to implement change

The following "unfreezing-moving-freezing" process is recommended (Lewin 1969; Nel 1995):

2.4.4.1 Motivation and Unfreezing

Most organizations are in a "frozen" state of comfortable homeostasis. A system of checks, balances and compromises ensure that even when change is desired the status quo will eventually be restored. Most attempts to implement change in religious systems fail because the old systems are never unfrozen (Mead 1994: 104,105). Moving out of this homeostasis requires:

- *'Identity Thinking'*

Christians are motivated by discovering their identity in Christ since indicative precedes imperative. Since people are far more motivated by experiencing compassion and community

than by challenges, reasons or commitments, diakonia and koinonia will be the most effective means of motivation (Nel 1995: lecture notes). This may sometimes require more than a generation (Hendriks 2001: 3).

- *Creating discontent*

Without discontent with the present system there can be no change (Schaller 1972: 175).

- *Establishing a Vision*

In a healthy congregation vision will be breaking out all over the place since vision comes from identity thinking (De Roest 1998: 9). Vision can empower a congregation to achieve its dreams (Shawchuck and Heuser 1993: 140 ff.). The leader's vision must be balanced by a corporate vision to which the congregation is committed. Congregations composed of well-educated professionals expect to be involved in shaping policy and to exercise their own management and planning skills (Ammerman 1997: 327).

2.4.4.2 *Congregational Analysis*

A congregational analysis must be contextualized within the framework of a societal analysis to be meaningful. The aim of a societal analysis is to determine the potential for the growth of the congregation in the neighbourhood (Callahan 1987: 8).

2.4.4.3 *Congregational Strategic Planning*

This involves the development of an effective long-range plan (Callahan 1987: 50). Such planning must be flexible and constantly revised. In situations that are under post-modern influences, Grove (1996: 32) advocates replacing strategic planning with strategic actions

2.4.4.4 *Reaching Objectives*

In order to transition to a cell church long range objectives need to be established involving changing the structure and values of the congregation whilst at the same time continuing the church's mission into the community. Beckham (1995:157 ff.) advocates a 'prototype' phase in which the congregation experiments with the implementation of a cell structure that particularly meets the needs of the congregation and the community in which it seeks to minister. Most congregations will need several years to reach the stage of becoming a self-sustaining, self-perpetuating cell church (Beckham 1995: 162).

2.4.4.5 Conclusions

Problems may be encountered in the transitioning process if:

1. The senior congregational leader does not have the gifting or personality profile required to lead the congregation successfully into change.
2. The transitioning process is handled too autocratically with too few people participating in the decision making process and/or it proceeding too quickly for people to change.
3. The congregation may not be discontented enough to want to change or be too elderly or conservative to change.
4. The congregation may have an insufficient number of early and middle adopters. This may be the case in an elderly or long established congregation in an ageing residential area.

Chapter 3 The modus operandi of the present study

3.1 The Problem

“The fact that at a particular moment a wave of alternative practices is sweeping over the church throughout the world indicates that the existing church order has lost a structure of credibility and at some points is in urgent need of being revised” (Schillebeeckx 1985: 258). One attempt at revision is the cell church concept that since 1993 has been adopted by a large number of churches in South Africa (Roebert 1997: 21). The author felt that a systematic and as objective approach as possible was needed to test the claims made by its advocates.

Until recently the common congregational structure has been one in which all the activities of the congregation focus around the Sunday celebration. This has been the received structure both in terms of theory and praxis. For the purposes of this study this is called the *unipolar* church concept. It is the “traditional” structure in terms of Zerfass’ model (1974: 167). The cell church concept as advocated by Neighbour (1990: 21), Beckham (1995: 27), Finell (1995: 15), Kreider (1995), Roebert (1997: 27), Comiskey (1998: 17), Stockstill (1998) conceptualizes the small group meetings (known as cells) in member’s homes as the focus of church life. This is similar to the structure proposed and practiced by Cho (1981) at the Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea.

A cell group is distinguished from other small groups such as a home fellowship group or bible study group. Unlike these a cell group always has three defining purposes, community, edification, and evangelism and unlike them it is conceptualized as an *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. A cell church must also be distinguished from a house church. A house church is an intentional community formed by fifteen to twenty persons who conceive of themselves as a church (Jones 1989: 2). Each house-church operates in an essentially autonomous manner, although they may be in fellowship with other house-churches as a movement (Neighbour 1990: 203).

Whereas the small groups in a cell church are organized on a congregational basis and have a combined central worship service (Neighbour 1990: 203). A cell church has two foci; the cell group meeting and the celebration. Beckham (1995: 25 ff.) calls this concept a “Two-Winged Church.” This has suggested the name “*bipolar*” being used for the concept. It represents a “Practical Theological Theory” (9) in terms of Zerfass’ model (fig. 3, page 33).

It is claimed that in relation to praxis the bipolar model is:

1. A more efficient model than the traditional unipolar model for mobilizing and disciplining the people of God (Neighbour 1990: 20; Beckham 1995: 77). Thus it is a more effective model for meeting the needs of and penetrating the secular modern and post-modern societies with the gospel than traditional unipolar models (Snyder 1975: 143; Neighbour 1990: 21).
2. Better able to respond to the needs in society than the traditional unipolar church (Neighbour 1990: 130 ff.; Beckham 1995: 75).
3. A much more efficient and cost-effective structure for organizing and integrating the church's various ministries (Beckham 1995: 71, 78 ff.; Stockstill 1998: 25 ff.).
4. Able to be much more flexible in adapting to the constantly changing demography of urban life because it is not limited to a building, which is either considered sacred, or in which everything must happen (Beckham 1995: 77 ff.).
5. Better able to realize numerical growth than the unipolar model (Beckham 1995: 72 ff.).

The testing of these claims will be incorporated within an evaluation based on testing a functional analysis and theory of the bipolar cell church model against theological tradition as contained within the New Testament, Church History, the four major church metaphors, the emerging, post-modern church paradigm and the societal context. This will be dealt with in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

3.2 Defining the hypothesis

The following conjectural hypothesis is based on an integration of criteria from the four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and the societal context.

The conjecture to be tested is, "The maturation of a congregation is facilitated more effectively through a bipolar ecclesiological structure than a unipolar structure in today's society."

The specific case to be tested is the cell church concept. It is premised that this concept incorporates much more effectively than a unipolar congregation the structural features and values that lead to the maturation of a congregation, as described in the conjectural hypothesis above.

Through the integration of its multi-level meetings and ministries it allows the Triune God to be experienced, enables disciple making, and facilitates community-supported, relational and service evangelism. As a result it is able to build up an open, loving, enriching, healing and serving community which is adaptable to the context of today's society and incorporates those who have newly come to faith in Christ.

Therefore a cell church congregation will more adequately fulfill the aims and objectives of maturation than a unipolar congregation.

3.3 Exposition of the theory

Ecclesiological literature describes a church mostly in decline in modern Western societies. The reason proposed for this is that society has changed and the church has not adapted to effectively fulfil its missional purpose. Thus this change has also exposed many inconsistencies between the features given in the biblical metaphors and the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm of a healthy church and those perceived in reality. There is a gulf between its essence and its actuality.

As a result the cell church concept, which has been popularized and promoted by Ralph Neighbour (1991) among others, has been developed and espoused by various pastors, church leaders and theoreticians. The premise of this concept is that multi-level assembling (small groups under congregational supervision plus a congregational gathering) will if the small group is organized effectively result in the type of community that the bible describes and which society is searching for. The activities it is desirable to exercise, in and through the small groups, are proclamation, instruction (particularly in the affective domain of learning), celebration (worship with the spiritual gifts, fellowship and care) and service. The small groups become another pole for church life since they include all the actions that practical theology recognizes as happening within a congregation.

Thus proclamation, and every other action will be more effective, since it is incorporating a long neglected feature of congregational life described by and practiced in the New Testament, namely a community incorporating the norms described in the bible. It is therefore premised that a cell church is structurally ordered so that its activities, values and goals lead to it being a more effective instrument for the maturation of the church than the unipolar church.

3.4 Determining the research design

The theory, which this thesis is seeking to test, namely the cell church model, is a broadly based theory of which it is not known how it is working in practice. Therefore a quantitative and deductive approach is employed. This will test the hypothesis by conducting a survey using two questionnaires on a statistically determined random sample of churches that are transitioning to the cell church model in the Western Cape.

3.5 Conceptualization

The theory used to arrive at the conceptual framework is based upon the following choices:

1. An adaptation of Zerfass' (1974: 171 ff.) model (fig. 3, page 33) in order to provide a coherent and academically accredited, practical theological procedural model for the study. This is with the aim of ensuring that the results will be validated both from the perspective of "valid tradition" (involving the claims of biblical, historical and systematic theology), and the perspective of the operational sciences.
2. The use of four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and a sociological-theological interpretation of modern society in order to provide the criteria against which to evaluate the cell church concept. It is to be noted that Zerfass' model does not compare differing congregations but differing praxes within the same congregation. Thus a congregation is evaluated against its past history.
3. The use of a practical theological operational field demarcated by actions based upon Moltmann's Trinitarian theology.

The procedural model and the evaluative criteria will be briefly described and summarized below and then used to formulate the two premises and a conclusion.

3.5.1 The overall procedural methodology

Zerfass' model (1974: 166) (fig. 3, page 33) will be adapted and applied in the following manner (the numbers in the text apply to those given by Zerfass to units in his model);

The contemporary praxis (□Praxis 1(1)) of the "first-world" church in South Africa and the Western Cape will be described. It will then be evaluated (□Situational Analysis (6)). This evaluation will draw upon theological tradition (4) and operational science (3). The situational analysis was arrived at through a study of recent literature containing the opinions and results of practical theological research in the USA, the UK and South Africa.

The practical theological theory (9) of cell church and its desired influence on praxis (□Operational influence (10)) will be described. It will then be evaluated in the light of theological tradition (4) and an evaluation of the situational analysis (8). This will include an examination of its ecclesiological basis, biblical and historical antecedents (answering the question from the people of God metaphor, “What is its relationship to biblical and historical tradition?”) and present implementation. The hermeneutical question as to whether it has an adequate ecclesiology from the perspective of the Reformed and Evangelical positions held by the author will also be addressed in chapter 5.

Factors influencing the operational implementation (10) will be discussed. Two dimensions influence the successful implementation of any practical theological model. These are the dimension of time (Zerfass 1974: 169) and the social dimension of change (Zerfass 1974: 167 ff.). The former dimension is measured in this study by the length of time a congregation has been in existence and has been transitioning to become a cell church. The social dimension of change is a time of ‘tension’ between the old praxis and implementation of the new praxis and of conflict between the demands of tradition and the demands of the new contextual situation. This is affected by how the transition process is handled; the leadership style exercised in this process; the social, demographic, and “reaction to change” profile of the congregation. It is also influenced by the nature of the local community from which the congregation recruits members (area served in mission) and the ecclesiological tradition of the congregation (Zerfass 1974: 167 ff.; Callahan 1983: xi-xxxi; Neighbour 1990: 404-422; Malphurs 1993: 79ff; Beckham 1995: 135 ff.).

The cell church praxis (□Praxis 2 (11)) in a number of randomly chosen congregations will then be assessed by means of 2 surveys. One was aimed at gathering stratification data from the congregational leader (pastors questionnaire). The other employed a cluster sampling procedure, obtaining data from cell members (cell members questionnaire) attending a randomly selected cell group in the selected congregations. The results will be evaluated in the light of theological tradition (13) and the situational analysis (12).

3.5.2 Evaluative criteria used

Practical theology provides the basis for evaluation of the unipolar and bipolar church concepts. The goal of practical theology research is to help the church to fulfill the role for which it was created as a result of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God into the world. This is that it will be a witness to and instrument of the Kingdom of God, overcoming opposition from the kingdom of Satan, ensuring that God's Word reaches people and is embodied in their lives in the context of today's world.

Whether or not it does this effectively may be judged by a key criterion that is called 'maturation'. The concept of maturity is derived both from the body of Christ and building of the Holy Spirit metaphors. One idea it conveys is that the more 'mature' a congregation, the more effectively it will achieve the goal described above.

The four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and a sociological-theological interpretation of modern society provide the detailed criteria against which to evaluate how effective the cell church concept may be in allowing God to produce maturation within a congregation. These criteria described in chapter 2 are summarized below:

- **Adaptability** is applied to the ability to change to include the insights of the emerging ecumenical paradigm in order to maintain an effective witness and mission for God in a changing society. It involves an awareness of imperfection and the readiness of the congregation to constantly hear, obey and adapt to the new thing God is always saying in order for it to be effective in witness and mission for Him in today's society (Isaiah 43: 18,19; Hebrews 3:15-19).
- **Mission** is the most important evaluative tool. It is concerned with the degree to which the congregation integrates its witness through its activities, programs and small groups to achieve the purpose of the church in community-supported, contextually relevant, relational and service evangelism which incorporates new believers into the congregation (Acts 1:8). Mission is the preeminent purpose of the church. Therefore every activity has either a missionary dimension or a missionary intention (Bosch 1991: 372, 373). The rest of the evaluative tools have a significant part to play in determining the effectiveness of mission in a congregation.

- **Mobilization** is measured by the degree to which every member is actively involved in using his or her gifts, abilities and resources in order to serve one another within the congregation and in fulfilling its “missionary” purpose within the community, country, continent and world (1 Corinthians 12:14- 27).
- **Discipleship** is concerned with the effectiveness of the church in discipling members and producing leaders. Its goal is that congregations and individuals will grow in relational, experiential and cognitive knowledge of and obedience to Jesus and His Word so that they become more Christlike and steadily progress towards maturity (Matthew 28:19,20; Ephesians 4: 13; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 5:11–6:1).
- **Community building** applies to the church’s effectiveness in producing an open, loving, enriching, healing, serving community with a strong sense of purpose and identity (Romans 12:3-21; Philippians 1:27).
- **Organizational integration** of programs and ministries is concerned with the coordination of the church’s groups and ministries in attaining its goals and objectives (Ephesians 4:16).
- **Serving the poor** asks the question, “Does what the congregation is doing lead to those who are oppressed, abused, exploited and impoverished economically, materially, physically, socially and spiritually being made whole and set free (Luke 4: 18- 19)?”
- **The trinitarian experience of God** concerns the congregation’s perception of its experiential relationship with God the Father and Christ the Son through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It asks the question, “Are men and women in the congregation experiencing the love, presence and power of God the Father and Christ the Son through the agency of the Holy Spirit both when they meet together and in their daily lives (Acts 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 1: 5-6)?”

3.6 Operationalization

The purpose of this section is to show how the operational criteria are linked to the conjectures premised for each action and translated into the questionnaires (see Appendix 1 & 2) submitted to selected congregations. The following resources were used to prepare the questionnaires:

- Sharing the Journey (Wuthnow 1994: 119 ff.)
- Pretoria University’s Department of Information Technology Research Support document entitled, “Standards for Questionnaires or Data Capture Forms” adapted from CS Steenekamp’s “Praktiese riglyne vir vraelyskonstruksie’ by Rina Owen.
- Census ’96 data provided by Statistics South Africa to the University of Stellenbosch.

The above criteria need to be conceptualized within the framework of the operational fields established by this study in order to be tested. These operational fields are defined by the actions of proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service and the operations focused around the cell meeting and the “congregation” (that is, the centralized administrative/celebration structure).

Two premises and a conclusion are then formulated for each operational field as per Van der Ven’s (1993: 116) formula. Included in this formulation will be suggested quantitative operational tests by which the conjectures may be tested. The quantitative operational tests will be related to the questions used in the two questionnaires. The two questionnaires employed were a pastors questionnaire (abbreviated to PQ – pastors questionnaire) and a cell members questionnaire (abbreviated to CMQ) administered to the senior pastors, ministers, dominees, senior elders and individual cell members respectively. The cell members questionnaire was administered in both English and Afrikaans. (The question numbers for the respective questionnaires are shown as either PQ 1, 2 etc. or CMQ 1, 2 etc.)

3.6.1 Proclamation

Proclamation is that action which involves the presentation and preaching of the gospel to both those within and outside the church with the aim of forming Christian character, encouraging obedience to the Word of God and the regeneration of the unbeliever. It is deemed to be effective when both church and unchurched unbelievers are regenerated and incorporated into the congregation.

Conjecture: 1st premise

Proclamation is effective in today’s world through multi-level assembling with a small group component. It will be effective if the small group components are integrated in line with concrete missional objectives and are equipping disciples. The equipping will happen if they become open, loving, enriching, healing, serving and adaptable communities of disciples experiencing God, with a strong sense of corporate identity in which every member is mobilized. They will be mobilized to care for each other, serve the poor and make the Triune God known in a secular and pluralistic society so that the unchurched share their experience and are incorporated in the congregation.

Conjecture: 2nd premise

The cell church structure purports to facilitate and encourage most of the above activities and values more effectively than a unipolar church. Thus it is conjectured that a cell church will be more effective in proclamation than a unipolar church.

Operational Test

When integrated the four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and the societal context suggest that effectiveness in mission will be measured by:

1. Increase in number attending worship services over last 4 years (PQ 5, 6) plus number given away to start new daughter churches (either by church planting or “afstigting.” (PQ 7, 8)).
2. Increase in number of cell groups (PQ 15, 16).
3. Number who have professed conversion as a result of cell group activities and influence (CMQ 13, 14).
4. The number of cell group members who have successfully asked someone along to a cell group meeting or activity (CMQ 26).
5. The number of cell group members who have consciously and personally shared about their faith with someone outside of the congregation (CMQ 27, 28).
6. The number of cell group members who have seen people they have contacted or been involved with profess conversion (CMQ 29).

3.6.2 Instruction

Instruction involves nurture that is aimed at building up the believer. The aim of this action is teaching Christian truths, forming Christian character, guidance of personal development, creating enthusiastic, mobilized and committed disciples who are equipped for Christian caring, mission, for serving, equipping, training, teaching and possibly leading others. It is judged to be effective when these aims are being successfully accomplished.

Conjecture: 1st premise

Instruction leads to the maturation of the congregation when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group component that facilitates its affective dimension and modelling through the dynamics of inter-group discipleship. It will be effective if the small group components are integrated in line with concrete missional objectives and are open, loving, enriching, healing, serving and adaptable communities of disciples experiencing God, with a strong sense of corporate identity. Effectiveness also requires that every member is mobilized to care for each other, serve the poor and make the Triune God known in society.

Conjecture: 2nd premise

The cell church theory structure purports to facilitate and encourage most of the above activities and values more effectively than a unipolar church. Thus it is conjectured that a cell church will be more effective in instruction than a unipolar church.

Operational test

When integrated, the four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and the societal context suggest that effectiveness in instruction will be measured by the degree to which individual members:

1. Are valuing the importance of prayer (CMQ 15).
2. Are valuing the importance of reading and studying the bible (CMQ 16).
3. Are perceiving that they are experiencing growth towards spiritual maturity (CMQ 17).
4. Are valuing the importance of their local congregation (CMQ 18).
5. Are coming to understand the importance of world mission (CMQ 19).
6. Are valuing the importance of a simple life-style (CMQ 20).
7. Desire to help other people (CMQ 21).
8. Are valuing the importance of their nuclear families (CMQ 22).
9. Are valuing interest and involvement in their local community (CMQ 24).
10. Are becoming enthusiastic about the congregation's vision (CMQ 25).
11. Are meeting with someone personally to help them grow as a Christian (CMQ 30)?
12. Are meeting with someone personally to be helped by them to grow as a Christian.(CMQ 31)?
13. Are more confident in sharing their faith with others (CMQ 42)?

3.6.3 Celebration

Celebration is that action where people celebrate together their common salvation in worship, and by sharing themselves with God and one another. It is deemed to be effective when it helps build a mature congregation with a strong sense of identity and purpose and deep personal relationships.

Conjecture: 1st premise

Celebration leads to the maturation of the congregation when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group component in which experiences both God and community. It will be effective if the small group components are integrated in line with concrete missional objectives and are open, loving, enriching, healing, serving and adaptable communities of

disciples with a strong sense of corporate identity. Effectiveness also requires that every member is mobilized to care for each other, serve the poor and make the Triune God known in society.

Conjecture: 2nd premise

The cell church theory structure purports to facilitate and encourage most of the above activities and values more effectively than a unipolar church. Thus it is conjectured that a cell church will be more effective in celebration than a unipolar church.

Operational test

When integrated the four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and the societal context suggest that effectiveness in celebration will be measured by the degree to which individual members:

1. Regularly attend cell meetings (CMQ 9).
2. Regularly attend worship services (CMQ 10).
3. Make new friends within the small groups (CMQ 32).
4. Experience love within the group (CMQ 33).
5. Feel close to God in their personal lives (CMQ 34).
6. Are learning how to handle the conflict that results from group dynamics (CMQ 35).
7. Are learning how to be more open and honest with each other (CMQ 37).
8. Are learning how to be more open and honest with themselves (CMQ 38).
9. Are feeling better about themselves (CMQ 39)?
10. Are growing in self-confidence (CMQ 40)?
11. Are able to confront and find forgiveness for their mistakes and sin (CMQ 41).
12. Experience God's presence when the group meets (CMQ 43).
13. Are learning to pray for and minister to each other in cell meetings (CMQ 51).
14. Are experiencing the gifts of the Spirit in cell meetings (CMQ 52, 53).

3.6.4 Care

Care is nurture aimed at healing, sustaining and guiding and may be called the shepherding function. As with celebration it is deemed to be effective when it results in progress towards building a mature congregation with a strong sense of identity and purpose and deep personal relationships.

Conjecture: 1st premise

Care leads to the maturation of the congregation when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group component so that it mobilizes members and enables them to use

the gifts the Holy Spirit has given them to love each other. It will be effective if the small group components are open, loving, enriching, healing, serving communities of disciples with deep personal relationships where God's love and care is being experienced through the gifts of the Spirit.

Conjecture: 2nd premise

The cell church theory structure purports to facilitate and encourage most of the above activities and values more effectively than a unipolar church. Thus it is conjectured that a cell church will be more effective in caring than a unipolar church.

Operational test

When integrated the four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and the societal context suggest that effectiveness in care will be measured by the degree to which individual members:

1. Value helping others (CMQ 21).
2. Are experiencing a new depth of love for others (CMQ 33).
3. Are recognizing and handling conflict (CMQ 35).
4. Are more able to forgive others (CMQ 40).
5. Have been helped through an emotional crisis (CMQ 44).
6. Have been given encouragement when feeling down (CMQ 45).
7. Are experiencing a community that is overcoming loneliness (CMQ 46).
8. Are being helped to make difficult decisions (CMQ 47).
9. Have been provided with meals in times of need (e.g. redundancy, illness etc.) (CMQ 48).
10. Feel more cared for (CMQ 50).

3.6.5 Service

Service is defined as that action whereby the church gives itself to the world. It includes the struggle for justice, peace and the wholeness of creation and is recognized particularly in diakonal service of the poor. It includes the administration of the congregation or any activity with the ultimate purpose of serving the world in mission.

Conjecture: 1st premise

Service leads to the maturation of the congregation when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group component that effectively mobilizes members to meet the world's needs. This will be better facilitated through an administrative infrastructure that integrates the ministries and groups in the congregation in line with its concrete missional

objectives. The focus will be on the needs of the poor both in mission and through the transforming of society.

Conjecture: 2nd premise

The cell church theory structure purports to facilitate and encourage some of the above activities and values more effectively than a unipolar church. Thus it is conjectured that a cell church will be more effective in serving the world than a unipolar church in areas which it believes are important.

Operational test

When integrated the four major church metaphors, the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm and the societal context suggest that effectiveness in service will be measured by the degree to which individual members:

1. Become involved in community volunteer work (CMQ 54).
2. Take a more active part in church life (CMQ 55).
3. Become concerned with social and political issues (CMQ 56).
4. Increase their financial contribution to the church (CMQ 57).]

3.6.6 Social and time dimensions of change

Conjecture: 1st premise

That the success of change in a congregation is a factor of:

1. The most influential the church and kingdom models influencing the congregation determined by denomination or church affiliation (see title page of pastors questionnaire).
2. The length of time a congregation has been in existence (V3).
3. The size of the congregation measured by average attendance at worship services for the last three years (V6 – V8).
4. The length of time a congregation has been implementing the bipolar model (V26).
5. The process by which it was introduced (V32 – V53).
6. The degree of participation of the congregation in the decision-making (V32).
7. The dominant language/culture group within that denomination (V58 –V61).
8. The demographic profile of the congregation (V62 – V65).
9. The socio-economic level of the congregation determined by accommodation (V66 – V69).

Conjecture: 2nd premise

That the following factors increase the probability of a successful transition from a church without cell groups to one that is experiencing multiplying cells:

1. A countersystem church or kingdom model has influenced the congregation.
2. The more recent the establishment of the congregation.
3. A demographic profile dominated by those under 40.
4. A transition process that took time to win the voluntary support of leadership and congregation.
5. A transition process that followed the process of identity preaching, creating discontent, establishing a vision which the congregation accepted, which was seen to be contextually relevant both for the congregation and the community.
6. A transition process which involved training and pilot groups.
7. A transition process which involved the leadership as active participants. .
8. A predominantly Afrikaans speaking culture group.
9. A predominantly skilled-working/lower middle class socio-economic group.
10. At least five years of implementation.
11. A congregation with an average worship attendance equal to or greater than one that is considered large by Schaller's (1980: 28) standards (i.e. equal to or more than 350 people on average attending worship).

Operational test

The following questions based upon the above conjectures were used to determine the various factors affecting the social and time dimensions of change:

1. Does the change involve conflict with entrenched denominational traditions rooted in different models of church life (PQ Denomination or church group affiliation given on page 1)?
2. Number of years congregation been in existence (PQ V3).
3. The number of years the congregation has had cell groups (PQ V14).
4. Whether or not the congregation was begun as a cell church (PQ V17).
5. Was the concept communicated to the influential groupings within the congregation so that they came to own the idea (PQ V18)?
6. Was the congregation adequately prepared for transitioning to become a cell church (PQ V19)?
7. Was the process voluntary or imposed (PQ V20)?

8. Was the concept applied gradually (PQ V21)?
 9. Were pilot groups established by which the concept could be judged by the leadership, the rest of the congregation and tested and adapted (PQ V22)?
 10. Was the leadership involved in leading the pilot group (PQ V23)?
 11. Was any other transition process employed than mentioned in the questionnaire (PQ V24)?
 12. Did the congregation have home fellowship groups prior to the transition (PQ V25)?
 13. Were existing home fellowship groups converted into cell groups (PQ V26)?
 14. Were existing home fellowship groups terminated (PQ V27)?
 15. Does the congregation still have home fellowship groups (PQ V28)?
 16. What is the educational profile of the congregation (PQ V29)?
 17. What is the cultural profile of the congregation (PQ V30)?
 18. What is the demographic profile of the congregation (PQ V31)?
 19. What is the socio-economic profile of the congregation (PQ V32)?
 20. A test of attitude towards change was incorporated by the questions,
 - How long have you been a member of the congregation (CMQ 3)?
 - How long have you been a member of your present cell group (CMQ 4)?
 - How long have you been attending cell groups (CMQ 6)?
 - “Which one of the attitudes given below was your attitude to the idea of joining a cell group when you first heard about it (CMQ11)?
 - “Which one of the attitudes is your attitude towards the idea of cell groups now (CMQ12)?
 21. Age of respondees in individual cell groups (CMQ 59).
 22. Educational level of respondees in individual cell groups (CMQ 60).
 23. Cultural background of individual respondees in cell groups (CMQ 61).
 24. Socio-economic background of respondees in individual cell groups (CMQ 62).
- Reasons for abandonment of the concept in a congregation

Conjecture: 1st premise

That the abandonment of the concept in a congregation is caused by:

1. Insufficient time allowed for experimenting with the concept in the congregation.
2. Resistance by the church members to the introduction of the concept.
3. Lack of leaders in the congregation to run the cell groups.

4. Cell leader's burning out.
5. The cell groups not performing according to expectations.
6. A perception by the leadership that the desired goals can be achieved by other methods.
7. A new pastor taking charge of the congregation who does not have a vision for the concept and therefore terminates the cells.

Conjecture: 2nd premise

That the following factors lead congregations to abandon the concept:

1. No one in the leadership with the administrative ability to make it work.
2. A too autocratic and speedy transition not allowing resistance to change being overcome.
3. The influential church and kingdom models were too resistant to the new concept.
4. The cell leaders and members found it too demanding a model.
5. Denominational uncertainty and opposition to the concept.

Operational test

The following questions based upon the above conjectures were used to determine the various reasons for the abandonment of the cell church concept:

1. The length of time the congregation had cell groups (PQ 12).
2. The reasons why cell groups were abandoned (PQ 13).

Chapter 4 Situational analysis of the present praxis in South Africa

4.1 Introduction

In order to consider the cell church model in its proper context it is necessary first of all to examine the societal context in which the church is currently operating in South Africa, its present praxis and the underlying myths and traditions that have contributed to this.

As the church moves from one paradigm to another it is the weaknesses of church praxis in the new paradigm on which attention is necessarily focused. If the church is to become an effective agent for the Kingdom in the new paradigm it is these weaknesses it must seek to correct in order to be the church for the new age. Aiming to establish first a transformatory consciousness in the church by showing where the church is failing to relate to society and achieve its God -given objectives does this. Its second aim is to establish transformatory mechanisms by indicating how to change those areas of weakness (Van der Ven 1996: xi, xii). These aims are addressed in chapters four and five.

This situational analysis will give a brief overview of contemporary, traditional church praxis in South Africa that will involve:

1. Features of contemporary society
2. An identification of influential church and kingdom models
3. An identification of influential church paradigms
4. An evaluation of present praxis

4.2 Features of contemporary society

The following sociological factors are considered to be important aspects in contemporary society:

4.2.1 Modernization

“Modernizing is a general term used to describe the processes of change that have occurred in society in the last few centuries, with modernity as its end product” (Heitink 1999: 35). The phenomenon of modernization has affected the countries of the Western World increasingly over the last 250 years, since the Enlightenment (Küng 1996: 771), and as a result of their influence it has impacted upon countries of the Southern Hemisphere (Van der Ven 1996: x).

Characteristically it includes the processes of industrialization, rationalism, break up of community, and pluralism (Hunt, Hamilton & Walter 1997: 3). These factors have either contributed to modernization or have resulted from it. Its non-linearity and sociological unevenness complicate the concept of modernization. So called modern societies do not necessarily possess all the attributes of modernity and even in modern countries large pockets of non-modern attitudes, beliefs, paradigms may exist among certain population groups or social classes.

4.2.2 A dramatic increase in urbanization

Quantitatively there has been a dramatic increase in urbanization over the last two hundred years that is continuing more rapidly. “Urbanization itself can be explained as proceeding from two main factors: the natural growth of the population, particularly in the third world countries, and migration” (Van der Ven 1996: 234). The consequences of this urbanization are complex. It has caused major changes in the way people live. In fact the term “urbanization” is not just a quantitative term but also refers to the mindset of urban dwellers affected by high mobility, anonymity, economic concentration and mass communication. Small villages surrounding the cities are drawn into its nexus. It is a way of looking at life impersonally, functionally and often from a position of moral neutrality and mutual tolerance (Cox 1965: 4).

South Africa is seeing a mass movement of people to the cities in search of a better way of life. Under the previous government, the people were confined to the Independent or National States and it was very hard for them to live in the cities legitimately. Back in the homelands there was no work and not enough land to eke out a living. With the relaxing of the oppressive apartheid laws people have begun to pour into the cities. Now more than six out of ten people in South Africa are living in and around towns and cities. The urbanization rate for the country is officially 53,7% as per the 1996 census. This figure is even higher for the Western Province. Gauteng is the most urbanized province. Yet the Western Province follows it with 88,9% of its people urbanized (Froise 1999: 7, 8). This means that the full effects of urbanization will be experienced in this province.

What are the possible effects of urbanization in South Africa and the Western Province?:

- Urbanization has resulted in an absolute loss of community. “We have less and less reason to be together and fewer and fewer ways of knowing each other, while our need for intimate, interpersonal relationships remains constant... Community scholars concur in describing contemporary society as alienated, rootless, lonely, and lacking in a sense of belonging” (Kirkpatrick 1995: 10, 11). People migrating from the rural and small town communities to the big cities loose contact with the church as churches in the city often do not have the same community visibility and social strength as the churches in rural areas (Gibbs 1993: 124).
- In a monocultural rural society people accept uncritically the social norms and religious beliefs of their community. Their religious beliefs are powerfully reinforced by social affirmation. However, when those persons move into an urban environment where they are exposed to a multiplicity of faith positions they begin to doubt previous “givens” and may opt for religious relativism (Gibbs 1993: 193, 194).
- Loss of community and the collapse of previous belief systems encourage the development of religious and moral relativism and the subsequent rejection of Christian values. The northern suburbs of Cape Town provide a specific researched example. Hendriks (1998: 2, 3) draws a contrast between the traditional, white South African rural community and what is happening in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. In the rural community, “nobody escapes the neighbours’ scrutiny. Gossip and genuine care for one another keep the community and its values intact.” Whereas in Cape Town’s northern suburbs, “Parents and youth will seldom meet or interact. They live in close proximity but in different worlds. The new members live in a number of segments where values differ from those taught by their church. They have a hard time reconciling the values of different worlds.”
- On the positive side urbanization offers people more choices as to their church commitment. Cox (1965: 112) welcomes the advent of the secular city as a “present day sign of the Kingdom of God” with its anonymity, opportunities, and technology offering privacy, freedom and happy leisure. Neither has communal life completely disappeared. Instead of location and tradition determining community the individual can now choose the community he or she wants to belong to from a multiplicity of networking communities (Newbigin 1986: 3; Ammerman 1997: 350).

4.2.3 Globalization

Globalization may be defined as the process, “that binds the population of the world into a single society” (Albrow 1993: 248). “Between 1914 and the early 1990s the globe has become far more of a single operational unit... the stage reached by the 1990s in the construction of the ‘global village’...had already transformed not only certain economic and technical activities and the operations of science, but important aspects of private life, mainly by the unimaginable acceleration of communication” (Hobsbawm 1994: 15). It may in the long run have a far more radical impact on people’s lives than secularization since it has involved the greatest restructuring of the world’s political and economic system since the Industrial Revolution (Louw 2001: 41).

One result is that individuals are beginning to see themselves as “transnational,” belonging to a worldwide society (Albrow 1995: 3; Louw 2001: 44). Social relations are becoming divorced from the local context (Richter 1997: 110), aided by the rapid growth of the communications industry and more specifically the Internet (Naisbitt 1995: 54). A growing number are more rapidly impacted by what is happening in the rest of the world, culturally, morally, spiritually, economically and politically than by local traditions.

This is having the following negative impact upon the church in South Africa:

- The church’s exclusivistic claims for the Christian faith are being increasingly challenged in society (Sumithra 1987: 261- 268) because globalization is producing a syncretistic world ethic. The international community has already created transnational, transcultural and transreligious legal structures. Pressure is emerging for a global ethic (Küng 1996: 788).
- At the same time there is in an increasing confrontation between religious blocks as globalization increases contact (Moltmann 1977: 150). This may not only result in international wars and support for international terrorism on an increasing scale (vis September 11th and the al-qaeda network) but also decreasing tolerance of religious differences in some countries (such as South Africa) making evangelism much more difficult (Küng 1996: 781) (brackets are my comments).

- It is increasing expectations of what is supposed to happen in the local small congregation to unrealistic levels (Ramachandra 1996: 18). Churches that are not on the global network may become increasingly marginalized. The maintenance centred parish model will be perceived as being irrelevant, outmoded and unexciting compared to the real macroworld of the global village.
- It is marginalizing the church as a whole. This would partially explain the observation made by Hendriks (1995: 27; 1999: 89), “that those who are “leaving” the church seem to be white and “coloured” affluent people.” Those who have money and power are not in need of the church. It is especially this group that move in the “jet-set” world of high finance and corporate business empires who perceive the church to be a minor role player in shaping the destiny of the world.
- As a result many churches are finding it difficult to understand and adapt to the expectations of individuals influenced by the new global culture. “Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the end of the twentieth century is the tension between this accelerating process and the inability of both public institutions and the collective behaviour of human beings to come to terms with it” (Hobsbawm 1994: 15).

However there is also a plus side to globalization:

- Paradoxically as globalization increasingly impacts culture, religion, economies and politics, small units will become more powerful. Naisbitt (1995: 12, 13) predicts that, “The bigger the world economy, the more powerful its smallest players.” He extends this hypothesis from economics to both culture and politics and therefore it seems fair to assume that it, if true, it will also apply to religion. This offers hope to those local congregations that are willing and able to adapt.
- Globalization is enabling a global cross fertilization of networking churches that is able bring a new dynamic into local congregations. Global religious messages invading the home may in part be responsible for the phenomenal spread of the ‘Toronto Blessing’ throughout the world and the growth of many churches associated with it (Richter 1997: 111).
- A new vitality will emerge in Christian theology and living due to the cross fertilization of all the various cultures and paradigms in which Christianity is influential including the Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical confessions (Küng 1996: 792).

- “Today the Christian faith is acquiring new centres of gravity in Africa, Latin America and Asia and these new centres are accompanied by the development of non-European Christian theologies” Moltmann (1989: 221).
- It will encourage Christians to become not only locally active but also globally conscious with the result of increasing the support for cross-cultural mission.

4.2.4 Secularization

The term secularization may be used to describe a decrease of religious activities and convictions, a loss of the social status of the church, a restriction of the scope of religion, and the adaptation of religion in and to modern society (Hunt, Hamilton & Walter 1997: 3, Heitink 1999: 43). At its core is the desacralization and demystification of society’s worldview (Van der Ven 1996: 153; Heitink 1999: 44). Its origins in Western society have been placed as far back as the Creation and Exodus traditions in Hebrew history (Cox 1965: 17) or with Thomas Aquinas in the High Middle Ages (Küng 1996: 685). It was, however, its adoption as the epistemological model of the Enlightenment that enabled it to become a predominant trend in Western Society.

Bonhoeffer (1953: 279-281) has suggested that secularization is in harmony with the biblical message and may even be seen as the ripening of Christian values (Sumithra 1987: 270). It has liberated the cultural, philosophical and scientific world from church dogma. “The concepts of secularization, self-determination (emancipation) and control of the world (demystification)... emerged with the cultural revolution of the enlightenment. The differentiation of certain spheres of social life from religion giving them independence made good sense and need not in any way have meant the disappearance of religion” (Küng 1996: 675, 761). And it has the advantage that it makes the distinction between belief and unbelief more clearly defined and no longer obscured by a massive nominal institutional Christianity (Schwarz 1999: 264 ff.).

Secularization is composed of and associated with the following trends:

- **Individualization**

One of the results of secularization is that it has produced individualism (individuation / individualization) (Gibbs 1993: 176; Küng 1996: 763) and privatization (Heitink 1999: 37). It is an important concept since it permeates the whole of Western Society, ecologically, economically, sociologically and psychologically (Van der Ven 1996: 231).

The *I* sense becomes the central principle of existence replacing the *we* sense and humans become occupied with themselves and their needs (Van der Ven 1996: 446; Heitink 1999: 29). They see themselves as totally in control of their lives and able to do anything they want (Küng 1996: 763; Van der Ven 1996: 446).

The self-discovery involved in individualism has the potential to enable people to live more honestly and openly with each other (Heitink 199: 29). It also enables both institutions and individuals to be more adaptable in changing circumstances through self-reflection and independent judgment (Heitink 199: 253). Yet the independence and preoccupation with personal rights leads to the neglect of corporate responsibilities (Gibbs 1993: 176). The community and society are seen as a threat to autonomy and to the ability to determine one's own life (Van der Ven 1996: 446). This often leads to a suspicion of all corporate bodies including denominations (Gibbs 1993: 176).

- **The breakdown of community and alienation**

Individuals thus begin to experience alienation from society. They feel compelled to make their own choices in order to authenticate themselves as responsible, choosing beings. In the past people felt themselves supported from infancy to old age by structures with a traditionally religious foundation that interpreted the world to them. The modern paradigm causes them to see themselves as individuals who must choose for themselves to authenticate their individuality (Küng 1996: 763).

The logical result is a society consisting of an unconnected assemblage of self-centred individuals pursuing only their own gratification (Hobsbawm 1994: 16). To prevent society from falling to pieces it is therefore necessary to make a contract with others based on the perceived profit and loss involved in human interaction (Van der Ven 1996: 446). This leads to the undermining of the traditional family and traditional churches in the West, which have collapsed dramatically at the end of the 20th century (Hobsbawm 1994: 337).

- **Loss of meaning**

At the same time individualism has directly impacted upon religious belief in society. Belief in God is characterized by desubjectivization and objectivization (Van der Ven 196: 154).

This combined with individualization results in collective and individual loss of meaning (Kung 1996: 763). This is a part of the psychopathology of every day life. It manifests itself in symptoms such as collective hysteria or compulsion neurosis and becomes particularly important at the limits of life such as in birth and death (Van der Ven 1996: 15).

- **Compartmentalization**

There has been a loss of confidence in society's religious meta-narrative. This has resulted in "institutional differentiation." Functions and institutions are seen as divided into numerous autonomous spheres and compartmentalized each within their own frames of moral, ethical social signification (Van der Ven 1996: 16, 154; Heitink 1999: 36 ff.). The public and private domains have become separated. The public domain is a macroworld of powerful public institutions and private business. Religion is only permitted into this world when its presence can be used to bolster institutions, preserve cohesion or heighten moral fibre (Gibbs 1993: 165). Christianity, the church and its values are in effect marginalized from the institutional base of society (Van der Ven 1996: 157, Gibbs 1993: 171). Religion and church life are more and more confined to the sphere of free time and private life (Heitink 1999: 37).

It paves the way for a pragmatic philosophy. The world is viewed as a continuous set of problems and projects to be solved and executed without reference to an underlying value system. Instead of overarching moral values which guide decision-making the criterion now becomes, "Will it work?" Results become more important than whether a course of action is right or wrong (Cox 1965: 60).

- **Moral relativism**

This may lead to moral relativism. The standards and norms of a marginalized Christianity are regarded as non-absolute and therefore a matter of choice. Religiously based ethical norms are seen as repressive. This makes it very difficult for many Christians. They find the strain of living in two worlds with, often, opposing moral values too great for them (Gibbs 1993: 230).

All these factors are contributing to the break up of family life and development of a socially dysfunctional environment in South Africa. This has been accelerated since 1994 when a Bill of Rights was adopted. This includes good fundamental liberties such as equality, human dignity, freedom of religion, belief and opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of association and

freedom of movement. Yet it opens the way for the advocacy by seemingly powerful lobbies of a legislated morality that is in some cases very different from that of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

- **Religious pluralism**

The church has three attitudes towards other religions exclusivism (or absolutism), fulfillment (or inclusivism) and relativism (or pluralism) (Moltmann 1977: 153, 154; Bosch 1991: 478; Carson 1996: 278 ff.). The position of exclusivism, the traditional position, is that either there is no salvation outside the church (ecclesial exclusivism) or of the Christian faith (Carson 1996: 278). It is based on the perception of the need for God's revelation, and man's incapability of knowing God outside of it (Sumithra 1987: 264). The position of fulfillment sees Christianity as the fulfillment of other religions. All who are saved are saved on account of the person and work of Jesus Christ but that faith in Christ need not be conscious. Thus some may be saved who have never heard of him (Carson 1996: 278). The position of relativism which developed as a result of the Enlightenment paradigm (Bosch 1991: 481), holds the view that all religions have the same moral and spiritual values, offer the same potential for salvation and can all contribute insights leading to the one truth (Bosch 1991: 481; Carson 1996: 279).

In premodern society reality is singular and there is only room for one worldview or central belief system (Regele 1995: 59). The Thirty Years War sowed the seeds that brought to an end the perception that there was only one universal Christian theology as there was now more than one established teaching by more than one church (Brueggemann 1997: 9). As a result pluralism became an accepted Christian viewpoint. This had great benefits in producing the inter-denominational and religious toleration that has become the hallmark of the civilized state. The debate has however moved beyond the Christian world into the arena of many competing faiths.

As regards non-Christian religions, South Africa has been at least since the 17th Century a religiously pluralistic society, unlike Western Europe and North America. Although Christianity in South Africa was the dominant religion, it coexisted with African indigenous religions and Islam. With the importation of Indian labourers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Hinduism became a component. In 1993, 24% of the black population were estimated to be involved in African Traditional religion, 2% of the white population were estimated to be Jewish, 6% of the coloured population were estimated to be Muslim, and 61% of the Asian population to

be Hindu with another 20% as Muslim. The remainder in all population groups is estimated to be Christians. As such Christians constitute over 70% of the total population (Johnstone 1993: 493 ff.). (The 1996 census showed that these percentages had not changed by more than a percent in the intervening three years (Hendriks 1999: 48 ff.)).

Yet for much of the church in South Africa the reaction to this pluralistic society has been defined by the exclusivistic or fulfillment attitudes towards other religions. These are still the views held by a large number of church-going South Africans today, since the Protestant, Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches are strongly evangelical and the large Dutch Reformed Family still holds to the traditional Reformed Confessions.

However with the collapse of the colonial Empires and the disillusionment of two World Wars has created a loss of certitude in absolutes in the West. There has also been a “trickle-down” influence into society in general from academic circles of the new hermeneutic from such philosophers as Heidegger (1962), Gadamer (1970) and Wittgenstein (1968) who are perceived to have rejected the notion of absolute truth. Deconstructionists, such as Derrida (1978), who argue that there is no escape from the subjectivism of the hermeneutical circle and that all interpretations are equally valid have reinforced this. This has generated a philosophical base for relativism that has influenced the man in the street creating a culture of disbelief (Carson 1996: 23, 70 ff.). It is beginning to affect the way especially society as a whole thinks about the conflicting claims of the major religions. Religious relativism is becoming a philosophy of life for an increasing number (Gibbs 1993: 193).

This undoubtedly applies to South Africa. Since 1994 with the advent of a new democratically elected government the traditional dominance of Christianity in South Africa is being challenged by religious pluralism. Christianity is welcome but only as one among many faiths not as the official religion (Froise 1996: 17).

This has a positive side in that it gives people faced with rigid institutions the possibility of making independent choices in this sphere (Küng 1996: 764). A positive result of religious pluralism in South African society in general is that individuals are now being given far greater opportunities to make independent choices about the religious institution and local congregations with which they wish to associate. This is a threat to those the mainline Christian denominations that have depended upon the socialization of their members into their particular religious

tradition in the past. Yet it offers tremendous possibilities in penetrating hitherto resistant religious traditions, such as Islam. Christianity began in an environment that was religiously pluralistic both demographically and philosophically (for example, Acts 14:11; 17:16). Thus what is destructive for some Christian denominations will be very advantageous for others (Küng 1996: 763, 764).

The downside of this is that Christianity is being reduced to one religion among many (Bosch 1991: 272), contributing towards a loss of confidence in the uniqueness of Christianity as regards salvation. The championing of tolerance and religious pluralism whilst leading to a society where people could exercise their God given ability to freely choose Him or reject Him, has led to the attitude that all roads lead to heaven and therefore why bother with mission? (Küng 1996: 763).

It is also making individuals reluctant to make a commitment to Christianity (Heitink 1999: 37). The competing claims of the various religions causes them to reject such a necessity. It is also producing a new level of hostility towards the exclusive claims of Christianity because it is seen as intolerant. One of the values of a pluralistic society is that no competing ideology must be criticized. Christianity does not adhere to this value almost by definition (Carson 1996: 32 ff.). “The notion that one particular religious figure and one religious perspective can be universally valid, normative and binding upon all peoples in all cultures... is widely rejected today as arrogant and intellectually untenable in our pluralistic world” (Netland 1994: 94).

As a result mission and evangelism are becoming more difficult in South Africa because:

1. New levels of biblical illiteracy are forcing the proclamation of the gospel to become a much more time consuming process beginning with a “proto-evangelium” covering basic biblical truth and values (Carson 1996: 492).
2. Individuals cobble together a selection of random truths from the great religions to form their own private religion to suit their needs (Küng 1996: 764).
3. An inability to think logically and linearly. Many who have a pluralistic outlook are unable to follow a step by step presentation of the gospel because they are used to making decisions based upon intuition, impressions and pragmatism (Carson 1996: 45).

Furthermore relativism is demotivating evangelism by church members because:

1. Their doctrinal foundations motivating evangelism have been undercut by the relativistic approach of many influential clergy and academics (Carson 1996: 29).

2. They lose confidence in their ability to verbalize their beliefs because of the new and convincing arguments they encounter from the adherents of other religions. This may cause them to begin to doubt their own beliefs and adopt a relativistic position (Gibbs 1993: 196).
3. They are intimidated into being silent by the social pressures on them not to “rock the boat” in society by bringing up potentially divisive and confrontational issues (Gibbs 1993: 196).

On the basis of the above analysis it is suggested that religious pluralism has been one factor in the decline in church membership among the white population in South Africa. It is further suggested that it will increasingly affect other population groups, as they become more urbanized and influenced by the modern and post-modern relativistic paradigm. However, in the long run, there is good reason to suggest that, if the challenge is met appropriately, it may lead to the revitalization of the church’s mission in this country and the maturation of the local congregation.

- **Conclusion**

Secularization with all its component parts has resulted in the development of more negative attitudes towards the church and its values in South Africa. It is no longer seen as relevant due to the disappearance for many of a worldview in which belief in God is important. God tends to become totally discarded as having no relevance at all. Surveys conducted in the Netherlands indicate that as a result of increasing secularization there are fewer and fewer traces of God in society. “It appears that when the church drops out, belief disappears within a shorter or longer time” (Van der Ven 1996: 158). Religion moves to the periphery of human concern and this challenges the very essence of Christian religion (Sumithra 1987: 260). It gives rise to the perception that there is no practical value in being the member of a church.

Associated attitudes as a distrust of institutions and the importance of “doing your own thing” have led to a “religious consumerism” especially among baby boomers (Hadaway 1993: 349). There is every indication that this is already the practice of many South Africans. Although statistics say that 74% of people in South Africa are Christian this country is not functioning in a

Christian way. The “Christianity” of most South African church members is typically Western: hedonistic and secularised (Hendriks 1998: 4). The secular ethos of the new dispensation has already and will continue to accelerate this trend, especially within the white and “coloured” communities in South Africa (Buchanan and Hendriks: 1995: 27). “The token of religious affiliation no longer holds any practical value and is being discounted” (Hendriks 1998: 4, 5).

4.2.5 Rate of change

The rate of change in our society has become more intense than in any previous generation and is unprecedented in history” (Carl George 1991: 17; Malphurs 1993: 20). Many changes now come rapidly and with little warning making it sometimes very difficult to engage in long term strategic planning (Gibbs and Coffey 2001: 36). Congregations in Western urban societies are experiencing an almost complete membership turn-around every 5 to 10 years (Woods 1996: 139 ff.).

This is particularly the case in South Africa which is a society in transition geographically (e.g. four to nine provinces), politically (a government elected by all and a constitution based on a bill of rights) and demographically (increased predominance of the black population and urbanization). The sense of insecurity and change has been exacerbated on the social front by the increase in crime, spread of Aids and demise of previously existing NGO support systems (Froise 1996: 10). There has been a rapid rise in those who are being diagnosed as HIV positive which is predicted to lead to half a million Aids related deaths a year by 2006 (Froise 1996: 10, 11).

This has contributed to the overwhelming complexity of our world in South Africa today. So much so that it has become almost impossible to isolate only a few factors driving this change and to make any predictions on the basis of these factors. Indeed the future of our society may be better predicted by applying “Chaos Theory” (which states that even the smallest action can have unimaginable consequences) than by reductionist concepts.

This has a tremendous impact upon the church. It is challenging previous assumptions about many congregations’ identity, especially in the traditionally white Afrikaans-speaking Reformed churches. This identity crisis is a result of the transformation of the political scene and the rejection of the earlier theological vision of Church in relation to society (Dreyer 2000: 22, 24).

4.2.6 The emergence of the post-modern epistemological paradigm

This summarizes much of the above concerning the factors influencing contemporary society. Much of the first world, including South African society is characterized by three main competing epistemological perspectives – the traditional, modern (or enlightenment) and the post-modern (Hendriks 1999: 85 ff.). The basic features of these perspectives are presented in fig.4 (adapted from Regele 1995: 57 ff., Hendriks 1998: 6):

Fig. 4: Epistemological paradigms

	Traditional	Modern	Post-modern
Perception of reality	Singular-one belief system	One reality – compartmentalized	Many realities – pluralistic
Truth	Through tradition	Through reason	Through experience
Attitude to authority	Accepts unquestioningly	Accepts critically	Hypercritical-deconstructionist
Method of learning	Rote learning	Intellect - analytical	Experiential -critical
Socialization	Tribal solidarity	Institutional	Relational
Approach	Inductive	Rational	Rational/existential
Religious experience	A part of daily life	Cognitive	Relational/subjective

The traditional epistemological paradigm would generally be more influential among the elderly, in rural areas and those with less education. The modern paradigm is more influential among the “baby” boomers, the urban dweller and those who operate within the modern “consumer driven, rational choice society” (Hendriks 1999: 86). The post-modern paradigm “is only now surfacing in the South African church scenario” (Hendriks 1998: 6) but it has already influenced many in the “baby buster” generation, especially in the English speaking community.

It must be noted that there is much disagreement about the difference between the modern and the emerging post-modern paradigms. Küng (1989: 21-23, 219) suggests that we are now in the post-modern era, or at least in transition. Van der Ven (1996: 5 ff.) believes that the effects of the modernization of the Enlightenment paradigm are still being worked out in our society. Heitink (1999: 255) considers that whilst post-modern thinking is critical towards optimistic Enlightenment thinking it still remains loyal to rationality and is rather a radicalization of modern thinking.

Louw (1998: 233) defines postmodernity as, "... the hypercritique on the critical stance of rationalistic thinking and autonomous reasoning." It seems to include the following features:

1. The abandonment of sole reliance upon the subject-object way of perceiving the world leading to an essential scepticism about the existence of an objective reality and/or the possibility of arriving at an understanding of it by rational means (Hobsbawm 1994: 517). Our perception of reality is seen to depend upon personal experience and cultural paradigm (Regele 1995: 66, 67).
2. A rediscovery of the teleological dimension leading to a break with the concept that the universe is totally deterministic and predictable and that everything must be explained by cause and effect (Bosch 1991: 356). (See for example -the emergence of chaos theory (Cohen and Stuart 1994: 189 ff.)).
3. A modification of "progress thinking" to include not development but revolution and dialectic (Bosch 1991: 358; Hobsbawm 1994: 517). The optimistic faith in an enlightened world, which was able to solve all its problems in a rational way, has been lost (Hendriks 1998: 6).
4. An expansion of rationality to include metaphor, myth, analogy, symbol and experience (Bosch 1991: 353). Mystical ancient traditions are proving to be sources for the ideas for the future about a spirit of cosmic unity and worldwide community (Moltmann 1989: 223).
5. A turning to non-Christian faiths and values to explain reality and produce well being and harmony in the world (Bosch 1991: 354).
6. The transition from a Eurocentric age to the age of humanity as a whole (Moltmann 1989: 221).
7. The emergence of a deconstructionist ethos (Hendriks 1998: 6; Louw 1998: 235,236). There is a natural mistrust of all institutions and authority and a critical attitude to any certainty in historical interpretation (Hendriks 199: 87).

8. The social, scientific and religious meta-narratives which have bound society together are deconstructed and discarded (Hunt, Hamilton & Walter 1997: 4).
9. The natural result is a pluralistic and relativistic mind-set (Hobsbawm 1994: 517; Louw 1998: 236). It assumes that reality consists of a plurality of structural patterns of life and interconnected events that are at the same time both compatible and incompatible with each other (Welker 1994: 37, 38).

4.3 Influential church and kingdom models

Six church and kingdom models appear to have been influential among first world churches in South Africa that have come from a Protestant tradition. This generalization is helpful provided it is realised that most congregations have been influenced by more than one model and that a few congregations within the same affiliation may be influenced by different models from the norm.

4.3.1 The influence of the institutional church and inner spiritual experience models

The two dominant models among first world churches in South Africa are the kingdom as institutional church and the kingdom as inner spiritual experience. The reasons for conjecturing the co-dominance of the institutional church model are:

1. Churches tend to become more institutional when they are established or successful in a culture. This has influenced the Afrikaans Reformed Churches (3,2 million members in 1999) and the Church of the Province (1½ million members in 1999) (Froise 1999: 35). Both these churches have had periods when they have been the unofficial 'established' churches of the country. From 1910 to 1948 the Church of the Province benefited from its connections with the Governor General and the English administration (de Gruchy 1986: 37). This favoured position with the government was bequeathed to the Dutch Reformed Churches after 1948 (de Gruchy 1986: 67, 68).
2. The Reformed Churches were introduced to South Africa from the institutional seventeenth century Reformed churches in Europe. This institutionalism has since been exacerbated by their predominantly confessional theology which tends to centre on the correctness of doctrine, the teaching of the church and its way of existence.
3. The other main line churches, the Presbyterian, Lutheran and Methodist, in 1996, totaled a membership of 4,8 million members (Hendriks 1999: 67). These are all churches with long historical traditions. It is therefore reasonable to expect that they will be very influenced by the institutional model, as institutionalism in an organization usually increases with age.

4. Both Hendriks (1995: 29, 1995 (June): 42) and Van der Ven (1996: 401) comment on the bureaucratic and the institutional emphasis in the mainline denominations in South Africa. The Kingdom as inner spiritual experience has been the dominant model in Protestantism since the Reformation (Snyder 1991: 46). This was very strongly reinforced by the Presbyterian ministers imported into South Africa after 1806, especially Andrew Murray (Sundkler and Steed: 2000: 823). As a result the theology of some sections of the Dutch Reformed Church still has a strong evangelical, Puritan and conservative slant (Hexham 1988: 447; Smith 1995: 42). Other churches that appear to have been influenced by this model are the evangelical wing of the Church of the Province, the Methodist church, the Baptist Church and the Presbyterian Church.

4.3.2 The influence of the mystical communion and the church as herald models

Historically the main line churches since the beginning of the nineteenth century have been greatly influenced by two subsidiary church and kingdom models. These are the Kingdom and church as mystical communion and the church as herald models.

The emphasis in Reformed Theology, the theology of the Evangelical Revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries and in traditional evangelical theology on preaching has enabled the church as herald model to become very influential. It would thus have influenced many churches that were within the traditions mentioned above. At times this has been the most influential model in Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and newer churches, where there is an effective preaching ministry.

The Kingdom and church as mystical communion has been equally, if not more influential, than the other models. It was expressed perhaps preeminently in the Methodist societies or classes (Snyder 1991: 57). This model is found in much revivalism and Evangelical spirituality of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States and Britain (Snyder 1991: 62). It has had a tremendous impact upon South African Christianity, especially on the African Independent Churches (AICs).

This is a group of about 4,500 churches now numbering over 10 million adherents (Hendriks 1999: 48). They may be divided into five main types - the Ethiopian, the Zionist, Apostolic, Evangelical -Pentecostal and Zionist-Cum-Ethiopian (Makhubu 1988: 5 ff.). The majority of AICs have adopted a form of worship that combines traditional African forms with Pentecostal

and charismatic practices. They major on small group meetings. Some condone polygamy and practice initiatory circumcision rites. Their doctrinal beliefs range from conservative evangelical to an incorporation of traditional African beliefs concerning ancestral spirits, healing practices and animal sacrifice. Some deny Jesus' divinity and are unclear concerning the doctrine of the Trinity (Makhubu 1988: 24, 25, 38, 59 ff.).

The mystical communion model grew in influence as revivalism impacted many churches in South Africa between 1850 and the 1930s. In particular Andrew Murray's revivalist ministry in Worcester in the 1860s influenced many in the Dutch Reformed Church and the Methodist church (Terhoven 1989: 93, 94). It also, indirectly, resulted in the foundation of the second major denomination amongst the white Afrikaner the AFM (Apostolic Faith Mission) which was also influenced by the Los Angeles revival of 1906 (Hastings 1994: 500).

4.3.3 The influence of the Kingdom as future hope model

The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have been deeply influenced by the Kingdom as future hope model in different ways. The Pentecostal Churches, such as the AFM and the Assemblies of God, have stressed the eschatological aspect, seeing miraculous signs as a portent of the return of Christ. By contrast, in many Charismatic churches the Kingdom is seen as future hope realised as a present reality. The gifts of the Spirit are perceived as contributing mainly to the vitality and spiritual growth of the church (Snyder 1991: 34-37).

4.3.4 The influence of the kingdom as countersystem model

The Anabaptists and the radical Reformers of the sixteenth century provide a historical example of this model. This suggests that the Baptist Churches and the newer churches that have often been formed from Baptist churches would provide the most likely examples of countersystem churches in South Africa today. Most of the newer churches especially embody that anti-institutional position which is so characteristic of this model.

4.4 Influential paradigms

The three paradigms influencing society are operating in the South African church today (Hendriks 1998: 5). Their influence has resulted in a pre-modern traditional paradigm (P3, P4), a modern (Enlightenment) paradigm (P5) and a post-modern paradigm (P6) being found in the church. The pre-modern and modern paradigms operate with the basic assumptions of the Christendom paradigm, in so far as ecclesiology is concerned, whereas the post-modern

paradigm relates to the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm. For those living in the pre-modern paradigm (P3, P4) truth is in tradition. The precepts of the Reformation are considered flawless. Authority is seen as residing in tradition and those who uphold it. “They want to preserve the old proven ways which prevailed before the experiments with new “superficial stuff” were introduced in an attempt to please the audience”(Hendriks 1998: 5).

For those living in the modern paradigm (P5) truth comes through reasoning and science. Thus authority rests with those theologians who can win debates rationally. It is also accompanied by an optimistic faith in progress and the power of reason to solve problems. “Rationalism made such superb sense, particularly since its achievements in science and technology were so manifest, that it appeared absurd to question it” (Bosch 1991: 350). This rationalistic approach, “led to two opposing approaches to the bible, the one liberal, the other evangelistic-fundamentalistic. Both practiced the modernistic hermeneutic: “we know and we are right” (Hendriks 1998: 6).

In the post-modern paradigm (P6) the individual decides truth. A personal experience of God in one’s life is all-important. Authority is vested in one’s own personal experience more than ‘systems of thought’. People do not want a theology to believe, or even a cause to live for, but first of all an experience of something ultimately real. Their enchantment with drugs or oriental mysticism is an acted out parable saying, “Give us a taste of experience” (Snyder 1975: 15, 16). This tends to make the post-modern paradigm deconstructionist. Old structures, especially authority structures such as denominations, economic systems and governments are viewed with suspicion.

The positive benefits are that it frees Christianity from a scientism that “feters human thought as cruelly as any belief system has ever done” (Bosch 1991: 353). The cognitive Enlightenment approach to Christian maturity is balanced by a more relational approach. The cognitive approach assumed that Christian maturity automatically comes through people learning biblical truth and practicing a lifestyle that visibly reflects the application of that truth. This is insufficient if they fail to relate openly and deeply in their lives with others. The hidden issues of the heart are never dealt with. As a result non-Christians sense the coldness, unattractiveness and hypocrisy that characterizes many sincere, committed Christians influenced by this paradigm (Crabb 1987: 204).

How have the influential church paradigms influenced the praxis found in South African churches today? The first consideration in answering this question must be what percentage of the population in South Africa has been influenced by the various paradigms? These are the inclusive Christendom paradigm, the traditional Reformation paradigm, the modern paradigm and the post-modern paradigm (Hendriks 1998: 5).

The most influential paradigm is the Christendom paradigm. Most of the perspectives of this paradigm have been the received truth about the church in the popular mind and sometimes in the doctrines of the church until just recently. There is no reason to doubt that has been so for the mainline churches in South Africa. Although this paradigm, with its partnership between church and state, ended in 1994 in South Africa, its influence is still great since these churches comprise some 60% of the Christian community (Hendriks 1995: 23; 1999: 85).

The Reformation paradigm and the Modern paradigm may be included as subsets within the Christendom paradigm from the point of view of ecclesiology. It is doubtful whether any congregation in South Africa is operating wholly within the Reformation paradigm. However, there do seem to be many congregations for which certain aspects of this paradigm are very important to them, either consciously or unconsciously. These values may include an adherence to tradition, an unwillingness to be self-critical and an over-emphasis on orthodoxy as compared to orthopraxy (Hendriks 1999: 86).

The traditional Reformation premodern paradigm, which may be partly a backlash against change, is typical of areas where a rural ethos predominates. Although such a paradigm is not always age related, it would seem to be arguable, that it is often the older members of the congregation who try to defend tradition and who thus hold to this paradigm (Hendriks 1991: 7). It would also seem likely that these older members would often be from the pre-baby boomer generation (those born before 1946) who are still living in the church paradigm of the 1940s and 1950s (Malphurs 1993: 25, 33). In the Afrikaans Reformed Churches it manifests as a desire to be "Reformed". This often means that nothing must be changed including the hymns, doctrine and church order of the Enlightenment paradigm (Hendriks 1999: 91).

The modern paradigm would tend to be most influential among ministers (trained in a rational approach) and business people who are rational in their approach and want to run the church like

a business, selling God and their way of thinking (Hendriks 1998: 7). Since, in South Africa, the generation born since 1946 has been the one most influenced by science and modernism it would be reasonable to equate this generation with the rationalistic approach.

The post-modern paradigm is most influential among the baby-busters (Hendriks 1998: 7), who are those born since 1964 (Malphurs 1993: 33). Wagner (1999: 167) delimits baby-busters as those born from 1965 to 1976 and adds another category that he calls generation X who have been born since then. These have been even more influenced by the post-modern paradigm than the baby-busters. This paradigm is partly a reaction against capitalist Western culture and life-style. It emphasizes life, experience and feeling. In Christianity it has expressed itself in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement (Hendriks 1999: 86).

Since it is usually the older members of a congregation who normally carry the financial burdens of a congregation, it can be assumed that they would be influential beyond their numbers in preventing the church benefiting from the lessons of either the modern or post-modern paradigms. On the other hand one would expect many churches in rapidly developing urban areas to be influenced by the modern paradigm. Whereas the post-modern paradigm would at the moment affect only a small percentage of church congregations and these would normally be from the newer independent churches. Another factor that skews the data in favour of the influence of the traditional paradigm is that many baby-boomers and even more baby-busters are joining the ranks of the unchurched (Malphurs 1993: 33, 34). Thus on the whole the post-modern paradigm will have had little influence on the vast majority of church members in South Africa up until now.

It is, however, predicted that the influence of this paradigm will increase rapidly in the next ten to twenty years as the baby-busters become predominant and economically influential in society.

The influence of this paradigm, where it is felt may be seen in:

1. A seeking for community to compensate for the individualism of the modern urban society.
2. A new openness to the supernatural dimension of Christianity such as prayer, spiritual warfare, angels, demons, signs and wonders, miraculous healing, the gifts of the Spirit and the outpouring of the Spirit, as in the so called 'Toronto Blessing'.

3. The growth of independent congregations at the expense of denominations since the ethos of this paradigm is deconstructionist.
4. A dissatisfaction with modern and traditional worship. The consciousness of the baby buster generation is now far more influenced by the symbolism of music, drama and art forms than by the spoken or written word presented in analytical and propositional form. Because music is far more important to them they are not prepared to tolerate that from another generation which does not speak to them with the symbolism and rhythms they have become accustomed to. Since the worship of most churches is still traditional they find it extremely boring (Malphurs 1993: 36; Wagner 1999: 155 ff.).

4.5 An evaluation of the present praxis

This is now evaluated using key criteria suggested by the four major metaphors, the emerging paradigm and the context of society. These are - Adaptability; Mission; Mobilization; Discipling/leadership; Community building; Integration of programs and ministries; Serving the poor and the Trinitarian experience of God. This evaluation makes the assumption that the many similarities between church membership trends in the United States and in South Africa indicate that they share many common features (Hendriks 1995: 43, 44).

4.5.1 Degree of adaptability

The societal analysis presented above emphasizes the ever greater degree of adaptability needed on the part of the church in order to continue to be effective in mission. “The mission responsibility of the church requires that we keep pace with the rate and nature of change in the culture we seek to reach” (Warner 1999: 88).

There has been some structural adaptability in response to these pressures in some main line congregations and in the majority of newer churches (which were often formed in response to the pressures). These would include the introduction of “Seeker-Sensitive Services,” conscious establishment of “Mega-churches,” and “House Churches,” and small home fellowship groups.

The concept of small home fellowship groups, which was the precursor of the cell church concept became popular in the 1960s. These small group meetings utilized the dynamic of increased intimacy of the primary group consisting of 12 or less members. Until then most unipolar churches had operated only at two levels of assembling. These are the tertiary level which consists of more than 175 people and focuses on the congregation, celebrating,

envisioning and identity building and the secondary level consisting of from 13 to 175 members enabling people to know each other but not intimately. The secondary level includes such meetings as Woman's Association meetings, events aimed at special groupings (such as elder's districts) and All-age Sunday Schools (Gibbs 1981: 276 ff.; Coleman 1987: 33 ff.; Neighbour 1991: 59 ff.).

Yet the situational analysis reveals a continuing failure to adapt by many churches and even those with small home fellowship groups, because of:

4.5.1.1 A failure to react to post-modernity

The dominant models of church have been fashioned for modernity and depend on its presuppositions that no longer prevail (Brueggemann 1994: 274: 275). People are no longer persuaded by the presentation of the propositional truths that have been the traditional emphasis of Protestantism. Those influenced by the post-modern paradigm are moving away from rational religion to a more experiential involvement with God. Relationships have also become more important to individuals than institutional loyalty. The church has been very slow to react to this change since its approach to Christianity is still predominantly cerebral and institutional.

4.5.1.2 Institutional inertia

Churches influenced by the Christendom paradigm and the institutional church and kingdom model find it very difficult to adapt through institutional inertia. In many churches in South Africa ministry is still structured within the framework of rural ethos although the needs and challenges of suburban and city life require new structures, a new paradigm, a new vision (Hendriks 1998: 3). The mainline church is generally failing to adapt, be flexible and responsive to this need to change that is adversely affecting proclamation and care. Their structures are rigid and they are lacking communication with the grassroots who are experiencing the change leading to their needs not being met and thus motivating them to move to more adaptable churches (Hendriks 1999: 90).

Denominational hierarchies are often unaware of the need to adapt in order to reverse the decline in membership. They are suspicious of innovative forms of ministry and tend to be threatened by it. Many ministers and loyal church members feel that it is being disloyal to ask critical questions. Those clergy, who are experimenting, in an entrepreneurial manner, with new

structures or new paradigms of ministry, are often disciplined for rocking the boat (Mead 1991: 37, 54, 55).

4.5.1.3 A strong emphasis on sacred space

The preponderance of those influenced by the Christendom paradigm and the institutional church and kingdom model in South Africa, suggests that in the minds of many of its members the word church is mainly associated with the building where they meet to worship that they consider to be sacred.

A specially dedicated premises has the advantages that it is convenient, available and may be visible in the community. These factors have the potential to assist with the congregation's proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service. However, when there is an over-emphasis on sacred space it will disadvantage the church in these actions.

The church's effectiveness in the actions of proclamation and service is hindered by lack of adaptability and too much attention being to the building in terms of organizational objectives and finance. It tends to make the church static and inflexible so that it cannot adjust to the demographic changes or needs of a rapidly changing society (Snyder 1975: 66; Getz 1984: 217; Warner 1999: 189). The members may easily adopt a building centred mentality that prevents the congregation reaching out into the community (Finell 1995: 15). Maintaining the building may take precedence over mission in the allocation of financial resources, time and talent (Snyder 1975: 67, 68).

The church is also hindered in its instructional activity. Many dedicated premises in which congregations meet and worship have been built according to designs that do not facilitate either affective/inter-active learning or allow the interaction necessary to build community (Getz 1984: 263; Richards & Hoeldtke 1980: 127; Snyder 1975: 92, 93).

This attribution of "sacredness" to the building may also hinder the church's celebratory activity. The church is not seen as a community of the people of God with a calling from Him to be in the world. Relationship is therefore neither expected nor sought. Thus the congregation's sense of identity with one another and with Christ as the Head is diminished and thus the maturation of

the community hindered in community building and in the action of care (Getz 1984: 265, 266).

4.5.1.4 The local congregation is not central to renewal or mission

The Christendom paradigm's institutional approach to mission is leading to an impoverishment of the congregations' financial and manpower resources greatly hindering the actions of proclamation and service. There are numerous advantages to inter-congregational denominational cooperation. Yet many denominational projects seem irrelevant to the needs congregations see on their doorsteps and thus fail to command commitment. As a result even loyal mainstream congregations are beginning to view contributions to national denominational offices as a waste of money, rather than gifts to God (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 101). Neither is new local church development a high priority. Even if these activities are ideologically supported they must compete with many other priorities for funding and thus local congregational outreach and church planting is insufficiently resourced (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 99–101).

4.5.2 Mission

The church's effectiveness in mission must be the pre-eminent criteria by which to judge its maturation and its faithfulness. As can be seen from the features of contemporary society impacting the church in South Africa it is becoming more difficult for it to influence both individuals and society. This is exacerbated by an adherence to the Christendom paradigm and an institutional model on the part of many churches. Effectiveness in mission today involves:

4.5.2.1 Numerical growth

There is a consensus that the church in the Western World is not growing when measured in terms of membership (Gibbs 1993: 12). In South Africa this decline is reflected in the overall decrease of the membership of Christian denominations since 1980. One symptom of this is the increasing percentage who indicated "no religion, refused, not stated" in the various censuses (Hendriks 1999: 87). The Mainline denominations (Reformed, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, and Roman Catholic) have declined from approx. 61% in 1980 to 47% in 1996 (Hendriks 1999: 48). In contrast the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have increased from approx. 7% to 9% and the AICs from approx. 28% to 36%. Despite the fact that census data concerning the AICs is sometimes unreliable due to uncertainty over what constitutes an AIC, their growth between 1980 and 1991 is unmistakable (Hendriks 1995: 36).

Not all lack of church growth is connected to a congregation's neglect of or inefficiency in mission. Roozen and Hadaway (1993: 34; 1995: 56), for instance, believe that research indicates that there are four broad factors that influence church membership trends:

- National institutional factors such as denominational ethos, polity and programme (ie. The most influential church or kingdom model in that denomination).
- National contextual factors which comprise influential social and cultural trends (ie. urbanization, globalization, secularization etc.).
- Local institutional factors involving the ethos, structure and programme of the local congregation.
- Local contextual factors such as the unique social, cultural and demographic context of each local congregation's environment.

These contextual factors may include:

- The location of the local congregation (Thompson, Carroll and Hoge 1993: 188 ff.). For instance congregations that are near new housing are more likely to grow (Hadaway 1993: 181, 186; Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 58, 59). Most locations surrounding churches may be categorized into one of 6 types – city centre, the young developing suburb, the maturing suburb, the aging suburb, the rejuvenating suburb and the rural, industrial or special purpose suburb. The young developing suburb shows rapid population growth with many young parents buying houses in the area. The maturing suburb has been in development for at least 20 years and its population total tends to be stable. This type of suburb is often composed of single family homes more than 40 years old and the population total is declining. Rejuvenating suburbs are defined as those in which one particular age group is showing a net increase and the housing stock has been through more than one cycle of ownership. In weakly rejuvenating suburbs there will still be a net decrease in population whereas in strongly rejuvenating suburbs it will be increasing (Neighbour 1995: 120 ff.).
- Constituency birthrate (Thompson, Carroll and Hoge 1993: 188 ff.). In mainline churches decline in church membership is related to declining birthrates in their traditional population group and cultural constituencies (Hadaway and Roozen 1993: 39). This factor must be taken into account when considering denominational trends in South Africa. It would account to *some* extent for the decline in membership of those denominations which have a greater white population group constituency. This population group has had a markedly declining birthrate in comparison to other groups over a period of many years (Hendriks 1999: 73).

- The demographic profile of the congregation (Thompson, Carroll and Hoge 1993: 188 ff.). Congregations with a smaller proportion of elderly members and with a larger proportion in the thirty to forty age group are much more likely to grow (Hadaway 1993: 181, 186). The growth of congregations with older members is hindered by their being located in older residential neighbourhoods and possessing programs and worship styles unsuited to the needs of younger age groups (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 60, 61). Thus because the white population group in South Africa has the lowest proportion of population under 15 years and the largest over 65 years (Hendriks 1999: 10) many churches with this constituency will be numerically declining.

4.5.2.2 Concrete missional objectives

Many congregations are passively stagnated in South Africa having no goal, purpose or vision in the area of mission. They give a low priority to mission because:

1. In many churches lay leaders are investing themselves in maintenance rather than mission. Thus maintenance is stressed rather than mission in the congregational budget (Nel 1988: 5, 13).
2. Decisions are made on the basis of institutional self-interest often with the question of survival being the main criteria (Nel 1988: 9).
3. Many congregations believe that the local congregation exists more for the sake of its members than for mission (Nel 1988: 13).
4. Many church leaders have no vision for God or his world (Nel 1988: 13). This means that the membership has no sense of direction (Malphurs 1993: 33). Evangelism flows out of a sense of purpose, excitement and mission. This is noticeably lacking in many churches (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 67, 68, 75).
5. A special factor at work in South Africa is because of their involvement with the struggle against apartheid. Now it has ended they are finding it difficult to re-align their priorities along missional lines. This has exacerbated the decline in membership especially of the mainline churches (Buchanan and Hendriks 1995: 28).

If the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa reflects what is happening in other main line churches there is a growing discontent among the laity with this situation. This was revealed by a document prepared for the UPCSA's Centenary conference in September 1997 (then known as the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa). The document asked, "What does the PCSA need to repent of?", "Where is the PCSA not meeting people's needs?", and, "What does Jesus want of the PCSA here and now?" Nearly a hundred congregations and Presbyteries answered. The replies showed that the denomination was perceived to be more concerned with maintenance than mission and had no purpose or strategy that made sense at the congregational level. It may be interpreted as a cry for vision, purpose and leadership from a denomination that is ready to change but unsure of the direction in which to go.

4.5.2.3 *Serving the community in mission*

The geographical parish system, appropriate for rural areas and towns of moderate size and the congregational system assuming a settled population within easy reach of the church building and within reach of the personal ministrations of the pastor is no longer working. These are mostly anachronistic in relation to the vast metropolitan areas of today and a society which is increasingly mobile (Jay 1978: 125). In an unchurched culture, which South Africa is rapidly becoming, the value of church is not among the major values of the culture. A substantial number of persons are not seeking churches on their own initiative and they live life as though the church did not matter (Callahan 1990: 23, 24).

The traditional Christendom paradigm "come" structure (Finell 195: 16, 17) for evangelism, where the church building is seen as the centre of the community in the parish, is no longer working. The main concern of church leaders in this structure is to organize events and run programs which are attractive, relevant and sufficiently publicized to draw people into the building (Gibbs 1993: 231).

A "come" structure has its merits because Christ promises to be especially present when Christians are gathered together (Matthew 18:20). Unbelievers were converted through attending worship services in the early church (1 Corinthians 14; 24,25). Yet it can become a hindrance to proclamation when this 'come-to-us' perception of the ministry becomes the dominant one, is pursued over an extended period of time, and when the surrounding society is not a 'churched' culture.

The development of home fellowship groups may not greatly increase the church's effectiveness in outreach to the community. They help to conserve its fruits, but because of their lack of evangelistic emphasis cannot be a part of the solution. Wuthnow (1994: 248, 249) concludes from his research that home fellowship groups are not particularly effective at evangelism. An inclusivity quickly develops with any small group that has no objective purpose that will create difficulties in the assimilation of people who are new to the group, unless they happen to be people who are, 'like ourselves.' Olsen (1989: 432-474) studying 700 Baptist congregations, with home fellowship groups, found that the cultivation of friendships in these congregations seemed to work against church growth. He suggests the reason for this is that people reach a saturation level beyond which they can make no more friendships.

4.5.2.4 *An effective strategy for evangelism*

Neighbour (1990: 239) is concerned about the steadily declining effectiveness of the traditional evangelistic strategy in the Western World. The strategy is still reasonably effective among those people who have been influenced by exposure to a church culture at some time in their lives, usually as children and teenagers. It is steadily declining in effectiveness in South Africa because:

1. The number of people who have never had any contact in a meaningful way with the church in Western culture is rapidly increasing. Many could not care less about going to church (Getz 1994: 264). They see the church as archaic and remote and have increasingly rejected it as an institution (Warner 1999: 58).
2. It assumes knowledge of the basics of the Judeo-Christian belief system that is rapidly diminishing among the population as a whole (Neighbour 1990: 240).
3. It is sometimes confrontational and insensitive offending many people (Gibbs 1993: 74, 75).
4. It wrongly presumes that the unchurched will find in its presuppositions such as heaven and hell, the assurance of forgiveness and eternal life relevant to themselves (Neighbour 1990: 240).
5. A more liberal theological outlook in many mainline churches has diminished the church's theological motivation for evangelism, thus diminishing its practice (Hendriks 1995: 48).

As a result it can be expected that among churches in South Africa which are influenced by the institutional, inner spirituality and herald models there will be a decline in successful evangelism.

4.5.2.5 A less institutional and more informal ethos in the local congregation

Many churches and denominations in South Africa are locked into the institutional model of church life, wholly or in part. This is out of phase with the demands of the times. The deconstructionist attitude prevalent among those that are influenced by the post-modern paradigm fosters a distrust of all institutions. While people are willing to dedicate themselves to a cause or a movement, they do not wish to bind themselves totally to an institution. Institutions are seen as self-serving and repressive and as needing to be kept under strong vigilance. A large section of South African society is seeking independence from institutional ties. This has meant that some have dropped out of the church altogether and that others have opted to join “newer” churches. In the white community, the move is to small autonomous churches or to those with small groups and in the black community to indigenous churches (Buchanan and Hendriks 1995: 29; Froise 1996: 21).

4.5.3 Mobilization

The involvement of the majority of church members is not the case for most first world churches as demonstrated by the table shown below which presents estimates of the percentage mobilization of church members in the USA. The average given of 18.75 has been calculated by the researcher and is the mean of the preceding four estimates.

Fig 5: Estimates of average percentage of mobilization of members in churches in the USA

Author	Estimate of percentage of congregation mobilized in average church
Neighbour (1990:49)	15
Maxwell (according to Malphurs 1993:167)	20
Arn (according to Malphurs 1993:167)	30
Gallup (according to Malphurs 1993:167)	10
Average	18.75

Differences in the estimates of mobilization may be more imagined than real since the result that is obtained in calculating the percentage of those involved depends upon the decision as to what constitutes the congregation. Some churches for example, may judge this by how many attend the morning service, others by how many have been baptised as adults, and yet others by how many have been baptized as infants. Be that as it may, these percentages still serve to underline the comment made by a retiring bishop of a large mainline denomination that there must be a total re-emphasis on empowering the laity (Shawchuck and Heuser 1993: 166).

The degree of overall mobilization within a congregation affects every action – proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service. It affects church growth. Arn (no date or page given)

estimates that 55% of the membership are mobilized in a growing church and 27% in a declining church (Malphurs 1993: 167). If this is correct, then the average mobilization rate of 18.75% given in the above table reveals that this is one of the causes of the overall decline in church membership experienced in the first world. A report presented to the Church of England stated that the only way to increase penetration of densely populated urban areas was, “to increase lay mobilization in mission and to minimize lapse rate” (Wasdell 1974: 12).

Many South African churches have the same problem with mobilization, as do American churches. This failure to mobilise is a common symptom in churches influenced by the kingdom as institutional church and as inner spiritual experience models. It is also a feature of the Christendom paradigm and Reformation and Modern sub-paradigms. These are the prevalent models and paradigms of many South African churches. Nominalism and clericocentrism are basic problems with the Reformed Church in South Africa today (Floor 1997: 6).

The unipolar church concept possesses several inherent weaknesses that make a greater mobilization of the congregation very difficult. These are:

1. The lack of true community because there are no multi-level meetings.
2. The lack of multi-level assembly with at least one level emphasizing compassion.
3. The social distance between individuals is not overcome and enables many to remain in a state of comfortable nominalism.
4. There is no means for the leadership to model the committed life-style in front of the members. Thus they remain ignorant of what this involves or else dismiss it as impossible.

The addition of home fellowship groups to a congregation increases the percentage mobilization through the input of the community dynamic and the greater opportunities presented for mutual ministry by the laity. This may result in greater spiritual growth. There is a connection between having one's spirituality deepened in a small group and being involved in other church activities (Wuthnow 1994: 253). The actions of instruction, celebration, care and service will become more effective. This, in turn, may cause the congregation to become more effective in proclamation as it witnesses as a living, vital community. However, it may also be detrimental because the increased commitment may leave less time for members to relate to unchurched friends (Gibbs 1981: 302).

4.5.4 Discipleship

Concepts such as ‘church member’ and ‘Christian’ have lost their true meaning in many South African churches because of the church’s neglect of discipleship (Nel 1988: 41 ff.). The failure in this area effects every action that is the essence of being church. Some of the contributing factors are:

4.5.4.1 Basic truths of discipleship not being taught

The basic truths concerning what it means to be a church member and to follow Jesus are not being taught or modeled. “The radical demand of continual surrender to God often becomes watered down to taking part in the duties of an external church member” (Nel 1990 46). This adversely affects every action. Church members have no desire to grow as Christians and congregations are not becoming mature. The church is reduced to being no more than a religious club that is not fulfilling Christ’s Great Commission in the world.

4.5.4.2 There is no concept of the congregation being disciplined

Church members have no idea of the concept that congregations need to mature and grow in the same way as individuals. Thus there is no vision, and sometimes not much love, for the local church (Nel 1988: 4). The church becomes too institutionalised and self-centred to call for a radical modeling of its members lives on that of Jesus and his first disciples. There is no motivation to experience the life in the Spirit, pray, read the bible, experience fellowship and community, live the simple life-style and evangelize. Every action is adversely affected.

4.5.4.3 An overdue reliance upon the cognitive process in instruction

This lack of development of enthusiastic disciples is also due to the fact that the action of instruction has been almost entirely conducted cognitively, ignoring the affective and modelling components. A feature of the Christendom paradigm was the early development emphasizing the communicating of faith in cognitive and propositional terms (Snyder 1975: 66; Finell 1995: 18). This approach has been deeply entrenched in modern Protestant church life by:

1. Reinforcement by the Reformation’s stress on creedal accuracy and the preaching and teaching of scripture from the pulpit and in catechism classes.
2. The rational approach of the Enlightenment paradigm.
3. The institutional church model which attaches great importance to the teaching and acceptance of correct doctrine.

As a result the primary aim of teaching is still seen to be the impartation of knowledge and intellectual content (Richards & Hoeldtke 1980: 127). This means that church buildings are built with classrooms, and pews arranged in rows so that all can look toward the pulpit where the sermon is given in lecture form. This is compounded by the fact that there has been reliance upon the tertiary and secondary group meeting levels that function primarily at the cognitive input and task orientation levels. Formal classroom instruction is effective in communicating a set of beliefs as concepts. It produces the problem, however, that many laymen have become ardent listeners to pulpit expositors without the opportunity to put it into practice, except in the case of highly motivated individuals. Consequently some churches have moved towards a sterile, though biblical orthodoxy (Getz 1984: 262, 263) where mastery of faith's intellectual content will not automatically be translated into lifestyle (Richards & Hoeldtke 1980: 128).

This reliance upon intellectual-cognitive instruction in mainline South African churches has had contributed to their numerical decline (Hendriks 1995: 26 ff.). It has hindered the effectiveness of the action of instruction to produce enthusiastic, mature disciples. "Africa proves to us that faith is not merely an intellectual endeavour but that it needs to be supplemented by feeling and emotion, fellowship and concern to be truly meaningful" (Hendriks 1995: 29, 30).

The primary small group level is the ideal level for the utilization of the affective component in learning and discipling that translates faith into lifestyle. The addition of primary group home fellowships by some churches in South Africa, combining cognitive and affective learning with community and the meeting of pastoral needs, is a step towards correcting this weakness. The informal, interpersonal dynamics of group life are considered more important than anything else in contributing to spiritual growth in small groups, followed by bible studies that focus on personal application (Wuthnow 1994: 260).

Wuthnow's (1994: 221 ff.) research indicates that small home fellowship groups aid the spiritual growth of their members in the following ways:

1. It helps them focus on getting to know God.
2. They pick up ideas from others in the group.
3. They compare themselves with others and are spurred on to work harder.
4. Experiencing love and support from others in the group.
5. By having a leader who will answer their questions.

6. By having a spiritual confidant.
7. By working through a spiritual crisis with the support of the group.
8. By studying the bible.

The research further revealed that small group members felt they had grown spiritually because:

1. Faith is deepened.
2. They feel that they have grown closer to God.
3. They learn how to apply the bible to real life issues.
4. Their praying becomes more effective.
5. The bible becomes more meaningful.
6. They have developed an increased ability to forgive others.
7. They have become more involved in the church.

However, the cutting edge for discipleship that comes with being involved in proclamation will be missing. Groups without this objective run the risk of falling into the trap recognized by Wuthnow (1994: 5) of turning belief into something people can manipulate for their own selfish purposes. They can become too comfortable which is detrimental to every ecclesiological action.

4.5.5 Community Building

Individualism has become rampant in the church (Bosch 1991: 273). The conception of the church as a community has suffered in Western Protestant churches, which has impoverished the action of celebration. One symptom is the number of people who claim to be Christians but never have anything to do with a congregation. Another symptom is the lack of fellowship and community many church members are experiencing within their congregations (Snyder 1975: 93; Moltmann 1979: 40; Callahan 1983: xxi). In many churches in the Western World there is a “much neglected disconnectedness among churchgoers” (Moltmann 1978: 62). The action of care is suffering since there is very little place or time given for people to “tell their stories” to each other and become intimate (Neighbour 1990: 48). It is affecting proclamation since it would appear that in South Africa that the decline of many mainline churches is due to their failure to build community. The growing churches are doing this by restoring personal and small group relationships (Hendriks 1999: 88).

In many mainline churches the Sunday services are devoid of genuine human contact. Many

church members scarcely know each other “with genuine mutuality” (Moltmann 1978: 29). In fact there is very little desire to create community and life is lonely even in the church. This affects the church’s obedience to the Great Commission since many congregations have a “very deliberate exclusivity with respect to the “evil world” and “unbelievers”...” (Moltmann 1978: 62). There is “fellowship crisis” in the church (Snyder 1975: 85 ff.).

What has allowed individualism to become rampant?:

1. The ethos engendered by the institutional model of the church. This tends to see relationships as less important than the goals of the organization. A symptom of this ethos is the program centred approach. “The preoccupation of local congregations with programs and activities is deplorable...Some churches become so involved in sponsoring a vast array of programs that they lose sight of the people those programs were meant to serve” (Callahan 1983: 39).
2. This will be exacerbated if other influential models are those of the church as herald or the kingdom model as inner spiritual experience, which are both two very influential Protestant models.
3. The modern paradigm with its emphasis on rationality and individualism further reinforces the perception that relationships within the church are secondary when compared with other goals.
4. The clericalization of the church, a characteristic of the Christendom paradigm, will also tend to discourage true community in the church since the church is seen as ‘not of the people’ and as other than themselves.
5. The average size of the congregation that gathers together is usually too large for the intimacy required for community to develop. The maximum number of people that can be considered to have the interaction necessary to build satisfactory relationships is fifty people, and usually much less (five to ten being the optimum number) (Van der Ven 1996: 249). Yet 60% of all Protestant churches in the USA have over 35 members attending worship on a Sunday, and 43% have over 50 (Callahan (1983: xxiv).
6. The traditional worship service is not the proper structure for experiencing fellowship. It is designed both by liturgy and architecture, principally for a one-way kind of communication, pulpit-to-pew (Snyder 1975: 92, 93).

Home fellowship groups have met the need for fellowship and community (Wuthnow 1994: 4). By increasing the congregation’s overall sense of identity they should improve the actions of

celebration and care. Yet this fellowship is limited and is not always entirely healthy since:

1. They are not often open communities that welcome and reach out to strangers. They may simply provide occasions for individuals to focus on themselves rather than on others (Wuthnow 1994: 6). If a group does not have evangelism as a goal it can easily become self-centred and cliquish. “A closed society no longer has any future. It kills the hope for life of those who stand on the periphery and then finally destroys itself” (Moltmann 1978: 35).
2. They are often seen just as an optional extra and as just a helpful adjunct to the church’s main functional units, namely the congregation and the worship service(s) (Callahan 1983: 35-39). This means that many church members are not involved in them.
3. Wuthnow’s (1994: 3, 4) research reveals that for most small group members the larger church is not something they care much about and that they tend to have a markedly anti-institutional bias. This could lead to opposition to the goals of the larger movement, division and even schism where there is not a good system of accountability.

4.5.6 Organizational integration

There is a marked lack of integration in the ministry of many congregations. This is the result of:

1. Many leaders not having a vision that would help to establish the common congregational purpose needed to obtain this integration (Malphurs 1993: 33, 160).
2. The secondary and primary level groups in the congregation have differing, uncoordinated agendas and goals which may lead to “departmentalization and fragmentation” (Malphurs 1993: 160; Gibbs 2001: 224). This in turn may result in:
 - The goals of some groups being the opposite of others and thus becoming counterproductive or leading to division (Malphurs 1993: 160).
 - The small groups and ministries become so diverse and fragmented that their resources are over-stretched in attaining their individual goals (Warren 1995: 89).
 - A few committed individuals becoming over-loaded in trying to achieve the many objectives of the many groups (Warren 1995: 89).

Such lack of integration will directly hinder the effectiveness of the actions of proclamation, celebration and service. Proclamation will be uncoordinated and too demanding for the over-loaded, celebration will lack a sense of identity and community, and service, as an administrative function will be difficult and frustrating.

4.5.7 The trinitarian experience of God

This criterion answers the question, “When did you last feel the workings of the Holy Spirit?” If the South African church reflects the rest of the world it would appear that the answer to the opening question for many congregations would be both embarrassing and negative and such experience declared ‘unholy’ and ‘too enthusiastic’ (Moltmann 1992: x, 2). In many churches influenced by the Enlightenment paradigm or the institutional model of church or where discipleship is not taught the epistemological framework does not permit God to be experienced. Religious experience is avoided and deadened by giving it no visible expression or burying it in tradition. There is a need for the reclamation of religious experience and spirituality and allowing the tangible presence of God back into the body of Christ, especially in worship. Communities need to be created where Christ’s Spirit is allowed to live and breathe and to animate the members (Roozen and Hadaway 1995: 77, 113)

In many congregations in South Africa there is an expectation to experience a relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, often accompanied by an exhortation to experience a vital union with Christ through regeneration. Yet although the Holy Spirit may be at work building the church He is never, or seldom, consciously experienced or recognized and his gifts, empowering, intervention and manifestations not sought after.

On the other hand there are also a considerable number of congregations that both in doctrine and practice stress the trinitarian experience of God. This would include most of the churches in which the Kingdom and church model of mystical communion and/or the Kingdom as future hope are influential models such as the AICs (with their 10 million adherents), the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Pentecostal and many newer charismatic churches. Added to this are those mainline congregations that have been experiencing, “charismatic” renewal in which the person and gifts of the Holy Spirit are emphasized.

It is difficult to assess the number of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in South Africa. It is estimated that there were approximately 300 million Pentecostals and Charismatics the early nineties (Welker 1994: 1) out of approximately 1600 million professing Christians in the world (Johnstone 1993: 25). If the South African church situation reflects these proportions then this means that 18.75% of professing South African Christians belong to Pentecostal and charismatic churches. The large number of AIC adherents may considerably increase this percentage.

There is, however, another dimension to the trinitarian experience of God and that is in the social encounter with others. If the primary level of meeting is lacking in a congregation, with the relational intimacy it provides, this will mean that the full trinitarian experience of God in all its dimensions will be lacking within that congregation. Only the primary level of meeting can give the opportunity for all to share the gifts that the Spirit wishes to manifest through them with each other and the degree of intimacy that allows for ministry in the power of the Spirit to needs that remain unexpressed in larger meetings.

4.5.8 Serving the poor

One of the major problems facing South Africa is that of poverty. Nearly 50% of the 40 million people in South Africa live below the poverty line (Pieterse 2001: 75, 76). Many congregations and denominations are seeking to meet the needs of the economically poor in South Africa and new caring ministries are coming into being. The Dutch Reformed and the Roman Catholic Churches have played a major role in caring for the aged, children, disabled and in providing health care and education. Coordination at a denominational level and cooperation between denominations and affiliations is necessary. Yet the church has so much more to do (Froise 1999: 45, 46). At a local congregational level serving of the poor is being hindered by:

- The demands that denominational structures are making for funds and resources (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 101).
- A survival mentality by church members that focuses on the well-being of the congregation and ignores the demands of discipleship and the kingdom of God ((Nel 1988: 9, 13).
- The prevalent institutional model that sees it as the work of the paid clergy.
- A suspicion of the “Social Gospel” and any program or activity that may detract from or compete with the preaching of the gospel and the saving of souls (Bosch 1991: 404).
- The church’s loss of credibility among the black population in South Africa (Pieterse 2001: 76).
- A paternalistic attitude on the part the South African church that prescribes for the poor and distances itself so that ministry is neither diaconal nor community based (Pieterse 2001: 76).

The addition of home fellowship groups may increase congregational effectiveness in this area both in the actions of care and service. They will certainly make the church more effective in helping the victim’s of society within its own membership. Wuthnow’s (1994: 322 ff.) survey

reveals that home fellowship groups in any congregation generate a substantial amount of caring and interest that extends beyond the boundaries of the group. The members of these groups are freed from their own insecurities so that they can reach out to others. To create community you have to be in community.

4.5.9 Conclusion

The situational analysis reveals that the criterion of:

- Adaptability reveals a general inability to change that is hindering the church in the actions of proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service. The introduction of an extensive network of home fellowship groups within a congregation may improve the congregation's ability to adapt in the actions of instruction, celebration and care but will probably not improve the actions of proclamation or service.
- Mission reveals the church, as whole, is not being very effective in the action of proclamation, except in some areas with young developing suburbs and in congregations with a membership in the thirty to forty age group. The addition of an extensive network of home fellowship groups within a congregation to the church's structure may indirectly improve a congregation's effectiveness in proclamation but may not or may even work against it!
- Mobilization reveals that a low level of mobilization is hindering the church in its effectiveness in every action. The addition of an extensive network of home fellowship groups within a congregation will help the development of discipleship that may lead to greater effectiveness in these actions but not necessarily in proclamation.
- Discipleship reveals that its general absence is adversely affecting the church in every action. The addition of an extensive network of home fellowship groups within a congregation may help the development of discipleship that may lead to greater effectiveness in these actions but will not necessarily do so if the groups become too comfortable.
- Community building reveals that the absence of true biblical community is impoverishing the actions of proclamation, celebration and care. The addition of an extensive network of home fellowship groups within a congregation will help the development of community in celebration or care but has its dangers if administration is lax and will not always benefit the congregational structure.
- Integration reveals that its absence in many congregations will directly hinder the effectiveness of the actions of proclamation, celebration and service. Most home fellowship

groups are not administered in an integrated manner and can make the administrative problem worse.

- The trinitarian experience God, in its social encounter with others, moral transformation, illumination, gifts, miraculous phenomena and energization will increase the effectiveness of a congregation in the actions of proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service. Its lack is diminishing the effectiveness of many congregations in these actions. Those congregations with an extensive network of home fellowship groups will become more effective particularly in the actions of instruction, celebration and care to the degree to which they permit and seek for this trinitarian experience.
- Serving the poor reveals that in many respects the church is attempting to meet the needs of the economically poor as part of the in the action of service, although there is much to be done. The addition of an extensive network of home fellowship groups within a congregation may or may not make it more effective in this respect. The needs of church members who are poor because they are victims of society may not being very adequately met within their congregations because of the lack of community and dependence upon the full time staff.

In searching for greater effectiveness and the maturation of the congregation many churches in South Africa have introduced home fellowship groups. Yet they are failing to improve the effectiveness of some of the actions either in whole, or on part. They fail because they are:

1. Not outwardly focussed in proclamation.
2. Are often only attended by a small portion of the congregation. Therefore they cannot be considered to be an extensive network within the congregation.
3. Are just another program or meeting added to an already full schedule.
4. Often lack organizational integration and may sometimes even be divisive.
5. May become too comfortable and self-centred.
6. Sometimes concentrate upon fellowship without combining it with discipleship.

The home fellowship group has much to offer in addressing the failure of the church in many areas revealed by the situational analysis in South Africa.. The cell church concept, which is discussed in the next chapter, has partly arisen out of a desire to address the weaknesses found in the unipolar home fellowship group concept and recapture the “bipolar primary group and secondary/tertiary group in tandem” dynamic that its adherents believe is found in the New Testament.

Chapter 5 An evaluation of the cell church concept

This chapter examines the cell church idea from theological, biblical, contextual and sociological perspectives.

5.1 Definition and description of praxis theory

This section contains a definition of and description of what Zerfass calls the “operational influence” (arrow 10 in his diagram—Fig. 3, page 33) of the bipolar cell church structure.

5.1.1 Types of bipolar models

Cell groups are always organized into congregations constituting a bipolar structure (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 95; Neighbour 1990: 203; Lawson 1993: 71; Finnell 1995: 23; Roebert 1997: 27; Comiskey 1998: 17, 18; Stockstill 1998: 16). Within this framework there are various types of model. Three that have been and are currently influential in South Africa are the “Jethro” (or Yongii Cho) model, the “Principle of Twelve” model (Comiskey 1998: 105 ff.) and the “Family Centred “ model described by Potgieter (1995). This latter, although distinctive, has many factors in common with the two former models but as it is not documented by an extensive literature will be subsumed under the “Jethro” model. Other successful models are those originated by Robert in Abidjan (as he shared in South Africa in 1999) and by Stockstill in Louisiana (Stockstill 1998).

The model that will be considered in this study is the Jethro model, which gets its name from Moses father-in-law. In Exodus 18 he advised Moses to divide the people into groups of “thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens” and appoint leaders for each group in order to help him judge and administer them. Moses was then to govern by the “referral” principle – only the most difficult cases being referred to him. This approximates to the organizational structure of cell groups. It was the method first used by Yongii Cho in Korea in the early 1970s (Comiskey 1998: 24). The Jethro model is the original model that Neighbour has promoted.

5.1.2 The perception of the role of the multi-level meetings

Both poles around which the cell church is organized are essential. Webber (1960: 131) speaks of these as “two focii in our life as Christians”. Yet the consensus of opinion is that the cell is the most important structure. The church is seen as the cell, not the congregation. The basic unit of organization is the small cell group and every essential function of the church is carried out through these groups (Snyder (1975: 71; Beckham 1995: 28). They are equated with basic Christian communities fulfilling the essential functions of a church (Neighbour 1990: 18; Beckham 1995: 28-30; Roebert 1997: 4; Comiskey 1998: 17). They are the heart of the congregation and the main tool for evangelism and discipleship. The key to defining a cell church is by looking at the place the cell has in the structure. “Everything that happens in a cell church ... exists to support the cells. Everything relates out from and back to the basic cell community” (Beckham 1995: 31). The aim of is that every member will attend a cell meeting.

5.1.3 The purpose of the multi-level meetings

The primary purpose of the small meeting component of the bipolar church is the establishment of a community (Neighbour 1990: 238; George 1994: 69; Floor 1997: 6). Cells that are developed to make a church grow numerically may fail to achieve this (Neighbour 1990: 238)

There are two secondary purposes, edification and evangelism (Neighbour 1994: 239 ff.; Stockstill 1998: 21). Neighbour (1990: 152, 159) defines edification as the building up of each other by each other, through love and the spiritual gifts, through the application of biblical knowledge to daily life (Floor 1997: 6). Evangelism provides the group with an objective purpose. Cell groups exist to serve by equipping and supporting their members to be witnesses for Jesus in the world (Snyder 1975: 149, 150; Lawson 1993: 67; Comiskey 1998: 18). This means that a tertiary purpose for a cell church is that individual cell groups are expected to grow and multiply (Comiskey 1998: 17).

The purpose of the large celebration meeting is instruction (Neighbour 1990: 152), envisioning (Roebert 1997: 32), community celebration and worship (Neighbour 1994: 17, 18). It is also to support the evangelism that is going on in the cells by organizing evangelistic events (often called “harvest events”) (Neighbour 1994: 18; Finnell 1995: 17, 121). The purpose of the congregational structure is administration (Neighbour 1994: 18; Finnell 1995: 141 ff.), training

(Neighbour 1994: 18; Beckham 1995: 31), organizing cross cultural mission and community service projects (Neighbour 1994: 18), integrating vision, goal setting and planning (Neighbour 1994: 18; Beckham 1995: 30), and oversight (Beckham 1995: 30).

5.1.4 Time span for existence of each cell group

The limited life of a cell distinguishes it from a bible-study or home fellowship group. A cell that grows is formed into two cells when the membership reaches 15 or so (Cho 1981: 66; Neighbour 1990: 204; Lawson 1993: 67; Floor 1997: 6,7). If a cell does not multiply within a given period of time the leadership reassesses it. The cell may then be closed down or the leader asked to spend a protracted time in further training, prayer and fasting. The duration of a cell's existence is therefore determined by either the time taken for it to multiply or the time allocated before the leadership closes it down. This is often a pre-determined period of between 6 to 18 months (Neighbour 1994: 149; Finnell 1995: 30; Kreider 1995: 119 ff.; Comiskey 1998: 24, 102, 103).

5.1.5 The role of the leader

The congregation appoints the leader in a cell. Opinions differ as to the qualities a cell leader needs to fulfill the multiplication purpose. Neighbour (1994: 14) and Roebert (1997: 31) agree that it is not necessary for a cell leader to be a bible teacher or a strong communicator. Cho (see Comiskey 1998: 30), suggests that the leader needs the gift of evangelism; others a strong pastoral gifting (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 98; Schwarz 1998: 97), good people skills (Kreider 1995: 47), or be a competent facilitator (McBride 1990: 97; Kreider 1995: 47). A survey of 700 cell leaders in eight countries revealed no connection between a cell leader's spiritual giftedness and success in multiplication (Comiskey 1998: 29 ff.).

5.2 Functional analysis of cell church theory and praxis

The diagram below compares the unipolar and bipolar church structures. It sets out the 5 actions of the church against the two operations of small groups and the central congregational structure. (The congregational unit is identified with those people who attend that worship service and /or have undergone some initiatory rite in the church, such as baptism, confirmation or attended a membership class.). The activities shown may not be employed in every unipolar congregation. For instance, many churches do not have home fellowship groups or evangelistic visiting teams.

Fig 6(a): Diagram of unipolar church structure with small groups

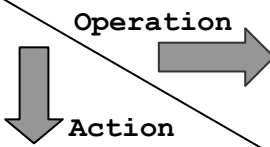
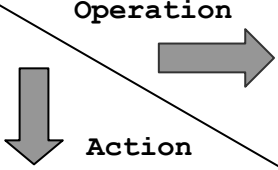
	Bible Study or Home Fellowship Group	Congregational Events
Proclamation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Special investigatory courses for the unchurched or nominal (such as Alpha courses) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visitors to services exposed to gospel 2. Special investigatory courses for the unchurched or nominal (such as Alpha courses) 3. Visitors visited by pastor or evangelistic team.
Instruction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Studies of topics according to needs or interest (essentially a cognitive process) 2. Confirmation class 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preaching and teaching from pulpit. 2. Special equipping functions and training for members and leadership. 3. "Sunday School" 4. Personal discipling?
Celebration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members may worship and pray together. 2. Personal friendships develop 3. Group experiences presence of God if worship and pray together 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weekly celebration event for worship and identity building. 2. Integrated koinonic functions
Care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group provides a circle of friends 2. Group may help members in need 3. Group provides pastoral care 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minister, elders and maybe caring team provide pastoral care. 2. Counselling, usually by minister
Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual members serve congregation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Administration by full time staff or volunteers 2. Specialist staff or church members involved in community projects.

Fig. 6(b) Diagram of bipolar “cell church” structure

	Cell Meeting	Congregational Events
Proclamation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports individual cell members through prayer and encouragement to penetrate oikoses. 2. Organizes koinonic events to which “contacts” invited. 3. “Contacts” invited to normal cell meetings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Harvest Events” organized at which gospel presented. 2. Visitors to worship services invited to attend a cell meeting. 3. “Interest” or “Share Groups” to contact unbelievers. 4. Koinonic events
Instruction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Message discussed in order to understand and apply. 2. Personal discipleship. 3. Modelling 4. Personal stories discussed 5. Opportunities to learn by helping others. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preaching and teaching from pulpit. 2. Special equipping functions and training for cell members and leadership. 3. “Sunday School”
Celebration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cell members worship and pray together. 2. Experience of community as members interact 3. Personal friendships develop 4. Group experiences presence of God. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weekly celebration event for worship and identity building. 2. Integrated koinonic functions for all cells.
Care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cell leaders provide “primary” pastoral care. 2. Group provides emotional support, acceptance and empathy. 3. Group provides a circle of friends who help each other. 4. Group ministers to each other 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cell leadership receive pastoral care. 2. Counselling on referral from cells or of those who are too dysfunctional to be in a cell.
Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group, as a whole, serves the congregation (maintenance, caring for elderly etc.) 2. Individual members serve the congregation. 3. Group serves community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Groups organized, envisioned, supervised and administered. 2. Specialist staff or cell members involved in community projects 3. Cells administered by supervisors

- **Analytical description**

5.2.1 Proclamation

Proclamation is primarily a team effort backing up the individual (Comiskey 1998: 79 ff.) and encouraging each other to reach unbelievers through strategizing, prayer and envisioning (Neighbour 1990: 225; Finnell 1995: 91). It involves cell friendship evangelism attracting newcomers (Cho 1981: 58; George 1994: 69; Beckham 1995: 30; Finnell 1995: 21), building relationships with unbelievers (Neighbour 1990: 242; Beckham 1995: 30); and service evangelism (Cho 1981: 62, 63; George 1994: 69; Comiskey 1998: 91 ff.). Unbelievers are evangelized by what they observe and experience when brought by friends to the cell meeting (Pearce 1985: 67, 68; Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 96).

At the heart of this relational evangelism is the group acting and planning evangelism together. In theory everyone in the group gets involved, using their particular giftings to create community, to care and serve the unbeliever. “The synergy of the small group is an especially positive factor in the witness of the group. Evangelism is best when it is in a team, not an individual effort. The various gifts of members allow the group to reach lost people in a way no individual could” (Mack 1996: 53).

Although the cell church concept of proclamation is partly a reaction against the confrontational method of evangelism a confrontational approach is used at specially arranged congregational celebration meetings. It is, however, judged not to be so offensive as in a traditional church, and much more effective, since most of the unbelievers present will have been partly socialized to the congregation through the friendships developed in the cell group.

5.2.2 Instruction

Instruction often centers around discussing how to apply the Sunday message (Cho 1981: 51; Finnell 1995: 89). There is some difference as to whether bible-study is an essential component of cell life. Snyder (1975: 149) and Lawson (1993: 67) think it is. Others reject “bible-study” as a valid cell activity (Finnell 1995: 95). “The bible is used freely as a guide for its lifestyle, but the cell is not a place for bible-study. These needs are fulfilled at a different level of the church” (Roebert 1997: 31).

It is centred around modelling, equipping, and hands on training (Neighbour 1990: 218; Finnell 1995: 18). It has a cognitive element but this is balanced by the affective component that changes values (Neighbour 1994: 65 ff.; 211; 362). Cell group theory stresses the integration of the cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of human behaviour within the cell meeting enabling the whole person to experience Christ in daily living (Snyder 1989: 260; Beckham 1995: 79; Roebert 1997: 63).

Thus instruction aims for certain values. These include intimacy and building up of relationships (Cho 1981: 50, 51; Lawson 1993: 71; George 1994: 69; Neighbour 1994: 148 Beckham 1995: 30); transparency (Neighbour 1994: 13; Beckham 1995: 30); accountability (George 1994: 69; Neighbour 1994: 13; Beckham 1995: 30), mutual support, encouragement, pastoral care and a servant heart towards each other, the church and the world (Cho 1981: 62 ff.: Lawson 1993: 67; George 1994: 69; Neighbour 1994: 14, 148). Every member is expected to be involved and use his or her spiritual gifts (Cho 1981: 50 ff.; Lawson 1993: 67; George 1994: 69; Neighbour 1994: 14; Comiskey 1998: 54 ff.) and depend on the Holy Spirit, expecting the miraculous (Cho 1981: 5; Lawson 1993: 70).

The cell leader takes responsibility to be involved in personal discipling (mentoring) of cell members or to organize it. The leader is expected to be the main role model for the cell members in ministry and life-style. A necessary complement to instruction in the cell are special seminars on a more cognitive basis to cover such issues as cell leader training, new member orientation, spiritual warfare training, the spiritual gifts, evangelism training and bible knowledge issues (Neighbour 1994: 17 ff.).

5.2.3 Celebration

The small cell group meetings of cell churches usually meet in private homes (Beckham 1995: 30; Floor 1997: 6). The large celebration meetings meet in large homes, School Halls or Civic facilities, traditional church buildings or specially constructed premises.

There is a pragmatic approach to the frequency of meeting for the cell groups. Usually the small group meeting is held on a weekly basis, as at Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, Korea (Cho 1981: 50; Comiskey 1998: 17). Most cell literature states that the small cells meet “regularly”

(Neighbour 1990: 197; Lawson 1993: 67), thus allowing room for experimentation and inculturation. Variety and flexibility distinguish the frequency and nature of the celebration meeting. It may take place weekly as is the case with Faith Community Baptist Church in Singapore and the Full Gospel Central Church (Cho 1981: 51; Beckham 1995: 30). It may take place once every six weeks as with the Dove Christian Fellowship in the USA, or once a year as with The Yopougon Protestant Baptist Church and Mission in Abidjan (Neighbour 1994: 19).

The size of the celebration is unimportant for the purpose of the definition. The size of the cell group, however, is usually limited to no more than 12-15 people (Snyder 1975: 70; Neighbour 1990: 210; 1994: 13; Lawson 1993: 67; George 1994: 53, 54).

Celebration in the cell groups is informal allowing the freedom of the Spirit, generally including sharing, worship and prayer (Ortiz 1975: 107; Snyder 1975: 95; Neighbour 1990: 225; Finnell 1995: 90; Floor 1997: 6, 7). This is in essence the celebration action as part of the koinonic function. This function is the key to understanding the cell church theory. "A cell church is people centered. The focus of the church is to meet the intimate needs of its members and non-Christians... the cell church does have some programs. Yet in contrast to the traditional church's basic organizational structure, the cell church is built around people and relationships not programs" (Finnell 1995: 14, 15).

In cell groups members take off their masks and can receive edification and healing (Beckham 1995: 30). The dynamic at work in a cell group cannot be duplicated in a large group (Beckham 1995: 60). The effectiveness of inter-personal relationships is in inverse proportion to the size of the group (Beckham 1995: 63). The normal cell meeting program is designed to allow these communication lines to be maximized and to facilitate community building. Thus the cell meeting facilitates the primary, face-to-face relationships that give the church social cohesion and power (Snyder 1989: 260). It is claimed that this community building plus the fact that in the cells every member gets a chance to develop and use their spiritual gifts (Beckham 1995: 30; Lawson 1993: 71; Neighbour 1990: 160) will allow God to be experienced within a cell group. This will be in a way that will significantly impact the cell members (Neighbour 1994: 165).

Yet in a cell church the large gathering is also an essential meeting. In the large gathering the community express their identity as the people of God. It is an essential part of community building and facilitating a sense of identity and purpose. This fosters an atmosphere of festival, celebration and covenant renewal in a way that a smaller one cannot (Snyder 1975: 105 ff.). For this reason a large gathering may more effectively present the claims of Christ to some people than a small group meeting, (Finnell 1995: 17). Thus the purpose of a celebration meeting is envisioning, instruction, community worship (Roebert 1997: 32) and evangelism.

5.2.4 Care

Care involves hands-on prayer (George 1994: 69), listening to each other's stories (Finnell 1995: 90), primary pastoral care (Beckham 1995: 31), healing (Beckham 1995: 30) and using the spiritual gifts (Finnell 1995: 90). It is an important action within a cell group. Cell church literature is full of examples of the priority that must often be given to it in cell meetings. "...thirty minutes of hugging, crying, advising, rebuking, showing mercy, or praying can be just as much of a lesson, if that's what the Holy Spirit wanted to do on that particular day as discussing the Sunday message" (George 1994: 218). "When a member belongs to a cell group, he knows he is loved and cared for, and that is the kind of security many people never find in churches that do not have cell groups" (Cho 1981: 53).

A cell is intended to be a place where people have enough social reference points to find themselves sustained emotionally and spiritually. It is a context for meeting needs for intimacy and trust (George 1994: 69). People are encouraged to share emotions and they are treated with respect (Floor 1997: 7). Thus primary care for members is provided at the cell level instead of the professional staff level (Beckham 1995: 31). This means that cell leaders are expected to have a pastoral heart for people

Within this context cell church literature points out that it is common for groups to go through four phases of development – the "get-acquainted" stage, the conflict stage, the community stage and the "ministering-to-others" stage. It is essential for conflicts, such as those due to relational insensitivity, differing value systems and personalities, to surface and be resolved before the community stage can be achieved (Roebert 1995: 42 ff.). This is a difficult stage to go through

since many people try to avoid conflict and believe that unless everyone readily agrees with the “majority” opinion the group has failed (Beebe 2000:13).

When the community stage is reached then members will be cared for as they become deeply committed to each other. The cell must not become too comfortable at this stage but move forward to reach out to unbelievers and seek to include them in the cell (Roebert 1995: 42 ff.).

5.2.5 Service

Cell church literature claims that a cell church is structured to serve the world more effectively than a unipolar church. It both integrates the purposes of the individual cells by effective administration and yet mobilizes and supports these cells as they move to meet the unique needs they may be encountering among their members and with their missional contacts in society. The small group structure, and the member as an individual, is enabled to touch the lives of hurting people far more effectively than through the programs organized by the unipolar church. The cell is on the cutting edge of the church - world interface and is thus able to speedily identify needs, and personally respond (Beckham 1995: 75).

Yet the ministry of the cells is integrated, administered both organizationally and financially, direction set, and oversight given by the congregational leadership. The cells fulfill the function of facilitating the congregational action of service by significantly reducing the number of programs necessary to run the church as compared with a unipolar church. Cell church literature claims that a cell church is thus able to have a far simpler organizational and leadership structure than a unipolar church of comparative size (Beckham 1995: 28, 79; Stockstill 1998: 25 ff.).

In a typical cell church each cell leader oversees 5 to 15 cell members. A zone “elder” or supervisor oversees 5 cells. A zone pastor oversees 5 zone elders. Five zone pastors are accountable to a district pastor. This means that approximately 100 to 125 cells may be under the oversight of a district pastor. In practice a zone supervisor may oversee anything from 2 to 6 cells, or from twenty to sixty persons and a zone pastor may care for 10 to 25 cells or 100 to 300 persons (Neighbour 1990: 195; Beckham 1995: 187, 188; Finnell 1995: 146, 147; Comiskey 1998: 108).

5.3 Analysis of its nature in the New Testament

It appears to be the position of Floor (1997: 26, 27) and Potgieter (1995: 21) that a practical functional cell church model is not found in the bible. While this may be true when it comes to exact details, recent literature is underlining the importance of both the small-group meeting in households and the bipolar structure, in the New Testament. This includes Clowney 1987, Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987, Branick 1989, Doohan 1989, Elliot 1991, Banks 1994, Barclay 1997, Esler 1997, Moxnes 1997, Dunn 1998 and Heitink 1999. This section attempts to answer the question of whether a bipolar model may be found in the New Testament and how precisely its functioning is described. The analysis will be made using the five ecclesiological functional actions defined in chapter one.

5.3.1 In the gospel record

5.3.1.1 Proclamation

Jesus proclaimed the gospel to the crowds, in the synagogue and Temple (Matthew 9:35,36; Luke 4: 14,15; 20:1). He also used his small group of disciples to reach the lost in other small groups (Matthew 10:5-20; Mark 1:29- 34; 2: 1-12; Luke 9: 1-6). It penetrated society through the entering into other small groups or households. When Jesus sent the apostles out to preach, he said, “Into whatever house (oikia) you enter, remain there until you leave” (Mark 6:10). “The key to mission was acceptance by one household” (Branick 1989: 19). While this may be an over-simplification the household was certainly was a major evangelistic target in the gospels (Luke 7: 36-50; 9:4; 10:5-7; 18:1-27). Proclamation included a strong relational element that Matthew records as being a corporate small group activity (Matthew 10:5 ff.).

5.3.1.2 Instruction

Jesus taught large crowds in the synagogues, in the temple, and around the countryside (Lawson 1993: 67). On numerous other occasions the gospels record that Jesus spent much time teaching only the twelve (for instance - Matthew 5:1 ff.; 11:1; 13:36 ff.; Mark 4:10 ff.; Luke 24:36- 49). They often discussed Jesus’ public teaching together where he often took the opportunity to explain it more fully to them and apply it to their lives. Within the context of this small group Jesus spent more time in leadership development with Peter, James and John (Lawson 1993: 68). This teaching was not confined to the cognitive domain but involved them being taught through many affective experiences (as in Mark 4:35ff; 5:1-13; 37-43; 10:13-16; 35-46). Out of the 125 teaching situations in the gospels Jesus was the initiator only about 40% of the time. The

remaining 60% of the situations came about in response to an event experienced by or a question raised by others. Jesus often used these opportunities to personally apply his teaching to individuals which made it very powerful and effective (Radcliffe 1996: 85).

5.3.1.3 Celebration

Jesus worshipped with his disciples in the synagogue and attended temple feasts (Luke 4:16; John 10:10, 14). At the same time the small group provided him with the intimate community support that he, in his humanity, needed (Shawchuck and Heuser 1993: 46). It provided a secure environment where he could worship with his disciples both by ceremony and in song (Matthew 26: 26-30, Luke 22:17-20). It enabled him to teach about and model kingdom relationships as a part of his syllabus for them (Matthew 5-7) and in the experiences he gave them (Mark 9:14- 29; 10:35-45; Luke 11:1 ff.; John 13:1-17).

5.3.1.4 Care

Jesus practiced a wonderful ministry of healing and deliverance in crowd settings (Mark 1:21-28; 3:7-12). He also ministered to the pastoral needs of the disciples (Mark 14: 29-31), touching their family circles (Mark 1:29-31) and praying for them (Luke 22:32; John 17) in a small group context.

5.3.1.5 Service

Jesus taught much to the crowds and to the disciples about serving each other, emphasizing the mission aspect of service by his analogies of the church as light and salt (Matthew 5:13- 16). He modelled service by washing their feet and dying for the world on the cross (Mark 41-45). “Jesus had come to lay down his life for the sake of others, and his disciples were called by him to do exactly the same” (Watson 1983: 26). The main examples of the disciples as a small group serving the world was their ministry of healing and deliverance (Matthew 10:1, Luke 9:1) which were also signs of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. The feeding of the five thousand may be regarded as a failed attempt by Jesus to use the disciples in service (Mark 6:37).

5.3.1.6 Conclusion

Jesus’ ministry provides strong support for a model of church in which both large and small group ministries are necessary to fulfill its functions. The large group is necessary to impact society and build group identity. The small group ministry is vitally important in order to fulfill the disciple making and leadership development functions and was used by Jesus to penetrate society at a personal level (such as through households). In and through his small group ministry Jesus performed the actions of proclamation, instruction, celebration care, and service.

The bipolar nature of Jesus’ ministry is unquestionable. Its normative nature for every society is another question. Jesus’ use of a small group of disciples was culturally acceptable in the social

context in which he lived. It was common practice both in Greek and Jewish society for teachers and rabbis to collect a group of disciples around themselves. It is therefore arguable, that to a certain extent he accommodated himself and his methods to the social milieu in which he lived and worked. It is however very difficult to conceive of a structure other than the small group which would, as adequately, fulfill all the functions contained in the actions discussed above.

There are practices in the modern cell church, however, for which there is uncertain, evidence in the gospels as to how they precisely functioned. For instance, Jesus' most important structure was bipolar. Yet he worked with groups of other sizes than that of the twelve or the crowd, such as the 72 (Luke 10:1) and probably the 120 (Acts 1:15). There is no record how these were organized or how they were included in the operational fields of Jesus' ministry. In another instance, the length of time Jesus was with his small group of disciples is not clear. It may have ranged from eighteen months (Coleman 1964: 24) to just under three years (Beckham 1995: 153). The longer estimate poses problems for the cell church theory's advocated time of 18 months for the existence of a cell group.

5.3.2 In Acts and the Pauline Corpus

The book of Acts and the Pauline corpus records intentionally and incidentally the expansion of the early church. An analysis of ministry structures must take account development, social structures, organization, perceptions, composition, reasons for development of the bipolar structure and of meetings in private homes and functional actions.

5.3.2.1 The natural development of the organization over time.

At the beginning of the New Testament an intimate community is pictured bound together by an itinerant preacher from Nazareth. The Pauline letters paint a picture of a democratic charismatic community, a church "from the bottom up". However, by the end of the first century a well-organized and structured institution is encountered with officers in charge exercising authority over the church and a tradition to maintain. This is by no means a simple transition or progression. It is the start of a healthy tension between the need for intimate community and for organization. Rather than resolving this tension, the New Testament sustained both poles, each essential for its contribution to the whole (Dudley and Hilgert 1987: 23, 24; Dunn 1998: 563; Heitink 1999: 91).

5.3.2.2 *The social context and the importance of the oikos*

It is appropriate at this stage to discuss the “oikos” concept as developed by Neighbour (1990: 114 ff.). Neighbour (1990: 82) defines it as “those people that we relate to on a regular basis.” It is used as a sociological and theological justification for cell friendship and relational evangelism and as a tool for its practical implementation. Although a helpful sociological concept care must be taken reading its current sociological meaning back into the New Testament.

In New Testament Greek, oikos has the meaning of a building consisting of one or more rooms normally serving as a dwelling place and may even be applied to a temple or palace (see Matthew 11:8) (Louw and Nida 1988: 81 ff.). Its meaning also extended into the domain of possessions and kinship. Thus it could mean either, “the material possessions of the head of the household” or “all the members of the household, those who were under the authority of the head: wife, children, and other blood relatives, as well as slaves and servants” (Moxnes 1997: 21). The latter relational meaning clearly defines the large household structure whereby social relations were governed by personal relationships between a patron and his clients.

The oikos concept played a key role in the early church’s social concretization of the gospel. The range of oikos derived terminology alone gives a strong indication of its important influence on the early church (Elliot 1991: 225). Filson (1939: 105 ff.) was the first scholar to draw attention to the fundamental significance that the household institution played in both the society of the Greco-Roman world and the New Testament church. It was an important unit because it was the basis of economic activity, involving clients and business partners (Branick 1989: 20), being the basic social structure of the Greco-Roman world including the richer Greek influenced households in Palestine (Tidball 1984: 79; Moxnes 1997: 21). Although it was also found in rural Palestine it carried a different connotation. In both these cultures the oikos was important but the position and composition of the oikos within the two societies differed (Guijarro 1997: 59).

In the rural Palestine of the gospels the household (oikos) was an economic unit of production that was bound less by emotional ties than by the necessity to live together in order to work together. This type of unit was more often found among the Galilean peasant social classes mentioned in the gospels (Moxnes 1997: 21). It seems that in Jewish peasant culture of the time many families were the ‘multiple families’ that are a very common type in the Near East today. A multiple family is one in which two or more conjugal families, who are related to each other, have independent living quarters in the same house (Guijarro 1997: 59).

The difference between the social domains of the Greco-Roman and Palestinian rural oikos may explain why the household seems never to have become central to the religious life of the disciples in the gospels. In these records the Temple and synagogue still play the traditionally central role for this new “Jewish sect” that they did in orthodox Judaism, despite the opposition of their hierarchy towards Jesus (Elliot 1991: 231).

There is no reason why groups of Jesus’ disciples should not have met in small groups in houses and have used them as bases for churches. In rural areas there seems to have been considerable penetration of Palestinian rural life by Greco-Roman culture, and we know from the gospel record that many of the houses of the richer people could easily accommodate a considerable number of people, even in Galilee. Evidence for such a scenario is provided by the most ancient archaeological evidence of a house church which comes from Capernaum, where Jesus often used Peter’s house for his meetings. Remains of a house with a large hall (45.5 sq.m.) dating to the first century AD have been found under an octagonal 5th century Byzantine church which tradition attributes to being built on the site of Peter’s residence (Blue 1994: 138).

There is in general, however, a paucity of evidence as to what happened in rural Palestinian (or any rural) communities. This continues into the records of the early church found in Acts and the epistles of Paul. Christians in these communities may have continued to use the synagogue as a base, not differentiating themselves too much from their orthodox neighbours or they may have used houses in which to meet. Such a situation would have changed dramatically, of course, after the Jewish revolt in 70 AD. But up until this time many Jewish Christians certainly continued to regard the Temple as a legitimate place in which to meet.

There is much more evidence for what happened in the urban Greco-Roman world in Acts and the epistles of Paul. In the urban Greco-Roman world the oikos lent itself admirably to becoming a centre for both small and large group meetings and to becoming a centre for administration and a focus for loyalties and the establishment of social identity. Most of the references to house churches in Acts and the epistles of Paul come from urban areas with the possible exception of those house churches mentioned in Galatians (see below for references).

5.3.2.3 Organization of Meetings

a) Location of meetings

Early Christians used and adapted a variety of places for their gatherings, both for large and small groups. Acts records private homes, upper rooms (presumably in apartment blocks), the temple, synagogues and teaching halls. They were limited by the fact that the majority of urban inhabitants dwelt, “in small dark, poorly ventilated, crowded buildings where privacy was unavailable” (Osiek and Balch 1997: 32). Most meetings for the whole church would probably have been held in the more spacious homes of the wealthy, in one or two rooms of an insula (block of flats) or in a large ground floor room in such a block (Osiek and Balch 1997: 33, 34).

References to small group meetings occur in Acts 2:46; 20:7; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 14: 26- 33; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2. The description of those belonging to the Galatian congregations as *oikeioi tes pisteos* in 6:10 indicates that the context for their meetings was probably a house, *oikos*, owned by a member. On three occasions in his correspondence Paul uses the term *kat’ oikon ekklesia*, ‘house-church’, to describe a congregation convening in a private household in 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:5 and Philemon 2 (Esler 1997: 135).

There is good reason to suppose that what happened in those cities such as Jerusalem, Corinth, Laodicea and those in Galatia reflects what happened in other cities of the Empire because of the restraints on the meeting places available to Christians. This limited them to meeting often in homes. Although it is recorded that at Ephesus Paul was able to hire the “lecture hall of Tyrannus” (Acts 19:9) even in this case Paul in his farewell address to the Ephesians elders, mentions teaching, “publicly *and from house to house*” (Acts 20:20). So the house meeting was an important unit despite the availability of a lecture hall even in Ephesus.

If a Corinthian origin is accepted for the book of Romans then more evidence for a large meeting of the whole church comes from its concluding section. In Romans 16:23, Paul includes a greeting from one Gaius whom he describes as “host to me and the whole church” (Romans 16:23). It appears that the small groups may have used his home for a gathering of the ‘whole’ church (O’Brien 1987: 91, 92; Dunn 1998: 541). Gaius was probably one of the more eminent men in the city. It is therefore not surprising that his home should be used for a gathering of the whole Christian community. Ample space would be required for such a meeting and it is precisely this that men of Gaius’ status could provide (Banks 1994: 32). As to Laodicea, the

church in Laodicea is a city church, but apparently there was also in Laodicea a house church, meeting in the house of Nymphas (Col.4: 15) (Clowney 1987: 23).

Speaking of the letters Paul wrote to Corinthians, Philemon and Colossus (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3,5; Phlm. 2; Col. 4:15) and the houses in which the recipients met Branick (1989: 13, 14) writes, “The private dwelling functioned for the church on two levels. It formed the environment for house churches... gatherings of Christians around one family in the home of that family... On a second broader level, the private dwelling formed the environment for gatherings of the local church, the assembly of all Christian households and individuals in a city.” There is clear evidence of a bipolar, multi-level assembling among the early Christians (Tidball 1984: 89).

Rome may have been an exception to this common pattern of multi-level assembling. There is no suggestion that the Christians of Rome ever met as a whole in one place. A century later Justin Martyr mentions that this was still the case (Tidball 1984: 83; Banks 1994: 31, 32). Dunn (1998: 542) suggests that the church in Rome thrived through a sequence of house groups. The size of the metropolis and the diversity of its population suggest that the Roman model was exceptional. This would make it far more difficult to have a coordinated two-winged structure in Rome than in a much more homogenous and smaller city such as Laodicea and Corinth.

a) Frequency of meetings

The only evidence we have as to the frequency of small group meetings is found in the Jerusalem church in Acts 2:46 and Acts 5:42. This suggests that small group meetings occurred on a daily basis. There is no evidence as to the practice in the Greco-Roman urban centres. There is some more evidence as to the frequency of the larger meetings. The practice in Jerusalem appears to have been for the whole church to meet daily for a period of several years after Pentecost (Acts 2:46; 5:42). In fact the location of their meeting, Solomon’s colonnade, in the Temple, seems to have become the known and acknowledged daily meeting place where anyone could find the church at any time (Acts 5:12). In Corinth, on the other hand, the evidence suggests that the whole church met together only on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16: 1,2). The fact that this became the common practice in the post-apostolic church suggests that this was more normative for the church as a whole.

b) Size of meetings

The size of Christian meetings was determined the nature of these meetings. Archaeological evidence has led to estimates concerning the maximum size of meetings varying from 40 to 100

in large houses. This larger figure, however, may not give enough consideration to the presence of household furnishings and statuary (Dunn 1998: 542).

The homes of the wealthy were very spacious. At Corinth a private house from the time of Paul has been excavated. The dining room alone, which was a favourite Christian meeting place, measured more than forty square metres (Thiede 1990: 144). The entertaining room in a moderately well to do household could hold around thirty people comfortably - perhaps half as many again in an emergency. The larger meeting in Troas, for example was so large that Eutychus had to use the windowsill for a seat (Acts 20:9). A meeting of the “whole church” may have reached forty to forty-five people - if the meeting spilled over into the atrium then the number could have been greater, though no more than double that size.

The evidence suggests that even the meetings of the “whole church” were small enough for a relatively close relationship to develop between the members. Many meetings may well have been smaller. The average meeting may have comprised around thirty to thirty-five people. Naturally the small group meetings and the domestic groups would have been smaller, although there is no way of determining their average size (Banks 1994: 35, 36).

5.3.2.4 The perception of the nature of these household meetings

It would appear that the “small-group” meetings and the “whole-church” meetings in private houses were regarded as meetings of the church and could be called authentic and complete ekklesia. To the apostle Paul every Christian assembly for worship was a meeting of the church, be it in a small group or of the whole church (Dunn 1998: 542). So for instance when in 1 Timothy 3: 15 he calls the church the household of God it shows that that the household could be conceived of as the church in microcosm (Barclay 1997: 77). All meetings were considered as “the church” meeting. “The Church in a private house was as much the church as the whole Christianity of Corinth” (Forsyth 1953: 70).

5.3.2.5 The composition of house churches

The Christian community gathered within the houses in the oikoi of socially significant members (Tidball 1984: 82; Barclay 1997: 75). Because an oikos expressed its solidarity through the adoption of a common religion, normally that of the pater familias, there would be considerable social pressure for everyone in his oikos to follow his example when he became a Christian (Tidball 1984: 84). It is therefore noteworthy that the New Testament indicates that not all the

members of a household were fellow-believers. The house church, on the one hand, and the household on the other hand, did not simply coincide.

Not every member of a family became a Christian when the head of the household did (Branick 1989: 22). Thus, for example, Philemon was a Christian but his slave, Onesimus, only became a Christian after he escaped from the household and met Paul in Rome as recorded in Philemon 10 (Barclay 1997: 75, 76). Paul addresses Christian small groups in households (oikoses) apparently headed by non-Christians. For instance the greeting to the “members of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord” (Romans 16:11) appears to be a greeting to a specific Christian group within an otherwise non-Christian household (Branick 1989: 22).

5.3.2.6 The reason for the development of a bipolar structure

The first clearly and seemingly consciously reported bipolar structure in the Acts record is that recorded in Acts 2: 42-47. It then becomes a part of Paul’s missionary strategy as well as occurring in other parts of the Greco-Roman world where he had never been. The question must be asked, “What caused this seemingly sudden appearance of the bipolar structure?” “Was it a sudden inspiration on the Day of Pentecost or had the seeds been sown in the ministry of Jesus or in the religio-socio-historical background?”

Multi-level assembling in groups of various sizes was a part of both Jewish and Greek culture. The individual identified himself or herself with groups of various sizes. In Judaism there was the level of the Nation under God which assembled in the Temple. Then there was the synagogue, a much smaller gathering (Doohan 1989: 41 ff.). Meetings in private homes, often in the extended family unit, were also seen as a vital part of the socio-religious structure of the community as evidenced in Deuteronomy 4:9- 10, 11:19, the Passover (Exodus 12: 26-27) and the Sabbath (Heitink 1999: 279).

The Greek citizen identified himself with his city (politeia). Then there were many smaller groups he could belong to such as voluntary associations that included guilds or religious groups (or koinonia), discipleship schools and underpinning them all, the oikos. According to Doohan (1989: 47) these considerably influenced the development of the early church.

It is therefore not surprising that when faced with an emergency situation (the 3000 conversions recorded in Acts 2: 41) the Apostles should fall back on multi-level assembling to cope with this

influx of new converts. Probably the simplest pattern to organize was to meet as a large group all together then in the homes of new or pre-existing converts. Maybe these groupings organized themselves to a large extent around a person with a larger than normal house, a notable leader with a home in Jerusalem or one of the 120, especially in the initial stages.

Practical considerations may also have played a part in the initiation of a bipolar structure. A “whole church” meeting was needed because there were some activities that only specialists could perform. These specialists were limited in number and thus it was necessary for the whole church to come together to receive their services (as recorded in Ephesians 4: 11). For instance, teaching was an apostolic function. There were not enough apostles to teach the approximately 200 small groups that the church in Jerusalem may have been divided into, assuming they were limited to roughly 15 persons each, and that the total number of people was 3000. Thus to receive apostolic teaching, especially on a daily basis, the whole church had to come together.

Beckham (1995: 214) suggests that another factor in determining the use of a bipolar structure is the need for an individual to be identified with a minimum number of people, several times larger than small group size. This seems to be essential for a movement to be self-supporting, self-sustaining and self-perpetuating. Jesus developed a base congregation of the 120 people, who were in the Upper Room, before initiating the expansion of the church at Pentecost (Beckham 1995: 154). The size of the base congregation may actually have been 500, if 1 Corinthians 15:6 is interpreted as only previous believers seeing the resurrected Jesus.

There are various possible reasons why Paul perpetuated the bipolar structure (similar arguments may have influenced the initiation of bipolar structures in non-Pauline churches):

1. He may have been influenced by his contact with the Jerusalem church. He was in Jerusalem when Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58; 8:1) and his zeal in persecuting the church (Philippians 3: 6) may have led him to investigate how they met together.
2. He came from a Jewish-Greek background and would have been familiar with the Greek and Jewish concept of multi-level assembling.
3. Problems with divisiveness experienced in some of the house churches, especially in Corinth, may have commended a bipolar approach in order to control the small meetings.
4. His emphasis on the body of Christ metaphor, if one accepts a Pauline authorship for Ephesians, would have provided a doctrinal motivation for a bipolar approach. It would

have been inconceivable to his theology that all the small groups in a city should not be connected by meeting together in some way as 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 demonstrates.

5. The oikos structure found in the Greco-Roman world would lend itself readily to a bipolar approach. The larger houses of the wealthy being used both for meetings of the whole church and the small group meetings.
6. The Greco-Roman oikos social structure embraced certain values that were compatible both theologically and socially with those found in apostolic Christianity, such as family and fellowship (Banks 1994: 56, 108).
7. The oikos social structure provided a natural base for mission and evangelism in Greco-Roman society (Branick 1989: 18; Doohan 1989: 142; Tidball 1983: 85).
8. The networking of these house churches into a local church appears to be the object of a special effort on the part of Paul (Branick 1989: 22, 23).

5.3.2.7 The reason for the development of small meetings in private dwellings

This section is necessary because the development of small meetings in private dwellings is a marked feature of early Christianity and distinguishes it from most of the rest of its two thousand years of history. The following reasons are given in the available literature as to why meeting in the private dwellings of oikoses played such an important role in first century Christianity:

1. Small group meetings in private dwellings preserved some of the methods and values of Jesus' ministry from when he discipled the twelve (Lawson 1993: 68).
2. Private dwellings provided a convenient meeting place, either as the preferred venue in which to meet or because none other was available for several reasons;
 - The developing hostility to Christian gatherings on the part of the synagogue or guild (as in Acts 17:4-9; 18:4-8; 19:23-28) (Branick 1989: 14).
 - The unsavoury connotations of rooms available in the local Temple (Branick 1989: 14; Banks 1994: 56).
 - Meeting in private households meant that the early Christians meetings did not have to conform to the Jewish or any other pattern of worship. The Christians were free to develop patterns that met their own needs (Tidball 1984: 82).
 - A desire for privacy to avoid persecution, especially after Nero's persecution, which began in 64 AD. This was probably not the motive before that time since Christianity was not persecuted before then (Wand 1963: 16).
3. The private dwelling was perceived as the most effective structure for ministry. Hadaway, DuBose and Wright (1987: 63) believe that not only did the house church play

the main role in molding church life but that, at the time, it was the most effective structure for Christian ministry available. They write, “the very context of the house church enhanced the function of the church.” One of the practical advantages of meeting in a private home was that culinary facilities would have been available for the love–feast (Blue 1994: 121).

4. The private dwelling setting for the action of celebration was compatible with the sacred Old Testament traditions of the first Jewish Christians that stressed the importance of the home (Banks 1990: 20; Branick 1989: 16, 17).

5.3.2.8 *Functional analysis*

a) Proclamation

The pre-Pauline evidence for proclamation occurring both within small groups and to the multitudes is found in Acts 2, Acts 5:42; 10:1-48; 11:14-15. Paul preferentially went to the synagogue first of all but if there was not one in the city or he was rejected or as the ministry developed, the small group became a center for his operations (Acts 16:15; 18:17; 20:20). “Most probably the conversion of a household and the consequent formation of a house church formed the key element in Paul’s strategic plan to spread the gospel to the world... The Acts makes such household conversion almost a theme in itself (Acts 10:2; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8)” (Branick 1989: 18).

Paul may have made it a part of this strategy to reach heads (the paterfamilias) of households (oikoi) so that he might then establish “house-churches” in their private dwellings (Sandnes 1997: 152). The household not only gave him a good number of converts initially but a centre for his future operations becoming a centre of hospitality and missionary endeavor (Doohan 1989: 142). It was well suited to serve as a centre for evangelism to other households and the surrounding neighbourhood in general. “This would occur not least, through day-to-day contacts the household would have with others for business or commercial reasons” (Tidball 1983: 85).

Mass public meetings enabled the church to give the gospel a greater exposure and make a greater impact in society beyond the capability of a single house church (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 65). The success, however, of these mass public meetings in penetrating society was very much dependant upon the success of the small group in fulfilling its role. “Even though the missional nature of the early church compelled it to forms of public witness outside the homes as an augmentation to the evangelism which happened there, it was the common life of

the house church centred in its teaching, fellowship and worship which provided the theological and spiritual basis for its witness” (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 67).

b) Instruction

Instruction took place in both the small group and the congregational gathering. The use of small groups for instruction is recorded in Acts 2:42, 5:42; 18:7-11; 20:7-12, 20. The Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42, 46) and the synagogue (Acts 17:11) were also used for instruction of larger groups. On one occasion Paul hired a hall for such an activity (Acts 19: 9).

c) Celebration

Something of the liturgical practices, ministry and nature of the large group meeting, when the whole church is gathered together, comes across in 1 Corinthians 11:17-14:40. There is not much actual direct evidence recorded in Acts or the Pauline Epistles concerning the nature of this action in the small groups of the first century. There are only two indisputable references –Acts 2:42, 46, 47; 20:7- 12. Yet there is much indirect evidence as to the central importance of the koinonic and liturgical aspects of celebration within the small groups.

The Lord’s Supper, grew out of the Passover feast, and its first observance was in the small group home setting. As it developed and later came to be linked to the *agape* meal, the home became the most appropriate setting (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 64). “...The private home and specifically the dining room (*triclinium* or *diwan*) provided an environment that corresponded remarkably with the Christians’ self-identification, reflecting Jesus’ own choice of an “upper room” for his last supper, his own choice of non-sacred space as the environment of his work, and his insistence of familial ties among believers” (Branick 1989: 14, 15). The common table, in the center of the room with the community encircling it, gave this religious observance a powerful family orientation (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 64).

The small group meeting in the home also lent itself readily to the koinonic function since individuals would be able to relate much more readily in a the informal family-type gathering rather than in a larger more impersonal group. These gatherings involved much interaction, personal contacts, affective relationships, common goals and norms (Heitink 1999: 279). “The church as the household of God and the household of faith was best able to express itself in the hospitality and fellowship of the Christian home” (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 63).

The community experienced fellowship of such an intimate kind that it can be described with ‘family’ terminology. As a result household concepts have shaped and been used to describe

Christianity's values. This is evidenced in the use of kinship terminology, such as "father", "child"/ "children" and especially "brother"/brethren." The picture of intimacy is reinforced when it is remembered that because the space was limited, even in the larger homes of the well-to-do citizens the members of the community had direct face-to-face contact with each other ((Bosch 1991: 166; Van der Ven 1996: 304). The practical necessity of meeting in a private homes clearly blended with Paul's theological understanding of the Christian community (Branick 1989: 16, 17).

d) Care

Direct evidence of care through the house church is very limited in the Acts account. However, the overwhelming evidence for the central place of house churches in Christianity in the first century means that many references to the action of care in the epistles must have operated in this context (for example, Romans 15:1-3; Galatians 6:1-10; Philippians 2:1-4; Titus 2:1-15). Van der Ven (1996: 304, 305) suggests that the small group meeting provided a functional pastoral structure in the later apostolic, Pauline and post-Pauline communities, despite their relatively low degree of overall organization because they had the external shape of the oikos social formation. It would have been much easier to recognize and attend to needs in a small group. Care would have also been exercised through the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit in the large group meeting as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14.

e) Service

There are no direct examples in Acts of the house churches serving the needs of the world or of the whole church exercising an integrating function for the small groups. If the argument is accepted that the small group is an ecclesiolae then the servanthood teaching that applies to the church as a whole will apply to it. There is no basis purely from the scriptural evidence to suggest that this will operate more effectively through the small groups. Indeed in Acts 6, the distribution of alms to widows was a function of the whole church.

5.3.2.9 Conclusion

The Pauline ministry provides evidence in the actions of proclamation, instruction, celebration and care that a bipolar structure operated with broad similarities to that advocated by the cell church movement today.

Those features of the modern cell church for which there is no direct evidence are:

1. The manner in which proclamation was conducted in the absence of Paul.

2. How the small groups multiplied. Were new groups founded through conversion in connection with a leading figure (an evangelist?) or did existing groups grow until they naturally multiplied?
3. How the small groups were linked to the “whole” church, the number of meetings they held separately and together, and the number of groups linked to each “whole” church and the relationship of the leaders of the small groups to the deacons and elders of the whole church.
4. There is no evidence as to the length of time for which small groups were constituted.

5.4 Cell churches since the New Testament

If the cell church approach was the apostle Paul’s preferred option and it was such a dynamic force in his strategy of making disciples of all nations why did it disappear? Why has the cell church model had such little influence on church praxis until recently? These questions need to be answered as part of the study discipline set by Zerfass’ model in order understand the theological tradition that has molded church praxis.

5.4.1 The disappearance of the house church bipolar structure

Before any conclusion can be attempted as to the relevance of the New Testament record to the present day the question of the disappearance of the bipolar house-church structure must be examined. How did this happen? What were the causes? Does this disappearance imply that the bipolar concept was just a first century cultural enculturation with no normative significance for the church in the twenty-first century?

The major problem is that there is no evidence outside of the New Testament documents for the existence of a bipolar structure. Archaeology can only suggest the existence of several private dwellings that were in all probability used as house-churches. If the size of these private dwellings was small, in cities where Christians were numerous, then there must have been more than one private dwelling in use to accommodate the numbers, and thus a bipolar structure can be assumed. If there were fewer Christians the connection between bipolar structure and the use of private dwellings becomes more tenuous. It is also tenuous after the middle of the third century since there is a well documented Christian paradigm shift in the Roman Empire towards clericalization, and thus away from small meetings as a preferred structure. This trend is reflected in the church’s meeting places. By the third century special buildings for worship had replaced private houses for liturgical gatherings. Initially the architects involved made no

distinction in the style used between buildings that were used for ecclesial or secular purposes (Krautheimer 1939: 144-159). Soon after Christianity obtained official recognition, in 313AD, they became modeled on basilicas and were to become the characteristic Christian sacral building (Küng 1996: 152).

The first question that needs to be answered is, “In what type of buildings did Christians normally meet after the apostolic period?” Vaughan (1985: 41) comments that, “...a variety of places were adapted by early Christians for their gatherings. These included homes, upper rooms, the temple, synagogues, hillsides, teaching halls, pagan temples, and particularly civic basilicas.”

The second question is, “When did bipolar house churches disappear?” There are various suggestions:

- Doohan (1989: 143) believes that Paul stopped using the small house-church meeting towards the close of his ministry, which would be sometime after 60 AD. Those already in existence, of course, might have continued in existence long after his death.
- Branick (1989: 14, 15), Esler (1997: 137) and (Küng 1996: 152) consider that communities operated in functioning houses, to about 150 AD. Then during the period 150 to 250 AD private dwellings ceased to be residences and were renovated and dedicated exclusively for the use of the congregation and became known as the *domus ecclesiae*.
- Hadaway, DuBose and Wright (1987: 45) would place their demise within the Constantinian era, approximately 50 to 100 years later (See also, Blue 1994: 120, 121). They agree that the institutionalization of the church, with the concurrent focus upon a special building for church meetings, began as early as the second century, but believe that, “the virtual eclipse of the house church in the Middle Ages had its beginning in the era of Constantine.”
- Krautheimer (1939: 144-159) divides the early Christian period (50-313 AD) into three stages. From 50 to 150 Christians met in house-churches belonging to individual members. During the period 150 to 250 private domestic residences were renovated and used exclusively as Christian meeting places. The last stage saw the construction of larger buildings and halls before the introduction of basilical architecture by Constantine.

For how long were private dwellings used as house-churches and when were private dwellings converted to become dedicated church premises? The evidence is sparse and it is not possible to arrive at unanimous opinion. Archaeological evidence of a church building specifically used for

worship comes from the record of a building destroyed by a flood in 250 AD in Edessa (Smith 1971: 148). A house built in 233 in Dura-Europas was converted to a house church some 7 to 12 years later with no one living in the building after this time (Branick 1989: 130).

Three churches in Rome are built on the sites of existing houses all of which are linked by tradition with early Christians belonging to important Roman families who could have owned these properties. These are the churches of Santa Prisca, San Clemente and Santa Pudenziana. Santa Prisca, was built before the end of the third century on the site of a spacious first-century house. The other two were completed before the end of the fourth century. The evidence may be interpreted as showing that these were private dwellings initially used as house churches until the third and fourth centuries (Thiede 1990: 144 ff.).

Despite the imperial decree, in 324, commanding that, at the empire's expense, 'churches' were to be built higher, broader and larger (Shillebeeckx 1985: 143) there is evidence for the continuation of private dwellings as house churches. Private dwellings that were almost certainly used as Christian meeting places have been uncovered from the fourth century at Hinton St. Mary, Dorset and at Lullingstone in Kent. Simple fourth and fifth century house churches have also been found at Augsburg and Mühlbach in Southeast Germany (Thiede 1990: 152, 153; Blue 1994: 162 ff.).

It may be concluded therefore that specially constructed church buildings were built as early as 250, either on new sites or on pre-existing house-church sites. Although this seems to have been the preferred practice for Christians in some areas, maybe where Christians were particularly numerous and well established, in other areas private dwellings were still used as house churches well into the fifth century (Blue 1994: 125). This has considerable importance in evaluating the theories that have been put forward to explain the demise of the bipolar house church structure.

The reasons suggested for the disappearance of small home group meetings are:

1. That it was because Paul insufficiently modeled them to permanently affect church structure (Doohan 1989: 143; Branick 1989: 22, 23). It is suggested that while Paul relied on the house-churches for his initial missionary work, he moved away from the house-church model in the latter part of his ministry. If this is accepted, then the conclusion is that, although the house-church might have lasted until the middle of the third century, it was by the end of the first or second century a historical anachronism.

2. A shift in theological and ecclesiological emphasis in the post-apostolic church rendering the house churches redundant. “Paul’s own transforming vision was itself soon transformed, with many of its distinctive features lost to sight” (Dunn 1998: 563). Christians meeting in the dedicated churches and basilicas after 250AD seem to show an understanding of themselves different from the Christians meeting in the first house churches (Branick 1989: 14, 15).
3. The increasing influence, popularity, prestige, success and affluence of the church enabled it to either to acquire numerous large houses that in time were adapted as independent church structures or to erect new purpose-built big buildings. (For instance by 250 AD there were 30,000 Christians in Rome alone (Blue 1994: 127).)
4. The potential divisiveness of small group meetings may also have contributed to the demise of the bipolar structure (Branick 1989: 117). In the first four centuries the church faced threats from Gnosticism, Montanism and the Arian controversy. The church’s organization was therefore influenced by the need to express unity and to combat heresy and schism (Till 1972: 89). All organizations try to safeguard themselves by centralizing, as much as possible, in order to keep effective control of the periphery. Ignatius’ attitude in the first century would probably be typical. It left no room for a sub-group within the church in the area under his influence (Schweizer 1961: 168-170; Branick 1989: 131).
5. A contextual factor in the decline of the house church was the change in the social environment of the Roman Empire from the fourth century on, in the West. This is witnessed by the decline of many urban centres from this time onwards (Wacher 1978: 102, 103). The bipolar house church structure was developed in an urban religiously pluralistic environment where communication operates at two levels which the cell church is ideally suited to exploit. The first level is that of mass expression reflecting the public sphere. The second is that of small-group communication reflecting the primary groups (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 61).

When the social environment and theological presuppositions of the religious paradigm changed then the bipolar church disappeared and did not emerge again until a 1500 years later.

5.4.2 The cell church in the Protestant Reformation paradigm

5.4.2.1 Luther (16th century)

The concept of small group meetings in private homes reappeared with the Reformation. Luther had a vision of the devout meeting in homes to practice their faith. It is possible that he was

imagining a bipolar meeting structure (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 48; Beckham 1995: 116; Hunsicker 1996: 193). However, more pressing matters, an innate caution, political considerations concerning divisiveness, a lack of faith in the people in his churches and a fear of loosing the movement to the Anabaptists may have prevented him from any practical implementation (Lloyd-Jones 1965: 60, 61).

5.4.2.2 *Horreck's societies (17th century)*

The bipolar church structure reappeared at the end of the eighteenth century both on the Continent and in England through the influence of Jean de Labadie to whose band both Horrock and Spener belonged when young. Horrock, an Anglican priest began to develop small group meetings in England. The aim was that his congregation would develop more disciplined spiritual lives. These small groups or “societies” were under the strict control of the Anglican Church. They were extremely successful and paved the way for Wesley’s class meetings (Hunsicker 1996: 194, 195).

5.4.2.3 *Spener's collegio pietas (17th century)*

In 1669, Spener, a Lutheran minister, had come to see that the church’s identity required Christians to meet together regularly in small groups to encourage and discipline one another (Young 1989: 107). To Spener this was not, “a pastoral strategy but a necessary correlate of ecclesiology” (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 49). Spener and Franke started the *collegio pietas*, house meetings for prayer, bible study and discussion. In the beginning the group discussed the previous Sunday sermon or read devotional works. Later the groups focussed on discussion of scripture (Beckham 1995: 117).

In 1675 Spener wrote *Pia Desideria*, (Holy or Pious Desires), in which he developed his ecclesiology of “little church within the church” (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 49). He argued that small groups provide the means to realise Luther’s vision for restoring the priesthood of all believers (Hunsicker 1996: 197), advocating the meeting together of like-minded, born-again believers in house-churches (Möller 1990: 156). However, he ran into opposition from the Lutheran Church problems that from 1703 onwards ended any more experimentation in the Lutheran Church because small groups often created schisms (Beckham 1995:118; Hunsicker 1996: 197). In Frankfurt, the city council even refused to allow the groups to meet in homes (Beckham 1995: 118; Hunsicker 1996: 197).

5.4.2.4 The Moravians (18th century)

Despite Spener's disappointment his experiment with small groups had unforeseen consequences. His colleague, Franke directly influenced Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravians, who gathered converts into unipolar house churches (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 50).

5.4.2.5 The Wesleyan class system (18th/19th centuries)

Influenced by the ecclesiology of the Moravians and the structure of the Anglican religious societies Wesley turned the bipolar concept into a radical method for evangelism, discipleship and church growth. He established small groups linked initially to Anglican congregations with a clear focus and purpose, which became the cornerstone of his methodology (Snyder 1980:55; Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 50; Beckham 1995: 120; Hunsicker 1996: 203). By the end of the 18th century he had developed more than 10,000 small groups, called classes (Snyder 1980: 63). These classes helped a powerless people gain some sense of control for the shaping of their lives and may have saved England from a revolution such as occurred in France (Callaghan 1987: 115).

Points of similarity with the modern cell church concept are:

1. Membership in a class was required before one could join the society (Snyder 1980: 54: 55).
2. The classes functioned as the church practicing every action associated with church - proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service (Beckham 1995: 120).
3. The classes normally met once a week (Snyder 1980: 54: 55).
4. Wesley saw evangelism as primarily taking place in the class meetings (Hunter 1987: 58).
5. If classes became too large they would be divided to retain the size he preferred (Comiskey 1998: 24).

Why did small groups mostly die out in Methodism? Some suggestions are that:

1. The Methodist church became more institutionalized in the nineteenth century and therefore distrustful of small groups.
2. The zeal for intimacy and community of the original founders became diluted by the success of the Church from the second generation onwards. It took considerable

3. commitment to discipleship to be a society member, as it required much effort and sacrifice of time.
4. The original zeal may also have been diminished by redemption and lift (Niebuhr 1929: 28; McGavran 1980: 295 ff.; Wagner 1981: 42 ff.). This theory suggests that in many cases vigorous church growth comes to a halt when those who are redeemed experience the consequent economic, social, medical and educational upliftment. Their sense of security and the complexity of their life-styles diminish their zeal and their involvement with the church.

5.4.3 The Cell Church in the modern period

The bipolar cell church model, featured in this study, initially reemerged in two areas of the Third World during the 1960s, namely South Korea and South America. Since then the model has been successfully initiated on every continent, in many differing types of society, sometimes as a deliberate reproduction of the Korean or South American model and at other times as an original response to circumstantial factors. Some examples are given below.

In South Korea the most widely publicized Protestant congregation using the bipolar approach is the Yoida Full gospel church in Seoul, Korea. The minister is David Cho, previously known as Paul Yongii Cho. It began with five people who gathered in a tent in 1958 (Neighbour 1990: 24). In 1997, it had 700,000 on the membership role (a member is one who tithes to the church). 153,000 regularly attended its seven services on a Sunday, a further 100,000 attended one of the twelve regional chapels in Seoul and it had 23,000 cell groups (Comiskey 1998: 16, 143).

These figures seem to reveal a problem with nominalism, since over 350,000 of its members cannot be involved in cell groups as these contain approximately 10 people each. They must also be seen in the context of phenomenal church growth in South Korea. Since 1900, Christianity has grown from practically nothing to being 35.3% of the population of 43 million, in 1990. Much of this growth has occurred since the end of the Korean War in the 1950s (Johnstone 1993: 336).

The cell church structure seems to be particularly appropriate to the Korean culture as it moves into the modern industrial age. An environment has been created for detailed organization and

hard work (Cox 1995: 231 ff.) which is fertile soil for the commitment and administrative skills required for the cell church approach. The world's two largest Presbyterian churches, along with the largest Methodist church, are cell congregations in Seoul (Neighbour 1990:24; Johnstone 1993: 337; Roebert 1997: 21). These churches are multiplying at a rate that far outstrip sister Korean churches that do not take advantage of the cell group structure (Neighbour 1990: 24).

In South America another example of new bipolar structure initiatives is to be found in the phenomenon of "base," "small," or 'grass-roots communities'. These began with community evangelization of the Barro do Poari, in Rio de Janeiro, by lay catechists of the Roman Catholic Church in 1956. The catechists gathered the people for weekly instruction, daily prayer and Sunday worship (Boff 1986: 3). They emphasized the role of the laity in evangelism and instruction. These small Christian communities are today spreading across the entire globe (Moltmann 1977: 328-329; Bosch 1991: 473). In 1984 there were estimated to be 50,000 to 80,000 of these basic ecclesial communities in Brazil alone (Azevdo 1987: 11).

A Protestant variation on this was the cells established in Buenos Aires at the El Tabernacle de la Fe in the early 1970s. They were considered home churches and had five elements, devotion (celebration), discussion (instruction), programming, mobilization, and multiplication (proclamation and service) (Ortiz 1975: 1, 102 ff.). Other examples of bipolar churches are the Christian Centre of Guayaquil, in Ecuador, with 7,000 worshippers and 2,000 cells, the International Charismatic Mission, in Bogota (Columbia), with 35,000 worshippers and 13,000 cells, and the Living Water Church in Lima (Peru) with 7,000 members and 600 cells (Comiskey 1998: 16). In Central America two large cell churches are the Elim Church in San Salvador, El Salvador, with 35,000 worshippers and 5,500 cells and Love Alive Church in Tegucigalpa, Honduras with 7,000 worshippers and 1,000 cells (Comiskey 1998: 16).

Examples of two cell churches in Singapore are the Faith Community Baptist Church and St. John's-St. Margaret's Anglican Church. The former congregation started in 1986 and grew to 4,500 members in four years (Neighbour 1990: 27) it now has 6,500 worshippers and 550 cells (Comiskey 1998: 16). The latter congregation successfully implemented cell groups, beginning in 1984. The number of groups had increased from 10 in 1984 to 40 in 1988, and there had been a concurrent increase in church membership (Toh 1990: 48).

In the United Kingdom those church movements that have adopted the model are the ICTHUS Fellowship, which is using them as a strategy to penetrate the residents of southeast London (Neighbour 1990: 32) and New Frontiers International (Virgo 2001: 251 ff.).

Neighbour (1990: 34) records that cell group churches are springing up in all parts of the United States. The entry under cell churches on the Internet certainly records scores of churches that want to be advertised as such, including the Bethany World Prayer Centre in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, which in 1996 had 4,800 *families*, almost doubling in size since 1992 (Touch International Pamphlet for Southern Africa 1998). This congregation had 7,000 worshippers and 500 cells in 1998 (Comiskey 1998: 16).

One of the most dynamic churches in Africa is the Eglise Protestante Baptiste Oeuvres et Mission in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. This church was launched in 1975, but it was not until 1983 that the pastor, Dion Robert, fully developed a cell group pattern for growth. When he finally developed the pattern, he grew from 638 to 23,000 in eight years (Neighbour 1990: 31). At a seminar in Cape Town, in 1999, Robert reported that his congregation numbered 120,000 members (95,000 adults and 25,000 children) in 1998. 6,000 were members of the central congregation and the others belonged to 45 satellite congregations scattered around Abidjan.

In South Africa one denomination, the AFM, has adopted the cell church model as the norm. Many of the newer churches have opted for the cell church model, such as Hatfield Christian Centre (Roebert 1997: 21). In Cape Town this includes the Jubilee Community Church and the Lighthouse Christian Fellowship (Virgo 2001: 259). Some of these churches are large, Jubilee Community church having 66 cell groups and the Lighthouse over 400 cell groups. Not many congregations in the main-line denominations in the Western Cape have adopted the model.

An indication of the number of congregations either interested in the concept or actively to the cell church structure is that, as of 1999, there were 250 congregations on the mailing list of Cell Church International (personal communication). This is the main organization promoting the concept in South Africa, for the Western Cape.

5.5 Factors favouring bipolar cell church development

An analysis of the sociological and religious similarities between ages and social conditions in which bipolar church structures emerged reveals that conditions that favour the structure are:

1. The enthusiasm and commitment generated either by 'first generation' Christianity or spiritual renewal. Such periods were the first century AD, the Pietistic Renewal in Germany, the Evangelical Awakening in the Anglo-Saxon countries and the entry of Christianity for the first time into a nation. When this commitment disappears the bipolar structure seems to require too much effort to maintain.
2. The existence of a high-density population, normally, although not necessarily found in urban areas. That there is some sort of correlation between successful bipolar cell church organization and urbanization is suggested by examining the social contexts throughout history in which this structure emerged - the Greco-Roman urban culture, the Britain of the Industrial Revolution and the large modern urban conglomerations. A high density may favour bipolar cell church development because:
 - High density of population means that less distance has to be traveled to attend at least two meetings a week, and it is therefore less irksome than in an area of low density.
 - There has been a breakdown in large segments of society of the intimate community experienced in smaller, stable communities. This creates a felt need for community for large numbers of the population (Boff 1986: 1). Such a situation exists in today's world thus the cell church, "...has the potential to speak to our time because of its small mixed community with varied relationships" (Doohan 1989: 143).
 - Urban communication operates on both the intimate and mass levels making multi-level assembling a natural outcome (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 61).
3. The existence of a pluralistic society in which some segments of the church lack rigid traditions and bureaucratic control has been weakened (such as in the case of the independent newer churches). Such conditions characterize parts of Africa, South Korea and South America and much of the Western World. This factor is suggested by the observation that bipolar churches have been successful in areas where innovation in church structure is permitted. Innovation is permitted because of the lack of previous traditions (as in the first century AD and in Korea), where existing structures were breaking down (as in the South American Roman Catholic Church because of lack of priests) or in a society where central control by religious bodies is impossible.
4. The existence of a theological climate in which small group meetings are not seen as a

threat but as an advantage. The Christendom paradigm is largely opposed to small group meetings and sees them as both unnecessary and as a threat. However, the small group approach is contextual for today's society corresponding to the group and team emphasis found in the social sciences, business and modern society (Beebe 2000: 2).

No one of these factors is sufficient by itself to allow the development of a bipolar cell church. Indeed it is suggested that all four need to be present before a self-perpetuation and self-sustaining bipolar system will be established. Even then a change in anyone of these factors may lead to a demise of the structure at a later date, as happened in the first centuries of Christianity and with early Methodism.

5.6 The theological justification for a bipolar structure

Developing a theological justification for the bipolar church concept greatly concerns some of its advocates. Snyder (1975: 85), Hadaway, DuBose and Wright (1987: 56), Neighbour (1990: 93) and Beckham (1995: 83 ff.) stress the priority and importance of theology and ecclesiology in determining cell church praxis. Snyder (1975: 85) advocates a re-examination the 'fellowship of the Holy Spirit' metaphor as the basis for a new ecclesiology and thus praxis. Hadaway, DuBose and Wright (1987: 56) contend that there is a direct line between nature, function, and structure. The church assumes certain functions growing out of its nature. These functions are translated into structures as the church takes root and grows in its cultural, economic, and political context. Beckham (1995: 83) goes so far as to write that the advantages of the cell church is found in theology not structure.

The following theological and ecclesiological arguments are used in cell church literature to support and advocate the bipolar cell church structure:

5.6.1 It is the most effective way of actualising biblical community

It is contended that only a small group can provide the intimate community necessary for man because he was created in the image of a God, who is in the community of the Trinity and therefore communal (Snyder 1975: 90, 95; Neighbour 1990: 96 ff., 112; Banks 1993: 19 ff.). Moreover only the congregation can provide the size of meeting required to build the church's

identity as demanded by the people of God metaphor (Snyder 1975: 105). Only a bipolar community actualizes and fulfills the need for both intimacy and identity. Banks (1993: 22 ff.) adds the argument that only the bipolar community actualizes the type of fellowship and community that the Holy Spirit desires to create in the church. Therefore a bipolar church structure is the most effective way of actualizing a community that pleases the Spirit and meets the needs of man created in God's image.

These arguments have a strong theological rationale. They are based upon powerful church metaphors – the people of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. They have much in common with the social definition of the Trinity and its implications as found in the work of J. Moltmann and E. Moltmann-Wendel, *“Humanity in God”* (1983). Whilst many forms of bipolar structure may exist, it is difficult to conceive of any alternative for the establishment of such a community in our present urban society.

These arguments provide a very strong theological basis for the bipolar structure. They must however be applied with care to praxis since some people have had unhappy experiences with small groups. They have felt that their personalities have been abused. Others have had confidences betrayed, had spiritual ignorance embarrassingly exposed or been made to feel outcasts (Gibbs 1993: 75). When small groups have unclear aims, poorly selected leadership, inadequately trained leadership, lack coordinating structures and accountability then they can be very harmful. These are precisely some of the abuses that the cell church concept with its administrative accountability structure and organizational integration is trying to minimize in the cell groups it advocates. .

Another danger of the theology of community is that it can create a “God of the Group” as an idol. “The God of the group is a deity that can fully accept only those who seek his presence “in community”” (Wuthnow 1994: 352). “In community” is then interpreted as being solely those who are in small groups. This may result in those who are especially introverted or unavoidably too busy to be involved in a cell group being on the one hand rejected by the church and on the other feeling rejected. Thus they are turned into second class citizens. Historically the Christian tradition has always embraced a wide range of devotion and practical piety. Mystics have been venerated. Everything should be a source of spiritual growth not just small groups (Wuthnow 1994: 353). Spirituality and community embraces far more than small groups. This emphasizes

the need for the bipolar church structure in which the cell is balanced by the broader vision of the congregation and its linkage to the wider church.

That caution is needed is emphasized by the problems small groups are facing in the bipolar cell church structure. These are:

1. The limitations on the depth of intimacy that can exist in multiplying small groups. Research indicates that small groups which multiply have problems in forming the sort of fulfilling community that family groups, or small primary groups, experienced in previous historical eras (Wuthnow 1994: 6).
2. The fatigue on the human psyche of the continuous loss of relationship as a cell multiplies several times. As Stockstill (1998: 97 ff.), a leading cell church advocate admits, this demotivates cell leaders. The Principle of Twelve model, has been developed to deal with this problem. (The original twelve initiators of cells in a congregation continue to meet together, whilst, at the same time, going out to form their own groups.)

5.6.2 It reflects the transcendence and immanence of God

The immanence and transcendence of God is seen as an analogy for the bipolar cell church structure. It is seen to serve as a theological paradigm for the church (Beckham 1995: 83). God's transcendence is perceived to be experienced most particularly in corporate worship and his immanence experienced most particularly in the small group (Beckham 1995: 85).

It is true that God will often be experienced differently in the social, intimate setting of the small group from the larger, impersonal setting of the congregational meeting. This social experience is vital and necessary. Yet the use of the contrasting attributes of God's transcendence and immanence to justify the bipolar approach is questionable. God's transcendence is not experienced only in a large group meeting and his immanence in a small group meeting. His transcendence can be experienced both in small and large groups and be absent from both sizes of meetings. Isaiah experiences the awesome transcendence of God as just one person (Isaiah 6) and a group of three disciples are frightened by the transcendence of Jesus (Mark 9: 2-8). Neither is the immanence of God necessarily experienced only through encountering other people in an intimate way. There is no biblical support for a correlation between experiencing certain

attributes of God and the size of a meeting or for making an arbitrary correlation between these two attributes of God and the two-wing approach.

5.6.3 It is the normative basic design of the church

“Normative” is used to describe a structure that establishes imperatives for the beliefs and praxis of the contemporary faith community (Bergsma 2000: 105). The claim is made that the bipolar church model is the normative model as opposed to the traditional unipolar model (Snyder 1975: 168; Dudley and Hilgert 1987: 28; Branick 1989: 13, 14; Neighbour 1990: 42 ff.; Lawson 1993: 67; Banks 1994: 31 ff.; Beckham 1995: 105 ff.; Roebert 1997: 19). It is contended by Beckham (1995: 64) that it is normative because Paul and the other New Testament writers never indicated that the church was to cease meeting in the pattern established during the early days of the church.

The argument begs the question, “Is there a normative New Testament ecclesiological model?” There are many arguments against such a concept. These are that:

1. Knowledge of the New Testament church is limited. The New Testament corpus gives the greatest insight into the ecclesiological structures of the Jerusalem church and the churches associated with the Pauline mission. Even then the information is sparse and fragmentary, although intelligent guesswork can provide some seemingly convincing evidence as to what was happening. Outside of these sources what happened in many cities and areas of the Roman Empire and its neighbouring states is undocumented.
2. There is no uniform pattern to church structure in the New Testament (Schweizer 1961: 13; Schwarz 1999: 122). It was extremely flexible (Clowney 1987: 23). Different concepts of the church were applied in different contexts (Schweizer 1949: 23).
3. There is development and change within church structure even within the New Testament. This militates against a mere copying of New Testament statements about the church and church development (Herbst 1987: 75).
4. The structure of the church is not a major doctrine in the bible. The bible is largely silent as to specific structures for the church. There is freedom to create those structures most conducive to the mission and need of the church in our time, within the broad outlines of the biblical vision of the church (Snyder 1975: 91).
5. It is even arguable how much the forms of ministry observed in the New Testament should be normative for the church. Getz (1994: 32 ff.) distinguishes between function

and form. The former includes values, directives, principles and truths whereas the latter includes patterns, organization, structures and methods. The key to establishing a normative pattern is not the existence of a structure per se in the New Testament but whether this structure is essential for facilitating particular New Testament functions.

6. The pilgrimage facet of the people of God metaphor justifies changing structures and practices to facilitate mission in today's world. "As for the external disciplines and the ceremonies, he (God) has not chosen to prescribe for us in particular, and as it were, word for word, how we must be governed, for as much as that depended upon the diversities of the times, and one and the same form would be neither appropriate nor useful for all ages" Calvin (Institutes IV: 10, 30).
7. The changed nature of our society compared with that of the New Testament world makes it impossible for us to even approximately reduplicate the structures found in the church of that era within our own society. History cannot be overturned and the church reestablished as it was in the first century AD. (Lundin 1999: 34).

In conclusion, although the bipolar cell church structure has much to commend it from a theological perspective and was indeed a preferred structure of the church in Jerusalem, the Pauline missionary churches and other churches in the first century, it cannot be accepted as the normative structure for all time. What may be right for one church may be wrong for another. The most appropriate structure depends upon the philosophy of ministry, the current mindset and culture of the society in which the church exists, denominational rules and many other factors (Schwarz 1999: 159).

5.6.4 The problem of divisiveness and /or heretical teaching

The problem of divisiveness and /or heretical teaching is essentially the same problem. Both result from the centripetal force that small group community building within multi-level meetings may bring when it is combined with lack of adequate supervision and training. They are both theological problems since unity within diversity is a major facet of the body of Christ metaphor.

The charge of divisiveness, schism and heretical teaching has been leveled at the bipolar concept since Spener's day. Bonhoeffer (1963: 169) expresses concern about the establishment of factions and a "separatist attitude" being fostered by the "church within a church" approach. George (1991: 111) mentions that small group leaders teaching doctrines opposed to the

emphasis of their churches and small groups joining other churches is one of the risks that this concept faces. A case study of home cell groups in St. John's-St. Margaret's church in Singapore, which has had cell groups since 1983, highlights this danger of heresy and wrong teaching (Toh 1990: 51).

These justified fears may be allayed by the following considerations:

1. In a bipolar cell church structure cell groups operate within a strong administrative and organizational framework under the oversight of cell supervisors and area leaders. In most of the groups the members are also constantly exposed to the congregation's vision and the vision-setting teaching of the senior pastor (see 5.2.4). Thus membership in a cell group, rather than leading to division, facilitates identity and organizational integration.
2. Whilst some cell groups may become "schismatic" and join other churches the gains of having bipolar small groups far outweigh the losses, especially if they are properly supervised and researched through teaching and training (George 1991: 111, 112).

5.6.5 Conclusion

The bipolar church structure does not have the theological justification to make it a major doctrine of the church and thus a compulsory structure. It is not normative. It does not reflect the transcendent and immanent natures of God in any special way. It is one possible model among many that should be preferentially considered as an effective model for the 21st century church because:

1. It appears to be a "direct line" growth (Hadaway, DuBose and Wright 1987: 56) out of the functions of the church reflecting its nature and suitable for our modern political, economic cultural and social climate.
2. It appears to be the most effective way of actualising biblical community in today's world consistent with the nature of the church as reflected in the four major biblical metaphors.
3. It is a structure that was given legitimacy, from an ecclesiological perspective, by the ministry of Jesus, the Jerusalem church and the Pauline mission.
4. It facilitates more effectively from a theological perspective many of the actions of the church more effectively than any other conceivable structure, particularly as judged by the criteria of mission and community building.

5.7 The ‘operational impetus’ of the bipolar structure in society

The same criteria that were used to analyze the effectiveness of the unipolar structure’s praxis will now be used to evaluate the theoretical effectiveness of the bipolar cell church structure in South African society. The theoretical efficiency of a bipolar structure as compared to a unipolar structure will be evaluated in terms of the factors influencing this society. Zerfass calls this theoretical effectiveness, “operational impulse.” The subsections within each criterion are measurements concerning it that have been previously discussed in either chapter two or used as a standard for assessing its effectiveness in the situational analysis under that criterion in chapter four.

5.7.1 Adaptability

5.7.1.1 The flexibility to react to rapid change in response to urbanization

The cell church’s ecclesiology, which emphasizes the body of Christ and that cell groups are “ecclesiolae in ecclesia,” counters the natural human tendency to search for sacred space and/or focus on a central building. This in addition to the fact that cell church theory is concerned with the importance of the local congregation in mission will facilitate the empowerment of the church to innovate mission within its own community despite denominational demands for resources and restrictions. It will aid the local ‘senior minister’ in the equivalent of the entrepreneurial role Van der Ven (1996: 411 ff.) believes that he/she must have for the church to be the innovative organization needed in the rapidly changing environment of the modern world.

Cells should be able to more effectively penetrate society than the unipolar church approach since they are more flexible (Snyder 1975: 144; Gibbs 1981: 242). They require no great resources other than the time their members devote to them each week. They are easy to start and disband compared to the congregational structure (Snyder 1975: 140; Wuthnow 1994: 23). They may be established to target specific cultural, interest, social and ethnic groups that will not feel at home in the congregation until a significant number are involved as worshippers. The meeting’s location, time, frequency and duration can be very easily adapted to the needs of its members (Gibbs 1981: 242).

5.7.1.2 Adaptation to post-modernity

Cell groups with their emphasis on relational evangelism involving the whole cell and on encountering God in the social experience are well adapted to proclamation amongst those influenced by the post-modern epistemological paradigm. They provide the opportunity for every

member and visitor to personally experience God the Holy Spirit in a small, friendly non-threatening environment. Problems such as adulterous affairs, bitterness, physical ailments, demon possession may be exposed and overcome, “striking deeply into the hearts of people” (Wimber 1985: 58, 59).

5.7.1.3 Provides a feedback mechanism that is sensitive to problems and needs

The cell administrative structure provides the data from feedback from cell groups as to missional effectiveness, and specific problems and areas of concern among cell members that allows the leadership to adapt quickly to changing situations. This also provides information so that the pulpit message may be adapted teach into areas of concern as well as to exhort and encourage the attainment of congregational goals.

5.7.2 Mission

5.7.2.1 Numerical growth

It is unclear as to whether cell churches have experienced numerical growth. Some cell churches have grown in numerical terms, over the last twenty years as evidenced in section 5.4.3. No figures are available, however, that present an overall picture for every church that has tried and adopted this structure. The research conducted and reported on in chapter six is an attempt to discover what is actually happening as concerns extensive growth.

5.7.2.2 Concrete missional objectives

Cell groups (as opposed to home fellowship groups) have the concrete missional objective of multiplication. Proclamation is central to the cell group agenda. Therefore they fulfill this criterion for effectiveness.

5.7.2.3 Serving the community in mission

Cell group theory stresses service evangelism in the community (Neighbour 1990: 254 ff.; Stockstill 1998: 60 ff.). The network of cells enables the church as a whole to keep alert and sensitive to what is happening in the community and thus be more responsive (Gibbs 1981: 244). This will encourage the actions of proclamation and service.

5.7.2.4 An effective strategy for evangelism

The cell group strategy for evangelism is relational and community based. Various sociological theories indicate that people join groups for a variety of reasons – survival, belongingness, esteem, self-actualization, inclusion, control, affection, similarity, complementarity and shared

interests (Beebe 2000: 55 ff.). A confrontational approach meets only a narrow spectrum of needs – such as the desire for truth, fear of judgment, or the desire to please the presenter. Koinonia and friendship can meet a broad spectrum of needs in the way that a confrontational approach cannot.

5.7.2.5 The incorporation of new believers into the congregation

The community found in small groups is not only a key to effective mission in so far as penetrating society but also as concerns conserving the fruits of mission. When people are not in a small group relationship they do not very frequently make much progress in the Christian life (Gibbs 1993: 75, 76). The cell church model is designed to facilitate the incorporation of those who have responded to the church's mission so that the Holy Spirit is able to add them to the church. Those who have responded to the claims of Christ as the result of relational evangelism are already bonded to someone who is part of a welcoming cell which has as one of its objectives the incorporation and discipleship of new Christians. Thus the action of care becomes more effective.

5.7.2.6 Less institutional and more informal ethos in the local congregation

The informality of cells because they meet in homes, the agenda of the meeting can be flexible and the “friendly” atmosphere provides the informal ethos many baby-boomers and younger are looking for. Actively participating in the meeting and being able to influence decision making at the group level also make the institutional nature of the church more acceptable to many.

5.7.2.7 Problems hindering missional effectiveness

Some problems that may hinder effectiveness in mission for a cell church are:

1. When evangelism is not a strong value within the church (Gibbs 1981: 251).
2. If the group possesses no one who has the gift of an evangelist or no one who is prepared to reach out into their oikos (Gibbs 1981: 251, 252).
3. If no one in the cell has unchurched people in their oikoses. Evangelism through cells is most effective when cell members have numerous contacts with the unchurched (Gibbs 1981: 303).
4. In some cultures and socio-economic groups some people find the intimacy of a small group meeting too threatening (Gibbs 1981: 305 ff.). The “urbanite” whilst longing for community has learnt to be afraid of it and has become comfortable in his isolation

(Gibbs 1981: 241, 286; Kirkpatrick 1996: 11). This underlines the importance of “harvest events” in a congregational or celebrational setting to reach unbelievers who feel threatened by intimacy or want to remain completely anonymous (Gibbs 1981: 305 ff.).

5.7.3 Mobilization

There are no estimates available as to the percentage mobilization in bipolar churches as opposed to unipolar churches. However, the bipolar cell church model should theoretically compare very favourably with the unipolar model when considering mobilization because:

1. Every church member is encouraged and expected to attend a mid-week cell group. This provides a large pool of people who are already mobilized in the five actions of the church simply because they participate in the cell meetings and activities. A situation has been created with the potential for all to be mobilized sooner or later. (There are no percentages given in the literature as to the extent of mobilization that can practically be expected. As it is a requirement of membership in many cell churches it may be far higher than in most unipolar churches with an extensive network of home fellowship groups. The research recorded in chapter six attempts to ascertain this figure).
2. The natural immobilizing lack-of-confidence that many people possess in their abilities to serve Christ is overcome through opportunities to gain confidence by serving in the small group. This is a much friendlier environment in which to make mistakes than in the congregation and the cell leader can also monitor progress. The cell therefore becomes the ideal place for gifts to be identified and developed (Gibbs 1981: 248).
3. In a healthy cell church where cells are multiplying there is a natural recruitment process as leaders and assistant leaders are continually being sought for new cells, or to act as zone supervisors and zone pastors. Becoming a cell leader or a zone pastor may be the first step into some other sort of specialist ministry.
4. The nominalism of church members can be dealt with tactfully, compassionately and sensitively in an intimate and personal way at the cell level amongst a group of people who have grown to love each other.
5. Multi-level meetings provide the envisioning, sense of identity and purpose and community needed to overcome social distance and provide the compassion and caring needed to encourage members to actively participate.
6. The aim of cells to multiply provides some nominal members with a purpose that they respect and to which they can begin to relate. Moreover the missional purpose of the cells

involves all cell members in mission, even if for some it is in a passive capacity, and encourages members to serve the community in mission.

7. Leadership involvement in cells enables them (hopefully) to model the committed lifestyle in front of the members and demonstrate its possibility.

5.7.4 Discipleship

A discipling and leadership development dynamic is theoretically built into the bipolar cell church model. This development should be more effective in a bipolar than in a unipolar church because:

1. The countersystem kingdom model and the discipleship metaphor influence cell church values. Therefore the basic truths of discipleship are taught both to the individual and, because there is a high degree of involvement in cell groups, to the whole church.
2. Small groups are very important as primary socializing units for faith communities (Hendriks 1995: 31). People who are incorporated into cells naturally absorb its predominant values and identify with its goals and become more open to discipleship.
3. The combination of cognitive instruction from the pulpit and affective instruction both in cell meetings and cell life means that discipling is going on all the time.
4. Learning and comprehension are improved by small group interaction (Beebe 2000: 12). One of the basic principles of communication is that the recipients must understand its content. The cell provides the opportunity to do this because:
 - It provides an opportunity for Christians to air their doubts and share their opinions. Questions arising from the pulpit message and coming out of life's experiences can be dealt with on a personal basis (Gibbs 1981: 244, 245).
 - The input data can be adapted to be in accord with the developmental level of those in the group (Dettoni 1993: 31, 32).
 - Involvement in a small group is an activity that facilitates engagement with new input and sharing, reflection, decision and thus action to change. People are helped to think about the input data in the light of the experiences of the group. This helps the process whereby the various experiences of reality are personalized and adopted into internal structures through assimilation and accommodation of action. New data may be ignored in the congregational setting but it is impossible to remain passive towards it in a small group (Dettoni 1993: 29).

5. The development of community through the cells means that the relational and modelling component occurs naturally and reinforces the motivation to become an enthusiastic disciple. Change of attitudes and behavior usually happens as the sermon is digested and supported within the network of primary groups and opinion leaders formed (Pieterse 2001: 104). Most people do not see the practical relevance of Christian teaching until they see it in the life of another person (Radcliffe 1996: 93).
6. The personal instruction which cell leaders take a responsibility to give to cell members, especially those they are training up as cell leaders.
7. Members are allowed and encouraged to practice some of the values and skills of discipleship through the ministry and mission of the cells.
8. The evangelistic purpose of the cell group provides a testing ground for the reality of spiritual growth in the context of the cut and thrust of secular society, not just within the social system of the church.
9. The multiplication of cells creates a constant pressure for new leaders which motivates the existing leadership to continually recruit and train these new leaders (Gibbs 1981: 248, 249).

5.7.5 Community building

A bipolar church structure will theoretically be more effective at building community than a unipolar church structure because of:

1. Its community ethos and values. The ethos of many unipolar churches is institutional. This tends to see relationships as less important than the perceived goals of the organization. An important value of a bipolar church should be that relationships are more important than the rulebook, correct liturgical practice, preaching, programs, being successful, evangelism etc. One of its aims is to meet the real needs of people through small group ministry.
2. Its participatory emphasis. The cell members decide some of what happens in the cells. This is significant empowerment for the laity compared to the unipolar model. They are further empowered because the 'success' of the cells depends upon their mobilization and skills.
3. The small group of no more than 10 or 15 people is the optimum size and provides the two-way dialogue required for building intimate community. Such intimacy is a necessity for creating the mutual trust that encourages people to remove their masks. This in turn

will lead to the development of the relationships that are so necessary for people to grow and develop both socially and spiritually (Gibbs 1981: 241, 246).

4. Compassion and caring develops community. There is far greater caring in a cell church for individuals because the responsibility for caring is that of every cell leader and the cell members (Gibbs 1981: 250).
5. It develops a strong sense of identity. Wuthnow's (1994: 4) study indicates that small groups are effective in identity building. They supply community and revitalize the sacred this combined with the multi-level assembling built in to the bipolar church's structure will lead to a greater sense of identity than in a unipolar church.
6. The greater the sense of identity the more motivated the congregation will be to become involved in the mission and ministry of the church. Thus this will positively affect the congregation's proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service.
7. The missional purpose built into the cell group church as a basic value of its cell groups means that the cells can build an open, healthy community. Exclusivity tends to produce selfish relationships that do not readily accept outsiders. Unipolar congregations that have an extensive network of well-managed home fellowship groups will enjoy the same benefits in points 2 to 6. They may or may not benefit from having a "community" focused emphasis depending upon the prevalent church or kingdom model and if necessary how successful they have been in changing to a community based one.

The factors that may hinder this community building process are:

1. An inappropriate or inadequately trained leadership. A problem that might occur in a rapidly expanding cell church is that because of the demands inadequately trained or inappropriate people are appointed as leaders to a cell. Such leaders may try to dominate, talk too much, or be unable to facilitate the cell meeting agenda (Gibbs 1981: 256, 257).
2. If the contextual society is extremely individualistic (such as in the United States, Britain or Australia). This means that individuals focus on individual accomplishment and self-actualization rather than collaboration or collective achievement (Beebe 2000: 18, 19).
3. The constant multiplication that is built into the values cell church may make it difficult for some individuals to reach the point where they can take their masks off.

5.7.6 Organizational integration

An integration of programs and ministries that still allows variety is possible in the bipolar cell system because of:

1. The impossibility of running a cell church without a clearly defined and communicated vision. A clear vision means that the district leaders, cell supervisors and cell leaders can operate without fragmentation or frustration occurring.
2. The administrative control of cell activities through cell supervisors and cell leaders.
3. The flexibility that the cell group is allowed in the development of its community and evangelism activities within the framework of the goals and objectives of the church.

The administrative control and guidance in setting goals and objectives and integrating them for the cells means that the limited resources of each cell are not over-stretched in attaining their goals and that their goals are mutually compatible. Although such integration is possible in the unipolar church it requires more fully employed staff to achieve the same result as in a bipolar church (Beckham 1995: 79, 80). This is because the administrative function in a cell church, although planned by the employed staff, is largely executed through the volunteer district leaders, cell supervisors and cell leaders. Thus the hierarchical bipolar cell system provides an easily used communications structure for distributing instructions and receiving feedback.

It must be noted that Schaller (1990: 41 ff.) is of the opinion that a cell church structure, in fact, requires a larger paid staff to membership ratio than in comparison with some traditional lay led congregations of the 40s, 50s and 60s. This high ratio may well be more than most congregations can afford. He does, however, comment that the typical growing “large” congregation, which is program or teaching based, also needs a large number of, “highly skilled, creative, energetic and productive specialists” in comparison to the traditional lay led church. His comments about staffing levels must be seen in this light as must several of his other comments about the high level of competence required by pastors to administer a cell church. Any large congregation today that is aiming to effectively impact our complex urban culture requires highly competent pastors. The cell type church is arguably the easiest to administer.

5.7.7 The trinitarian experience of God

The trinitarian experience of God energizes all actions but is particularly essential for the action of celebration and increases the effectiveness of the actions of instruction and care. Experiences of God may happen when the whole congregation is gathered for worship. However, there is

often no avenue to share them meaningfully with others and “experiences without expression are blind” (Moltmann 1992: 19). They may also be internalized and individualized in an unhelpful way or harmful way. A cell group provides the best place for experiences to be shared and for the social aspect of the God to be experienced through the lives of its members.

The structure and goals of cell meetings facilitates opportunities to experience this and provides a means whereby experiences can be shared in a caring group. This is important since, “it is in the expression that life is classified and structured, unfurled and heightened” (Moltmann 1992: 19). Wuthnow’s (1994: 220 ff.) research indicates that the introduction of home fellowship groups leads to a deepening of faith and a sense of growing closer to God. This may be deplored because, “the divine is turned into a trustworthy friend” (Wuthnow 1994: 234) or applauded because, “...through Christ’s friendship, all Christians have become friends of God (Moltmann 1978: 58). The cell group provides a setting where every member may experience God through the sharing of the spiritual gifts and be instructed in their use. “It provides the place for both awakening spiritual gifts and disciplining their use” (Snyder 1975: 134). This experience is impossible in a congregational meeting since, especially in Western culture, time does not permit everyone to be edified by receiving or sharing a gift.

5.7.8 Serving the poor

A cell church theoretically facilitates the effectiveness of their service to the poor because:

1. Its missional focus and outward orientation encourages its members to become involved in the community in meeting the needs of the economically poor.
2. The action of care in respect to the “victims of society” is greatly facilitated in cells through their intimacy and their emphasis on sharing needs which encourages and provides opportunities for cell members to share them. They may then be discussed, empathized with, prayed for, counsel to be given and more practically dealt with. A congregation with an extensive network of home fellowship groups would also share this facility.

5.8 Church and kingdom models and the bipolar structure

The bipolar cell church structure may be classified as sub-species of the Kingdom as mystical communion model. This has as its core feature an emphasis on experiencing God in community in both the congregation and in small groups. It is able to balance the demands of the institution with that of intimate community since organizational integration is one of its values. The

Kingdom as countersystem, which is influential in the cell church approach, is an important and necessary secondary model for producing the commitment to discipleship required to make a cell church work.

This is of considerable importance when considering the transition process from a unipolar church structure to a bipolar one. Many churches and denominations tend to be influenced by church and kingdom models that contain many of the values found in the cell church, whereas others are influenced by those that are further removed. It is suggested that the greater the distance between the existing influential models and the model(s) underlying the cell church, the greater the difficulty that will be experienced in the transitioning process.

The two church and kingdom models that are most anti-thetical towards the bipolar cell church values are those of the inner spiritual experience and the institutional models. The former would experience difficulty adapting to the values of mission, community, identity building by small group intimacy and the desire to experience God in the small group since of all the kingdom models it is the most inward looking and private. The latter would have difficulty with the values of mobilization, adaptability, mobilization and discipleship as these are cross-grained to its hierarchical control structures where “one man tends to do it all,” and its general rigidity in the face of change. It would also be expected to be suspicious of any small group activity since this decentralizes control.

There is a clash between the values of the church as herald model and the bipolar cell church model. The former emphasizes faith and proclamation over interpersonal relationships and mystical communion. Its is extremely bibliocentric as opposed to being community centred. Although the church as herald focuses on witness this tends to be conducted in an intellectual and dogmatic manner as opposed to the cell church emphasis on building relationships with the unchurched.

The Kingdom as future hope model is considered to be neutral in relation to the cell church model since its values are inherently tangential to those of the cell church.

5.9 Cell church and Reformed ecclesiology

Floor (1997: 7, 26, 27) has expressed the fear that the traditional Reformed church model and the cell church model cannot be reconciled. Three problem areas are noted:

1. That it will destroy the essence and ethos of the Reformed Church as the cells multiply because the cells become more important to the members than the congregation and its traditional ecclesiology (the ecclesiological problem and the ethos problem).
2. The diminution of the authority of the clergy and elected elders due to its transference to the cell organizational hierarchy (the hierarchical problem).
3. The potential for a cell church to create a church of the “elect” for those who are sure they have been born again (the elitism problem).

5.9.1. The ecclesiological problem

The main distinctive of Presbyterian and Reformed churches are:

1. A doctrinal emphasis on God’s sovereignty. The starting point for doctrine is found in what God has done, characterized by a Christocentric focus on the Trinity (Clowney 1988: 530; Letham 1988: 570).
2. An ecclesiological emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. Presbyterian order emphasizes that salvation is corporate as well as individual. The church is a body of believers called by Christ to join in mutual ministry. The gifts of the members differ from the gifts of the officers only in degree, not in nature (Clowney 1988: 531).
3. God’s word is interpreted as teaching government by elders (Clowney 1988: 530).

As regards cell church doctrine and ecclesiology in its relation to Reformed doctrine concerning these main distinctives the following points may be made:

1. Both have a common link in that they are distinctly Trinitarian in focus. Reformed theology began with Calvin’s emphasis on the centrality of God and the Trinity (Jensen 1988: 569). Recent Reformed theology has refocused on the Trinity through such scholars as Karl Barth and Moltmann. In fact the cell church justification for emphasis on community seems to owe many of its ideas to Moltmann’s social doctrine of the Trinity, either directly or indirectly.
2. Both emphasize the priesthood of all believers. The cell church model simply provides a structural way in which this may be more fully realised than with the unipopular model, which up until now has been traditional in the Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

5.9.2 The hierarchical problem

There is, however, an area of tension relating to the form of church government. The Reformed tradition stresses a democratic form of government by elected elders. Whereas the cell church

system stresses government by those who have proved their ability by rising up from being cell leaders to cell supervisors to area leaders. They are chosen mostly because of their effectiveness in building successful and multiplying cell groups. The problem however is not irresolvable because:

- Calvin leaves much room for flexibility concerning the role of elders (Wendel 1963: 324, 325).
- In practice, in many congregations, the elders are nominated for election by Session. The congregation usually just giving their consent. Those who may be nominated by the congregation are strictly vetted by the Session who may veto their nomination.
- In a Reformed Church, with a large hired staff, it is these latter who have to take important decisions on a daily basis. The elected Session can only exercise an oversight on major policy decisions.
- The diminution of the authority of elected elders and clergy is happening anyway in our post-modern society. The cell church provides a strategy to preserve some necessary authority. It also channels the new desire for empowerment that the “laity” is rightly experiencing.
- There is no reason why the cell church model should not be able to incorporate a Session, not all of whom lead cells, but are otherwise godly men who share the vision.

5.9.3 The elitism problem

The conclusion that the cell church may produce an “elect” mentality is probably correct. This is a tension that is implicit in the discipleship metaphor. It is not peculiar to the cell church structure. With the rise of pietism and its gathering of the like-minded, born-again, in house churches in 17th century Germany this tension entered the Lutheran Church (Möller 1990: 156). With the advent of the Evangelical Awakening in the 18th century it entered into the Reformed Churches as their members began to claim a conscious experience of regeneration. As the Christendom paradigm decreases in influence with its inclusive perception of those who are Christians and the state becomes more secular it is a problem that will have to be faced by every church. The post-modern situation will ever more strongly compel the church to regroup into communities of faithful believers. They will have to make a counter-culture, secular-world, renouncing choice to follow Jesus (Hendriks 2001: 3). This will increase the temptation for an elitist mentality to develop.

5.9.4 *The ethos problem*

A successful cell church with many multiplying cells will certainly change the ethos of an existing Reformed family of churches. This is no tragedy since pluriformity in doctrine and practice on inessential issues has always been an essential feature of these churches (Clowney 1988: 530; Jensen 1988: 570). Many of the features of the past associated with the Reformed churches which give them their ethos are a matter of form not substance. Provided that the main distinctives listed above are guarded by the eldership this change should be a positive factor.

The main area of difficulty will lie with the influential church and kingdom models in the Reformed churches, since these are the Kingdom as inner spiritual experience and church as institution and herald models. The Reformed Churches because they are mainline have also been influenced by the concepts of liberal Christianity. Some of these concepts are antithetical to those that the cell church structure is meant to facilitate. Three areas in which tension may be detected are:

1. That area of mission which encompasses evangelism. The cell church places a high premium on evangelism, conversion and incorporation of the unchurched through cell multiplication. This is not a value for many in the main stream churches (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 78 ff.). This makes it very difficult for these churches to become aggressively evangelistic. Many of their members do not tolerate a “narrow” belief in the need to receive Christ as a personal Saviour in order to avoid eternal damnation. Thus they lose any ideological motivation for evangelism (Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 78). This added to the values of the predominant models emphasizing privacy in personal belief, the exaltation of the “herald” and the institutional hiring of the religious professional, who does all the work, demotivates evangelism.
2. Making the concept of the priesthood of all believers a reality. The cell church places a great value on the mobilization of every believer. The very values of the influential models in the Reformed church militate against this despite the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.
3. The cell church’s emphasis on discipleship is also an area of tension. The cell church is intended to propagate and facilitate the values of a movement (usually counter-culture) not an institution. This requires a commitment to discipleship. The majority of members found in the mainstream churches have little interest in the discipleship standardized life-planning with its discipline of spiritual growth methods and heavy commitment of time

(Hadaway and Roozen 1995: 53). Many of their members may find this discipleship commitment too demanding.

5.10 Concluding summary

5.10.1 Results of analysis

An analysis of the operational influence of the bipolar church structure suggests that the criterion of:

1. Adaptability reveals that it has the potential to increase a congregation's effectiveness in the actions of proclamation and service when compared to a unipolar congregation, even if this unipolar congregation does have an extensive network of home fellowship groups.
2. Mission reveals that it has the potential to increase a congregation's effectiveness in the actions of proclamation, care and service when compared to a unipolar church that does not have an extensive network of small groups.
3. Mobilization reveals that it has the potential to increase a congregation's effectiveness in all five actions when compared to a unipolar church that does not have an extensive network of home fellowship groups. Its effectiveness is greater in the actions of proclamation and service, and to some extent in instruction, when compared to a unipolar church that has an extensive network of home fellowship groups.
4. Discipleship reveals that it has the potential to greatly increase a congregation's effectiveness in instruction when compared to a unipolar church that does not have an extensive network of home fellowship groups. Its effectiveness is somewhat greater in this action when compared to a unipolar church that has an extensive network of home fellowship groups.
5. Community building reveals that it has the potential to greatly increase a congregation's effectiveness in all five actions, but particularly those of celebration and care, when compared to a unipolar church that does not have an extensive network of home fellowship groups. Its effectiveness is somewhat greater in the action of care when compared to a unipolar church that has an extensive network of home fellowship groups since a cell group has an outward directed purpose.
6. Organizational integration reveals that it has the potential to increase a congregation's effectiveness in the administrative component of the action of service when compared to a unipolar church.

7. The trinitarian experience of God reveals that it has the potential to increase a congregation's effectiveness in all five actions, but particularly those of celebration, instruction and care, when compared to a unipolar church that does not have an extensive network of home fellowship groups. A unipolar church that has an extensive network of home fellowship groups has the same potential in this area as a bipolar church.
8. Serving the poor reveals that it has some potential increase a congregation's effectiveness in the actions of care, as relates to the victims of society, and service, as relates to the economically poor when compared to a unipolar church that does not have an extensive network of home fellowship groups. A unipolar church that has an extensive network of home fellowship groups has the same potential in this area as a bipolar church.

5.10.2 Tensions and problems with transitioning

The following tensions and problems hindering transitioning from a bipolar to unipolar church may occur due to:

5. Denominational hierarchical resistance to the structure as "too innovative" and "divisive" or too contrary to the denominational ethos and governmental traditions.
6. The influential church and kingdom models in the congregation containing values that are too opposite to the dominant values of the mystical communion and counter system models which characterize the cell church concept.
7. Church members finding the discipleship commitment required too demanding. This may be due to their influential church and kingdom model or because they have experienced considerable redemption and lift over one or two generations.
8. Church members having no unchurched people in their circle of friends and acquaintances (oikos). Thus the cells will not multiply and will stagnate, becoming inward looking.
9. An absence of one or more of the social and ecclesiological factors which favour bipolar church development.

Tensions may develop in congregations in the Reformed tradition that are transitioning to a bipolar structure in the areas of ecclesiology, ethos, hierarchy, and elitism. These not unresolvable where change is permitted and other factors are favorable within the local congregation. Some of the tensions are only what the church will have to confront anyway as

society continues to become more secular and both church and society move away from the Christendom paradigm.

Chapter 6 The operation of the field study

This section describes the field study that was used to test the new cell church praxis (praxis 2) against the current situation in the light of theological tradition. It is represented by the arrow marked “12” in Zerfass’ diagram (fig. 3, page 33).

6.7 Overview of research plan

The research was conducted by means of 2 questionnaires employing a 2 phase sampling process. The first phase was aimed at eliciting stratification data from the congregational leader (senior pastor/minister/dominee/elder questionnaire referred to as. “pastors questionnaire,” without the apostrophe “s” in pastors). This was then used to randomly select congregations for the second phase. This phase, employing a cluster sampling procedure, obtained data from cell members by administering a “cell members questionnaire” (without the apostrophe “s” in members) in cell groups in the selected congregations.

6.8 Details of methodology

6.2.1 First phase using the pastors questionnaire

It is difficult to precisely identify what is a cell church. The reasons for this are that:

1. Many congregations have small groups that operate using the same basic principles for meeting as those advocated for a cell group, yet cannot be considered to be cell churches but rather as “churches with cells.” The crucial distinction is to be found in the congregation’s philosophy. The philosophy of ministry of the “cell church” centres around the cell groups whereas in a “church with cells” the philosophy of ministry centres around the congregational activities.
2. Sometimes the leadership may consider the above distinction irrelevant.
3. The fact that many unipolar churches are in the process of transitioning to a bipolar church means that a congregation that intends to become a cell church may still be at the “church with cells” stage.
4. All but one of the congregations that were contacted were chosen on the basis that the leadership:
5. Considered their congregation to be a cell church or,

6. Had made it their express aim to become a cell church and were already implementing cell groups that were operating as defined by cell church theory.

A degree of subjectivity is involved in the process and one or two of the selected congregations might not be considered to be cell churches by some. The one church that was surveyed which was not a cell church was one that had been one previously but had since abandoned the concept.

The congregations were contacted by the following means:

1. Through meeting their representatives at Cell Church meetings organized by Cell Church International in the Western Cape.
2. Through the network of the researcher's personal contacts.
3. Through contacting AFM churches. This group was specifically targeted since the denomination had made a decision to transition to a cell church operation.
4. Through referral from contacts in all the above categories.
5. The pastors questionnaire (see Appendix 1:1) together with an accompanying letter (Appendix 1:2) was then sent or delivered to the senior pastor/minister/dominee/elder of 56 congregations in the Western Cape. It was delivered and returned to and from the respondents by hand, post or email (the returning emails were then transcribed onto blank questionnaires by the researcher).

Twenty-seven church leaders, out of the 56, returned a questionnaire. As of June 2001 the Cell Church International mailing list for the Western Cape had 205 names listed. These were churches that are either transitioning to become cell churches or are interested in starting. As this is the main organization promoting cell churches in this country it is estimated that the number of churches transitioning in the Western Cape cannot be many more. If this is the case, then the 27 questionnaires represent a 13.2% sample of the number of cell churches in the Western Cape.

6.2.2 Second phase using cell members questionnaire

Sixteen congregations were then selected from among the 27 congregations that returned pastors questionnaires for the cluster sampling. It is important to note that this sampling is regarded as a case study. This means that the conclusions only "might be indicative" of the situation for a

larger population of cell groups. Three stratification variables were used on which to base the random selection of congregations for the second phase. These were:

1. The mean age of the congregational members obtained from the demographic profile using two subsets divided by = or < 35 and >35 years of age
2. The denomination or affiliation of the congregation divided into two subsets – Main Line and Pentecostal/Independent.
3. The length of time a congregation had been operating cells using two subsets = or < 5 and >5 years.

One cell group in each congregation was then randomly chosen to be visited by the researcher in order to administer the cell members questionnaire. The church leader for each congregation was approached by phone and/or email and asked to supply a list of the names of their cell group leaders to the researcher by either email or post. When a list was received each name was numbered. These numbers were then used to randomly select two cell groups. The first one selected was the preferred candidate. The second one was a back-up candidate in case the first candidate's group chosen proved unsuitable (e.g. the group was in recess, in disarray, a specialist group etc.).

Since cell churches are found in both the English and Afrikaans speaking populations the cell members questionnaire used was prepared in English and then translated into Afrikaans. The English and Afrikaans copies are shown in appendix 2.1 and appendix 2.2 respectively. (The question numbers are designated by "V" (for "vraag") in the pastors questionnaire and "Q" (for "question") in the cell members questionnaire).

The researcher made an appointment with the preferred or back-up cell group leader to visit their group and administer the questionnaire. This involved the following steps:

1. Being introduced at the cell group meeting by the cell leader and the researcher giving a brief overview of his background and a brief explanation of the purpose of the research.
2. A time of dialogue with group members, finding out details about their lives, church history, cell group history etc. and answering questions they might have concerning the research.

3. Questionnaires being handed out to each member in either Afrikaans or English and the group was then instructed in how to fill in the questionnaire; difficult or unclear questions being explained. They were then completed individually by group members.
4. The questionnaires were then handed in and checked to try and ascertain if all the questions had been answered. It was almost impossible to do this perfectly in every case before leaving the meeting. Fortunately, however this only resulted in an insignificant number of pages being overlooked and questions not answered.. Sometimes the researcher was invited to stay for the whole meeting. This invitation was accepted when time permitted.

6.2.3 Analysis of data

The data on these questionnaires was then analysed with the help of the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria. This involved a 4-stage approach:

1. Initial checking of the data to eliminate input errors.
2. A preliminary statistical frequency analysis for every variable on the questionnaires. This also involved the Department of Statistics calculating the mean, median for the variables and also various ratios. Unless otherwise stated all the means, medians and ratios shown have been calculated by aforesaid department.
3. This preliminary analysis was then described for both questionnaires and some preliminary conclusions drawn. .
4. A further statistical analysis to establish relationships between the variables using correlation procedures and 2-way frequency tables.
5. A final concluding summary.

6.3 Statistical description of pastors questionnaire

6.3.1 Area in which the church is situated –Appendix 3; chart 1: columns 1 & 2

This information was obtained from the address of the congregation given on the questionnaires. It gives some idea of the area that the congregation serves in mission. The “area served in mission” is a concept used by Callahan (1990: 12). It is based on the principle that most of the membership of a local congregation will be drawn from an area around the congregation whose size is determined by the average trip time in the community. The average trip time refers to the amount of time people spend in their cars travelling to work, to major social and recreational activities and to go shopping.

It may sometimes be a subjective and inaccurate criterion. This is especially the case for some larger congregations because they may draw their membership from very wide areas containing many smaller congregations, and often at the expense of the latter (George 1992: 31 ff.; Gibbs 1993: 152, 153; Morgenthaler 1995: 26). Some congregations in the survey may be in this “large congregation” category because of their sheer size and consequent reputation (see figures on size in 6.3.5) (George 1992: 32). It is a much more accurate criterion for the smaller congregation, as smaller congregations tend to have a much more localized membership (Gibbs 1993: 152), unless exceptional processes are at work. This means that most of the congregations in the survey will tend to be influenced by the areas in which they are situated and serve in mission.

An area may be assigned to one of 4 categories (Neighbour 1995: 120 ff.) (see 4.5.2.1). These are:

1. The young developing suburb or area. Such an area is indicated mainly by having a demographic profile in which those under the age of 9 comprise more than 9% of the total, and those over 60 less than 5%. It has a strong population growth.
2. The maturing suburb or area. Such an area is indicated mainly by having a predominance of the 10 to 24 and 45 to 59 age groups. It has a stable population.
3. The aging suburb or area. Such an area is indicated, mainly, by having more than 12% of inhabitants over 60 years of age and with those under 9 comprising no more than 12%. It has a declining population.
4. The rejuvenating suburb or area. One key to an area being a rejuvenating suburb is that the 20 to 29 age group comprises more than 20% of the total, along with few children under 9 and a large percentage of the over 60s. A rejuvenating area may be weakly rejuvenating, which means that its population is still in decline despite the influx of younger people or strongly rejuvenating. In the latter case the influx of younger people has outstripped the former loss of population in the area and the population is now growing.

The area around each of the 27 congregations was assigned to one of the above four main

categories (Appendix 3; chart 1; column 2) using:

1. The perceptions of the pastors of the congregations concerned.
2. The perceptions and knowledge of personnel involved in the property business.
3. The 1996 census figures for the areas around two of the congregations.
4. A detailed demographic survey of 450 households for the area around one of the congregations conducted by that particular congregation.

The category designated was used to determine the population trend as growing, stable or declining using Neighbour's (1995:120) criteria (see Appendix 3; chart 1; column 1). Eleven congregations were in areas of growing population; 10 were in areas of stable population and 6 in areas of declining population.

6.3.2 Church affiliation details (V2) – Appendix 3; chart 1; column 3

Eighteen congregations were Independent or Pentecostal and 9 were of main line affiliation.

- *Independent or Pentecostal affiliation included congregations from the;*

Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, Family Harvest Church, Harvest Network, Independent Fellowship of Christian Churches, International Network of Christian Churches, New Covenant Ministries International, New Frontiers International, Pinkster Protestant Kerk, United Apostolic Faith Church and an unaffiliated congregation. These are designated “N” in the appendix because the predominant church or kingdom model influencing these congregations is one of the non-institutional models.

- *Main line affiliation included congregations from the;*

Baptist Union of South Africa, Church of the Nazarene, Church of the Province of Southern Africa, Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church), Uniting Presbyterian Church in South Africa, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. These are mainly influenced by an institutional church or kingdom model and designated by “I” in the appendix.

The division between the Independent/ Pentecostal churches and the main line churches is somewhat subjective. The mainline churches are considered to be those which are more institutional and traditional with a history dating back to the Reformation or the Great

Awakening of the 18th century. The Independent and Pentecostal churches are considered to be those that have arisen within the last century, have a charismatic or Pentecostal style of worship and are either independent or are involved in a loose network of churches. Some of the older Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission and Pinkster Protestante Kerk tend to reflect some of the institutional features of the main line churches. They are included in the Independent/ Pentecostal category because they were founded in the last century and have a Pentecostal/charismatic ethos and doctrinal basis.

The “market” share of Independent and Pentecostal churches in South Africa is only just above 10% (Hendriks 1999: 78). Yet the percentage of these churches in the sample is 66.7%. That a greater number of Independent and Pentecostal churches were surveyed than the main line churches stems from the fact that more of the former reacted positively to the invitation by the researcher to supply information on the congregation. It may also indicate that they are more ready to experiment with a cell church model than the more conservative main line denominations.

6.3.3 The age of the congregation since its foundation (V3) – Appendix 3; chart 1; column 4

Table 1. *Frequency distribution of ages of congregations*

Age of congregation (years)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10	8	29.6
10 – 19	7	25.9
20 – 50	5	18.5
50 – 99	5	18.5
100+	2	7.4
TOTAL	27	100

A wide variation was found in the ages of the churches surveyed. The youngest congregation was 2 years old. The oldest was 167 years. The average age of the congregations surveyed was 40.6 years (median 18 years). The average age of the Independent and Pentecostal congregations was 20.3 years (median 10 years) and the Institutional congregations was 75.4 years. (The median of 97 years reflects that some of these latter congregations were by far the oldest.) Many congregations that have been started within the last 20 years have been Independent and Pentecostal counter culture “new-paradigm” churches. They often engage with the post-modern elements of society (usually the baby-busters and younger) (Miller 1997: 1; Gibbs 2001: 23). There is a majority of these churches in the survey.

6.3.4 The number of worship services a congregation held on a Sunday (V4)

Table 2. *Frequency distribution of number of worship services on a Sunday*

Number of worship services on a Sunday	Frequency	Percentage
1	5	18.5
2	16	59.3
3	5	18.5
4	1	3.7
TOTAL	27	100

As would be expected the majority of congregations had the traditional 2 services on a Sunday.

6.3.5 The average number attending Sunday services (V5) – Appendix 3; chart 1; column 5

Table 3. *Frequency distribution of the average number of people attending Sunday services*

Average number of people attending Sunday services	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 199 people	7	26
200 - 400	7	26
401 to 600	8	29.6
601 +	5	18.5
TOTAL	27	100.1

The numbers attending as a total of every service on a Sunday varied from 50 people to 2000. The average number of people attending for all congregations on a Sunday was 526 (Appendix 3; chart 1; column 5) and the median was 420. The median is a more representative measure for

data that is skewed. The reason for the difference between the mean and median may be attributed to a biased sample. The sample is skewed by containing some very large congregations with over 600 members.

Some congregations keep attendance records. Many rely upon estimates which are often inaccurate and vary as to who they include in the count. For instance does it include Sunday School children who come in for part of the service? Callahan (1990: 8), however, considers the current attendance estimate as a key indicator as to what is happening. The researcher’s assumption is that the congregational leader is able to estimate with reasonable accuracy the attendance for the previous year.

According to Gibbs (1993: 151, 235) over 80% of all Protestant churches in the United Kingdom, North America and Australasia have less than 200 active members. Fifty percent have

worship attendances of less than 75 people. Callahan (1994: 8) has similar figures, calculating from United Methodist Church figures that 88.6% of all Protestant churches in the United States have less than 200 regularly worshipping members and 57.5% having less than 75. Considering the similarities between the countries previously mentioned and South Africa it is suggested that there is a good probability that these figures apply to its English and Afrikaans-speaking congregations. If this is accepted then the congregations in the survey show a preponderance of “large” and “huge” (above 350 average attendance at worship) congregations as defined by Schaller (1980: 28). By Callahan’s (1994: 8) standards the average size of the worshipping membership given in the survey is only found in 0.7% of Protestant churches, and the median in 1.6%.

6.3.6 The average attendance at Sunday services one year ago (V6) – Appendix 3; chart 1; column 6

Table 4. *Frequency distribution of average number attending Sunday services one year ago*

Average number of people attending Sunday services one year ago	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 199 people	8	30.8
200 - 400	9	34.6
401 to 600	7	27
601 +	2	7.6
TOTAL	26	100

The numbers attending varied from 30 to 1800 with 1 “don’t know.” The average attendance was 404 and the median was 360. The true average attendance figure for the last year compared to that for one year ago (comparing 2001 with 2000) shows an increase of 122. This increase may be:

- An apparent increase being a reflection on the part of the respondents to present a positive attendance trend that is maybe not entirely accurate aided by inaccurate estimate of attendance.
- A real increase in attendance which relates to some factor in the church’s programme and/or to favorable environmental and contextual factors.

6.3.7 Comparison of present attendance with the last three years (V5 compared with V6-8)

The numbers attending worship services 2 years ago (V7) and 3 (V8) years ago must be regarded as unreliable since 2 leaders and 6 leaders respectively did not answer.

6.3.8 The number of members released to church plants in the last 3 years (V9 – V12)

Table 5. Number of members released to church plants in the last 3 years

Number of members released to church plants in the last 3 years	Number of congregations	Year
140	5	2001
173	6	2000
190	3	1999

The idea of these variables was to ascertain whether or not church planting had made any difference to the worship attendance figures recorded in V5 to V9 above. 10 leaders reported that they had released members to church plants over the last 3 years.

Table 6. Frequency distribution of the number of members released to church plants

Number of members	Number of congregations	Percentage
14 or less	1	20
15 - 29	1	20
30 - 44	2	40
45+	1	20
TOTAL	5	100

in 2001

The distribution in 2001 of the “giving” congregations is fairly typical of each year. The lowest number of members given away was 7 and the highest was 60. These figures only have meaning when they are compared against the total attendance figures for each year for the 27 churches. In 2001 the total attendance figure was 24,980. The 140 members released may have considerably depleted the attendance figure for say the church that gave away 60 members but measured against the sum total it is insignificant. Over the three-year period any new church planting has not significantly decreased the total worship attendance figures for all 27 churches.

6.3.9 Existence of cell groups in the congregations surveyed (V13, V14- 25)

Out of the 27 congregations 26 had operational cell groups. 1 congregation had previously had cell groups but had disbanded them (as determined by V14). Reasons for abandoning cells were anticipated in variables V14 to V25. This one congregation last had cells in 1996 and had them for 3 years. The reason given for the termination was that they were not performing according to expectation. If time and resources had permitted more congregations to be surveyed it might have opened up some interesting insights into the difficulties of implementing and managing cells.

It should be noted that the questionnaire was designed so that any congregation that had terminated the operation of cells would not respond to questions designated by the variables V26 to V53. Therefore only 26 congregations qualified for answering these questions.

6.3.10 The length of time a congregation had been operating cells (V26) - Appendix 3; chart 1; column 7

Table 7. Frequency distribution of the length of time a congregation had been operating cells

Length of time a congregation has been operating cells (years)	Frequency	Percentage
2	3	11.5
3 to 5	12	46.2
6 to 8	10	38.5
10	1	3.8
TOTAL	26	100

The time congregations had been operating cells ranged from 2 to 10 years. The average length of time the responding congregations had been operating cells was 5.1 years. The median is 5. The cell concept was first introduced into South Africa about 12 years ago so the sample indicates that the survey might give a good cross section of development against time.

6.3.11 The number of cells in each congregation (V27) - Appendix 3; chart 1: column 8

Table 8. Frequency distribution of the number of cells in each congregation

Number of cells in each congregation	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 15	8	30.8
16 - 30	3	11.5
31 - 45	8	30.8
46+	7	26.9
TOTAL	26	100

The lowest number of cells possessed by a congregation was 2. The greatest number was 102. The average number of cells per congregation was 35.4. The median was 35.

6.3.12 The number of cells in previous years (V28 – V30) - Appendix 3; chart 1; column 9

Table 9. Frequency distribution of the number of cells in each congregation in 2000

Number of cells in each congregation in 2000	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 15	9	34.6
16 - 30	7	26.9
31 - 45	6	23.1
46+	4	15.4
TOTAL	26	100

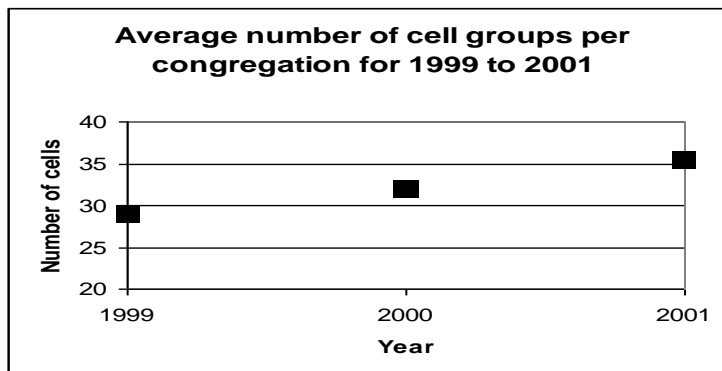
The most accurate figure for the number of cells a congregation possessed in a previous year is provided by that for the year 2000 (V28). The lowest number of cells possessed by a congregation in 2000 was 2. The greatest number was 119. The average number of cells per congregation was 31.9 for 2000 as compared to 35.4 for 2001. This shows an increase of 3.5 cells per congregation.

Table 10. Frequency distribution of the number of cells in each congregation in 1999

Number of cells in each congregation in 1999	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 15	9	41
16 - 30	6	27.3
31 - 45	3	13.6
46+	4	18.2
TOTAL	22	100.1

Four congregations did not respond for 1999. Three were not yet operating cells in 1999. One failed to respond because it had no records of the number of cells it possessed in that year. The lowest number of cells possessed by a congregation in 1999 (V29) was 2, the highest number 119.

The average number of cells per congregation was 28.7 compared to 31.9 for 2000 and 35.4 for 2001. This may be represented by the graph below:



No result could be used for 1998 (V30). It must be considered both unreliable and unusable since 7 congregations were either not operating cells or responded that they did not know the number

of cells they had.

6.3.13 Was the congregation founded as a cell church? (V31) - Appendix 3; chart 1; column 11

In response to the question concerning whether or not the congregation was begun as a cell church 6 congregations responded that they were founded as cell churches (bipolar) out of the 26 that replied. This means that 20 congregations needed to go through a transition phase. Variables V32 to V53 applied to details concerning this transition for these 20 congregations. (It was inferred from the data that the congregation that no longer has cells was founded as a unipolar church.)

6.3.14 Those involved in decision to become a cell church (V32, V33) – Appendix 3; chart 2; column 1

Table 11. Number of groups of people involved in the decision to become a cell church

Groups involved in decision	Number of congregations	Percentage
Senior leader alone	2	11.1
Staff leadership team also included	9	50
Lay leadership also included	2	11.1
Church membership also included	5	27.8
TOTAL	18	100

Eighteen leaders responded out of twenty. This provides a good spectrum of types of decision-making (e.g. autocratic to democratic) by which to judge whether or not this played a roll in the success or otherwise of the transitioning process. The autocratic end of the spectrum is the senior leader making the decision alone. The democratic end involves including all the church membership. The frequency distribution reveals a tendency for the decision making process to have been a more autocratic “clergy” process. In 61% percent of the congregations the process involved either just the senior pastor or the senior pastor and the staff leadership team.

The reason for gathering this information was to test two different viewpoints on church leadership. Callahan (1987: 58) and Nel (1990: 58 ff.) contend that building up the local church and the change process that this requires is more effective when as many possible from the whole congregation are involved in the decision making process (i.e. more participative). Wagner (1984: 141 ff.) and Malphurs (1993: 163 ff.) contend that growing churches which experience

change effectively are led by leaders who whilst listening to the membership are prepared to take decisions either by themselves or with the concurrence of a small leadership team (i.e. more autocratic). The results yielded by the survey are discussed below in section 6.5.

6.3.15 The methods used to prepare for transitioning (V34 – V43) – Appendix 3; chart 2; column 2

Table 12. Number of methods used to prepare for transitioning

Method used to prepare for transitioning	Number of congregations	Percentage (out of 20 congregations)
Preaching about cells (V36)	16	80.0
Establishing a vision for the congregation that included cells (V37)	16	80.0
Sharing the vision with key staff and lay leaders (V38)	15	75.0
Preaching about the need for change	11	55.0
Preaching about the Christian's identity in Christ (V34)	9	45.0
Analyzing the state of the congregation (V40)	7	35.0
Analyzing the needs of the local community (V40)	7	35.0
Encouraging their staff and members to attend a Neighbour "Year of Transition" seminar (V41)	7	35.0
Other (V43)	0	0.0

The options for this question were not exclusive and many leaders employed more than one method, if not most, of the methods for implementing change given below. These results indicate that between 15 and 16 congregations out of 20 implemented the change process through preaching and envisioning the staff and key lay leaders. The other processes were applied by from 11 to 7 congregations - roughly from a half to a third. Only 7 congregations availed themselves of the Neighbour Seminar that might mean that this influence was not very pervasive in persuading churches to transition or in establishing a model for cells. The average number of transition processes used per congregation was 5.

6.3.16 The procedures used to implement transition (V44 – V53) – Appendix 3; chart 2; columns 3 to 10

Table 13. Frequencies distribution for whether the process was voluntary or directed (V44), gradual or immediate (V45)

	Voluntary	Directed	No reply	Immediate	Gradual	No reply
Number of congregations	9	11	0	19	1	0
Percentage	45.0	55.0	0.0	95.0	5.0	0.0

A **voluntary process** was defined in the questionnaire as a process where only existing church members who wanted to join a cell group were incorporated into cells. Thus joining a cell group is a voluntary process. The result is that the congregation operates both with a cell church and its traditional structure for an indefinite period until most members belong to a cell group and every small group operates as a cell group. A **directed process** was defined in the questionnaire as a process where existing church members were expected to join cell groups as directed by the leadership as and when cell groups become available for them to join. Thus joining a cell group is theoretically eventually a compulsory condition for anyone who wishes to become involved with the congregation. (In practice there always seem to be some people who fall into the gaps!)

A **gradual process** was defined in the questionnaire as a process where existing small groups became cell groups and/or existing members formed cell groups after a period of training (of not less than 10 weeks) or as cell groups were expanded from an initial pilot group. An **immediate process** was defined in the questionnaire as a process where existing small groups were immediately expected to operate as cell groups and existing members or worshippers were expected to join cell groups after one or two training sessions for leaders, new cell leaders and members.

Table 14. *Frequency distribution for equipping procedure used for transition*
(V46 – V49)

	Equipping procedure for transition				Type of pilot group used			Other approaches		
	Training course	Pilot group	Both	No reply	Pilot group with only leaders	Pilot group with members	No reply	Another approach used	No other approach used	No reply
Number of congregations	9	4	7	0	5	5	1	0	15	5
Percentage	45.0	20.0	35.0	0.0	45.5	45.5	9.0	0.0	75.0	25.0

The **training course** was defined in the questionnaire as teaching and training concerning the cell group concept, methods and philosophy using the study, and/or seminar and/or workshop approach over an extended period (of at least 10 weeks or equivalent period) for cell leaders and members.

The **pilot group** was defined in the questionnaire as the establishment of a temporary group for purposes of experimenting and training people in cell life and values. After a period of time, in

which those involved learn how to operate as a cell, the group is then multiplied with most of those involved in the initial cell leading new experimental cell groups. Most of the people in an experimental cell come from existing church members who are asked to join it. These new cells are then in turn multiplied in the same manner lead by people previously trained in experimental cells. When a cell starts to multiply by recruiting people of its own initiative to join, it is no longer considered experimental and normal cell multiplication can begin. The process is repeated until a majority of existing members have been incorporated into cells.

Some congregations made use of **both** the training process and the pilot group to implement the transition process.

A **leadership pilot group** was defined in the questionnaire as a group that starts the transition process composed only of the leadership of the congregation. New experimental groups are composed of leaders until all the leadership have been involved in a cell group. Experimental cells then began to include ordinary congregational members. A **members pilot group** was defined as a group that starts the transition process composed mostly of ordinary members, excluding the cell leader who may be one of the leadership. New experimental groups are formed using people trained in this original cell and so on.

Table 15. *Management of home groups that existed prior to transition (V50 –V53)*

	Prior existence of home groups			Management of existing home groups								
	Home groups existed before transition	No home groups before transition	No reply	Directly converted home groups to cells	Did not directly convert any existing home group	Not applicable	No reply	Terminated all existing home groups	Did not terminate all existing home groups	Not applicable	No reply	
Number of congregations	15	5	0	8	8	4	0	6	8	4	2	3
Percentage	75.0	25.0	0.0	40.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	30.0	40.0	20.0	10.0	15.0

Key: *Three congregations reported that they still had 20, 27, and 32 home groups.

Summary

The objective underlying these questions concerning the transition process was used to ascertain

if there was any relationship between the various approaches to transition and the effectiveness of cell multiplication or attendance trends in each congregation (see section 6.5).

6.3.17 Congregational demographic details (V54 – V69)

Charts 3 and 4 (Appendix 3) present this information for each congregation. Tables 16 to 19 (below) present the information in four main age categories and compare the information with comparable information from the 1996 census for the Western Cape. The 1996 census information was supplied by the Department of Religious Demographic Research at Stellenbosch. For purposes of comparison and convenience these charts also include information from the cell members' questionnaire (see description in 6:4 below). The information obtained in the Pastor's questionnaire from the 16 congregations chosen to be sampled in the cell member's questionnaire is also shown in a separate column. The purpose of this data is to establish whether or not there has been any bias in their selection that may effect the results obtained from the cell member's questionnaire.

- Educational details (V54 – V57) – see also Appendix 3; chart 3, columns 1 to 4

Table 16. *Educational details supplied by pastors and cell members compared with 1996 census*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Source of information	Pastors questionnaire (all 27 congregations)	Cell members questionnaire	1996 Census for Western Cape (all)	1996 Census for Western Cape (white)	1996 Census for Western Cape (coloured)	1996 Census for Western Cape (black)
Educational level						
% no schooling	5.2	0.0	9.7	3.9	10.7	13.1
% grade 7 or less	8.8	10.0	28.3	9.6	34.7	31.5
% matric	46.0	39.7	41.7	52.7	38.2	39.7
% matric and higher	40.0	50.9	10.8	28.4	5.8	4.8
Total	100.0	100.6	90.5	94.6	89.4	89.1

The weighted average for each congregation who had no schooling worked out as approximately 5.19% (table 16; column 1). The 1996 census revealed that 9.7% of those in the Cape Province had no schooling. This means that the sample taken for the census is less than the average for all population groups for the province (column 3), although it is higher than that for the white group (column 4). The average of the white and coloured population groups taken together is 8.8%,

which is still greater than the percentage in the surveyed congregations. The same conclusion as to socio-economic status can be drawn for the percentage in the congregations surveyed with a grade 7 or less educational level (8.8%) which is far lower than the average for the province (28.3%). The percentage of those with Matric in the sampled congregations shows that the sample is a fair one for this group.

The weighted average for those who had a higher qualification than a matric pass per congregation was 40.04%, this compares with 10.8 % of the population according to the 1996 census. This disparity indicates that congregations with mainly well educated members have been sampled. It is maintained even when the white population is considered (28.4%) which has been historically advantaged. It is concluded that the sample taken is much above the average for the Cape Province.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the better-educated congregations would be the first to experiment with innovative ideas. Not only are they more likely to see the need for change but they would come into contact with new and innovative concepts more readily through their increased involvement with the wider Christian scene. They are better equipped to handle complex change of a technocratic nature (such as the cell church concept as reflected in the Jethro model) and have the time and financial resources to do so. Their energies are not totally consumed by just surviving!

- Language details (V58 – V61) see also Appendix 3; chart 3; columns 5 to 8

Table 17. *Language details supplied by pastors and cell members compared with 1996 census*

	1	2	3
Source of information	Pastors Questionnaire (all 27 congregations)	Cell Members Questionnaire	1996 Census for Western Cape (all)
Language			
% Afrikaans	53.5	51.9	58.2
% English	38.7	43.3	20.1
% Other 11 official languages	5.1	0	19.8
% Other	2.7	4.9	1.2
Total	100	100.1	99.3

The average percentage for Afrikaans speakers (53.5%) in the congregations surveyed is roughly similar to that given by the 1996 census for the Western Cape (58.2%). The table reveals however a much higher percentage of English speakers (38.7%) than given in the 1996 census (20.1%). Correspondingly those speaking one of the other 11 official languages are much more poorly represented than the average for the Province. The weighted average for those who did not speak one of the official languages (2.7 %) is over twice that of the 1.2% given in the 1996 census. This may reflect the immigration that has occurred into South Africa since 1996.

- Age profile of congregations (V62 –65) see also Appendix 3; chart 3; columns 9 to 12

Table 18. Age profiles supplied by pastors and cell members compared with 1996 census

Source of information Age range	1 Pastors Questionnaire (all 27 congregations)	2 Cell Members Question- naire	3 1996 Census for Western Cape (all)	4 1996 Census for Western Cape (white)	5 1996 Census for Western Cape (coloured)	6 1996 Census for Western Cape (black)
% 19 and under	25.9	1.8	38.2	26.4	42.4	37.9
% 20 to 39	37	39.3	36.3	31.1	35.3	44.4
% 40 to 64	27.4	58.0	20.4	29.2	18.8	15.6
% 65 and over	9.7	0.9	5.2	12.9	3.5	2.1
Total	100	100.0	100.0	99.6	100.0	100.0

The weighted average percentage for the 19 years and under category for the congregations surveyed was 25.9%. The 1996 census for the Western Cape records the weighted average as 38.2 % for all population groups. The weighted average for the 20 to 39 category was 37.0% whereas the 1996 census recorded it as 36.3 %. The weighted average for the 40 to 64 category was 27.4% whereas the 1996 census it is 20.4%. The weighted average for the 65 years and above age group is 9.7% whereas in the 1996 census it is 5.2%. These figures appear to indicate that the sample obtained is not too much at variance with the proportions in all age groups in the general population of the Western Cape.

- Details of accommodation (V66 – 69)(see table 19, below) also Appendix 3; chart 4; columns 1 to 4

The weighted average percentage for those in the category of a house on a separate stand is 69.1% compared which is the same as the 70.7% given in 1996 census. The weighted average for those living in a flat was 19.5% which is larger than the 8.0% in 1996 census. The weighted

average for those in the informal dwelling category was 8.4% which is less than the 19.3% in 1996 census. The weighted average for those living in an institution or hostel was 3.0% compared to 0% in the 1996 census. These two latter figures tend to confirm, if flat dwelling is considered to be a sign of lesser income than a house on a private stand, that the sample of churches is slightly above average for the total Western Cape population in the economic status and wealth of their members.

Table 19. *Housing details supplied by pastors and cell members compared with 1996 census*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Source of information	Pastors Questionnaire (all 27 congregations)	Cell Members Questionnaire	1996 Census for Western Cape (all)	1996 Census for Western Cape (white)	1996 Census for Western Cape (coloured)	1996 Census for Western Cape (black)
Accommodation						
% House or brick structure on separate stand	69.1	80.7	70.7	85.3	78.5	34.70
% Flat in block of flats	19.5	14.4	8.0	10.7	8.6	3.40
% Informal dwelling/shack	8.4	4.9	19.3	2.6	10.9	59.30
% Institution or hostel	3	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Total	100	100	98.0	98.6	98.0	97.40

6.4 Statistical description of cell members questionnaire (see Appendix 2:1 & 2:2 for questionnaire in English and Afrikaans)

115 cell members from 16 cell groups completed the questionnaire. The average number of respondents per cell group was 7.2. A few of the members did not answer all the questions.

6.4.1 Length of time worshipped in present church (Q3)

Table 20. *Frequency distribution for the time cell members have worshipped in present church*

Length of time cell members have worshipped in their present church (months)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 25	38	33.6
26 - 50	22	19.5
51 and 75	14	12.4
75+	39	34.5
TOTAL	113	100

A total of 99.1% cell members professed to be regular worshippers in the cell group's congregation. One person was worshipping in another congregation. The average length of time that people had been worshipping in their present congregation was 80.9 months and the median was 48 months. One person had been worshipping in their present congregation for 50 years. The disparity between the mean and median may be interpreted as showing that a fair number of newer worshippers are more likely be involved in a congregation's cell groups than longer standing members.

6.4.2 Length of time attending present cell group (Q4)

Table 21. Frequency distribution for time cell members have been attending present cell group

Length of time members have been attending present cell group (months)	Frequency	Percentage
5 or less	29	25.4
6 to 10	28	24.6
11 to 15	15	13.2
15+	42	36.8
TOTAL	114	100

The least length of time a person had been attending a cell group was 2 months; the greatest length of time a person had been attending was for 96 months. The average length of time for attendance at the present cell group was 16.8 months. The median time was 10.5 months. The disparity between mean and median may be interpreted as indicating that the cells are increasingly recruiting worshipping members who have been less time in the congregation.

6.4.3 Length of time of existence of present cell group (Q5)

Table 22. Frequency distribution for the length of time of existence of present cell groups

Length of time of existence of present cell groups (months)	Frequency	Percentage
9 or less	45	39.1
10 to 18	22	19.1
19 to 27	9	7.8
28+	39	34
TOTAL	115	100

Replies were received for all 16 cell groups. The least length of time a cell group had been in existence was 5 months. The greatest length of time a cell group had been in existence was 66 months. The average length of time the cell groups had been in existence was 20 months.

6.4.4 Length of time individuals had been attending cell groups in any congregation (Q6)

Table 23. Frequency distribution for length of time individuals had been attending cell groups

Length of time individuals have been attending cell groups in any congregation (months)	Frequency	Percentage
24 or less	30	26.8
25 - 48	29	25.9
49 - 72	17	15.2
73+	36	32.1
TOTAL	112	100

The least length of time that 1 person had been attending cell groups was 2 months; the greatest length of time was 192 months. The average length of time respondents had been in cell groups was 56.5 months and the median was 48 months. The average length of time people had been in cell groups is less than the length of time they had been worshipping in the congregation (80.9 months in Q3). This appears to mean that most cell members had initially come into the congregation through attendance at worship rather than through attending a cell group. This is not surprising since 20 out of the 27 congregations were begun as unipolar churches.

Four respondents answered that they had been attending cell groups for more than 120 months. The cell church was only introduced into South Africa in 1993. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that these respondents were confusing the cell group concept with some other small group concept, such as a home fellowship group or a bible study. This is 3.6% of the total.

6.4.5 Number of people who were in a cell group for the first time (Q7)

Thirty-four out of the 115 respondents (29.6%) answered that the present cell group they were attending was their first one. Cells grow in numbers by:

1. Existing worshippers in the cell’s congregation being allocated to a group by the leadership.
2. Existing worshippers in the cell’s congregation voluntarily wanting to join a cell group.
3. Existing worshippers in another congregation joining the cell. This is usually a prelude to transfer of membership and Sunday place of worship to the cell’s congregation.
4. Unchurched friends, relatives or contacts being invited to attend a cell group.

This may come under the blanket term “recruitment.” An average annual recruitment rate may be calculated using the following formula:

$$\{(\text{Percentage of people in cell group for the first time (29.6\%)} / \text{Average length of time present cell groups have existed which is the mean of Q5 (20 months)}) \times 12\}$$

This gives a result of an annual recruitment rate for new cell members of 18% per cell. At this rate the cells would be doubling the number of members every 50 months, if no account is taken of attrition.

6.4.6 Frequency of cell group meetings (Q8)

One hundred and nine respondents answered that they met once a week. Six respondents answered that they met more than once a week. In one congregation the cell leaders met with the pastor, then with their cell groups and then with their own families every week.

6.4.7 Cell attendance record of respondents (Q9)

Number of meetings attended in last 5 weeks	Number of members with this attendance record	Percentage
none	2	1.9
1	3	2.8
2	13	12
3	16	14.8
4	25	23.2
5	49	45.3
TOTAL	108	100

Table 24. Cell attendance record of respondents

This gives an average attendance record of 78% for each meeting. The attendance record is a percentage of how many people have attended each meeting over the last 5 weeks against a total possible attendance record of 100% if everybody attended every meeting. It is calculated using the formula:

$$100 \times \{ \text{Sum of (Number of meetings attended in last 5 weeks} \times \text{Number of members with this record)} \text{ divided by } (108 \times 5) \}$$

The attendance record percentage would have higher if some groups had not cancelled meetings due to other church activities or vacation periods during the previous five-week period. (The zero attendance record was recorded because a cell leader gave the questionnaire to two members to

complete who were not present at the cell meeting attended by the researcher. These were then posted back to him.)

The percentage attendance record for each cell group is given in chart 7 in appendix 4. It ranges from 40% for two cells to 96% for one cell. There is a fairly even distribution between these ranges. Three of the groups have a less than 50% record which may indicate that the members in these cells are becoming demotivated unless some other factor is influencing their lack of attendance.

6.4.8 *Worship attendance record of respondents (Q10)*

Number of Sunday services attended in last 5 weeks	Number of members with this attendance record	Percentage
none	2	1.8
1	4	3.6
2	10	9.1
3	13	11.8
4	23	20.9
5	58	52.7
TOTAL	110	99.9

Table 25. Sunday worship attendance record of respondents

One hundred and eleven people replied but one stated that they had attended a worship service on 8 Sundays in the last 5 weeks and the answer was therefore discarded. This gives an 81% attendance record. The records for weekly cell group attendance and worship attendance are virtually the same.

6.4.9 *Comparison between initial and present attitudes to cell groups (Q11 & Q12)*

Attitude	Initial number with this attitude	Percentage	Present number with this attitude	Percentage
Opposed	3	2.7	1	0.9
Cautious	22	19.6	5	4.5
Positive	47	42	39	34.8
Very enthusiastic	40	35.7	67	59.8
TOTAL	112	100	112	100

Table 26. Initial and present attitudes to cell groups

In Q11 the respondents were asked to designate their attitudes from a fixed list of responses (as in table 18) towards the idea of joining a cell group when they first heard about it and then in Q12 to designate their present attitude. The table appears to show that in the average period of time (56.5 months) that respondents had been attending a cell group a much more positive attitude had developed towards the idea of belonging. It must be assumed that some initial members had left due to dissatisfaction. Among those who remained, those who were opposed or cautious had decreased from 22.3% to 5.4%.

6.4.10 The influence of the cell group in bringing people to a commitment to Christ (Q13, 14)

In Q13 the cell members were asked, “Did you commit your life to Christ after you attended your first cell group meeting or event?” If they gave an affirmative answer they were then asked in Q14, if the cell group was influential in their making this commitment. “Committing your life to Christ” was explained as being equivalent to, “being born again, inviting Jesus into your life, being converted, receiving eternal life as a free gift, confessing him as your Lord and Saviour for the first time, receiving forgiveness of your sins for the first time, being saved, entering into a personal relationship with Jesus, believing in Jesus.” This terminology proved to be familiar to the majority of the respondents when discussed during the administration of the questionnaire. The theological basis for this “conversion” theology is provided in section 2.2.7.5.

Table 27. *The number of people influenced by their cell group to commit their lives to Christ*

Question	Number of affirmative responses	Percentage out of 109 responses
Did you commit your life to Christ after attending your first cell group meeting or event?	24	21.8
Was the cell group influential in your making this commitment?	17	15.6

Out of the 109 respondents 24 (21.8%) reported that they were converted after joining the cell group. Seventeen of the 24 (70.8%) felt that the cell group was influential in their commitment decision, whereas 7 (29.2%) were influenced by some other factor. This indicates that in the perception of 15.6 % of all the respondents, the cell group was influential in their commitment.

An annual approximate conversion rate per cell may roughly be calculated using the following formula:

{(Percentage who perceived the cell group was influential in their conversion (=15.6%)/ the average length of duration of a cell group which is the mean of Q6 (=56.5 months)) x 12}

This gives a result of an approximate annual conversion rate of 3.3% per cell for people in which the cell group has been in some way be perceived as influential by *those undergoing this experience*. The mean number of people converted per cell group was 1.06. There is a negative skewdness because the median was 2.5. Only 68.7% of cell groups have been influential in this manner (see table 28).

Table 28: *The influence of individual cell groups in bringing people to a commitment to Christ*

Number of people who professed conversion influenced by current cell group	0	1	2	3	4	total
Number of cell groups	5	7	2	1	1	16
% of cell groups	31.3	43.8	12.5	6.25	6.25	100

6.4.11 The members’ self-perception of the cell group’s influence on spiritual growth (Q15 to Q25)

The respondents were presented in the questionnaire with 11 activities, attitudes and areas (see table 29) that are considered important for Christian growth and discipleship (see in section 2.2.4.2). They were asked, “Has attending a cell group played a part in making the following more important to you, less important to you or not changed the importance you attach to them?” It was assumed that if a respondent replied that an attitude or activity was now more important to him or her that this was an indication of spiritual growth in that area. Likewise that if a respondent replied that it was less important that this was possible evidence of spiritual degeneration in that area. (Qualitative spiritual degeneration is a recognized condition for both individuals and churches (Gibbs 1993: 94).) One hundred and fifteen people responded.

Table 29. *The members' self-perception of the cell group's influence on their spiritual growth*

Ranking of frequency of influence	Attitude		Variable number	Number for whom it is more important	% for whom it is more important (Q20 less important)	Number for whom it is not changed	Number for whom it is less important	Number who failed to respond
	Indicator							
1	Own growth in spiritual maturity		Q17	100	87.0	15	0	0
2	Helping other people		Q21	97	84.3	16	0	2
3	Prayer		Q15	93	80.9	22	0	0
4	Sharing faith		Q23	91	79.1	21	1	2
5	Reading and studying the bible		Q16	89	77.4	26	0	0
6	Own church's vision		Q25	88	76.5	25	1	1
7	Church		Q18	85	73.9	29	1	0
8	Own family		Q22	80	69.6	33	0	2
9	World mission		Q19	71	61.7	41	3	0
10	Local community matters		Q24	67	58.3	44	2	2
11	Having nice possessions		Q20	4	47.8	54	55	2

6.4.12 The effectiveness of the cell groups in proclamation (Q 26 to 29)

(Q26) *Number of non-Christian friends who had come to a cell activity or event as a result of an invitation by a cell member during the last 3 months*

Number of people who have come to a cell group or church event or meeting in the last 3 months because invited by a cell member	Number of members who invited this number of people	Percentage
0	65	56.5
1	14	12.2
2	12	10.4
3	11	9.6
4+	13	11.3
TOTAL	115	100

Table 30. Number of people successfully invited to a church event or cell meeting

The respondents were asked to reply to a carefully phrased question, “How many people have come to a cell group or church event or meeting in the last 3 months because you have invited them?” The emphasis is on the number of people who have responded to the invitation and

actually come to the event or meeting. When someone was invited and came this is called a “successful” invitation. The maximum number of people successfully invited by a cell member was 10 people. From table 30 it may be calculated that the number of cell group members who had successfully invited someone to a cell group meeting or church event was 43.5%. The total number of people successfully invited by the 115 respondents was 160 people. This means that each cell group member had successfully invited, on average, 1.4 persons.

(Q27) Number of people that individual members had shared their faith with in the last 3 months.

Table 31. *Number of people cell members had shared their faith with in the last 3 months*

Number of people cell members have shared their faith with on a person to person basis in last 3 months	Number of members who have shared their faith with this number of people	Percentage
0	19	16.7
2 or less	27	23.7
3 to 4	17	14.9
5 to 6	10	8.8
7+	41	36
TOTAL	114	100.1

months

The respondents were asked, “How many people have you shared your faith with in the last 3 months on a person to person basis?” The above question could have been less ambiguously phrased to make it clear that it was the intention of the researcher that it refers only to sharing faith with unbelievers or unchurched people. All of the congregations in the survey could be classed as evangelical, charismatic or Pentecostal in teaching and ethos. The phrase, “sharing your faith” is a synonym commonly used in evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic circles for the proclamatory or evangelistic activity whereby a Christian tells an unbeliever what Jesus has done for them and/or makes a presentation of the gospel. It is in this sense that the emeritus Princeton Theological Seminary professor Armstrong (1979: 21 ff.) uses it in his book “Service Evangelism.” It was obvious to the researcher when he visited the cell groups that this was how most respondents understood the question.

The maximum number of people a cell member reported sharing their faith with was 94 people. Eighty-three percent had shared their faith with at least one person over the last 3 months. They had shared their faith with a total of 1142 people. The number of people shared

with on average by each cell member was 10 people. The median figure for this was 4. This disparity between mean and median indicates that a few people are sharing their faith with many more people than the majority.

Three people had remarkably high scores in the 90s. The researcher checked the veracity of these scores with two of the respondents. One was a beauty consultant seeing at least 90 clients per month and the other was supervisor at a canning factory coming into contact with hundreds of people daily who worked at the factory. It must also be borne in mind that the median figure shows that 50% of the cell members shared their faith with less than 4 unchurched people.

(Q28) Number of cell members that perceive they have shared their faith with more people since they became involved in a cell.

Out of the 115 who responded 85 (74%) replied that they had shared their faith more often since becoming involved in a cell meeting. 30 replied that this was not the case.

(Q29) Number of non-Christian friends who have attended cell meetings or church activities in last 24 months who have become Christians over the last 3 months.

Table 32. *Number of non-Christian friends who have attended cell meetings or*

Number of non-Christian friends who have attended respondents cell group activities or events in last 24 months who have become Christians	Number of members reporting a friend becoming a Christian	Percentage
0	92	80
1	8	7
2	7	6.1
3	2	1.7
4 or more	6	5.2
TOTAL	115	100

church activities in last 24 months who have become Christians over the last 3 months.

The respondents were asked, “How many of your non-Christian friends who have attended any of your cell group’s activities or events in the last 24 months have become Christians.”

A total of 23 non-Christian friends who had attended have now become Christians. One cell member reported that 18 formerly non-Christian friends, who had previously attended a cell group activity, had become Christians in the last 24 months. Twenty percent of cell members reported that they had seen a non-Christian friend who had attended a cell group activity a cell group activity become a Christian.

6.4.13 The commitment of cell members to discipleship mentoring (Q30 & Q31)

Table 33. *Personal meeting for help in growth as a Christian*

Activity	Number	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Cell members helping someone to grow as a Christian through meeting with them personally	75	65.2	115
Cell members being helped to grow as a Christian by someone meeting with them personally	66	57.9	114

Discipleship mentoring has been defined in 2.2.4.4. It involves a commitment to meet regularly with another Christian to either help them to grow or to be helped by them. Cell church theory (see 5.3.2) advocates mentoring for every cell member. The number of members being mentored (57.9%) is a high figure and would help to conserve the fruits of much cell friendship evangelism and aid the incorporation of new believers (see table 34). (“New believers” is used as a shorthand term for those who have committed their lives to Christ since they have attended their first cell group meeting or event organized by the current cell group they belong to.) In fact 79% in this category are being personally mentored.

Table 34. *Mentoring care of new believers*

Number who committed their life to Christ after attending first cell group meeting or event	24
Number of above who being personally mentored	19
% of above who are being personally mentored	79

6.4.14 The influence of the cell group upon social, emotional and relational development (Q32 to 42)

Table 35. *The influence the cell group upon social, emotional and relational development*

Ranking of frequency of experience	Response	Variable number	Number of "Yes" responses	% of "Yes" responses	Number of "No" responses	Number who failed to respond
	Experience					
1	Making new friends within the cell group	Q32	108	93.9	6	1
2	Feeling closer to God	Q34	104	90.4	10	1
3	The ability to be more open and honest with others	Q37	99	86.1	15	1
4	Feeling better about yourself	Q39	99	86.1	16	0
5	The ability to be more open and honest with yourself	Q38	97	84.3	18	0
6	A new depth of love towards others	Q33	96	83.5	18	1
7	More confidence in sharing your faith	Q42	94	81.7	21	0
8	A greater ability to forgive others	Q40	91	79.1	24	0
9	A greater ability to forgive yourself	Q41	83	72.2	32	0
10	More understanding of people from different religions	Q36	68	59.1	46	1
11	Conflict with people in your group	Q35	24	20.9	90	1

The respondents were presented in the questionnaire with 11 experiences which are considered important for social, spiritual, emotional and relational development and growth (see table 35). (See Discipleship and Community building in sections 2.2.4 and 2.2.5.) They were asked if they had then experienced them in the cell group and asked to reply either, “Yes” or “No.”

The questions asking whether the respondents felt better about themselves and had experienced a greater ability to forgive themselves were couched in this non-theological “psychological” format in order to simplify the communicative process (Q39 & Q41). They were designed to discover whether or not the respondents had that sense of well being that comes from accepting and being aware that there is, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 8:1).

For 9 out of 11 experiences over 70% of the respondents gave responses which indicated development and growth. This is interpreted to indicate that for most people the cell group is perceived to be a place of positive social, emotional and relational development within themselves, towards others and towards God. It is strongest in the areas of making new friends and feeling closer to God. It is weakest in the areas of understanding people of different religions, and of dealing with conflict.

This latter is of concern since confronting and resolving conflict is a necessary part of small group development. Undue conflict destroys community within a group and may lead to its dissolution. Yet some conflict is necessary for healthy social bonding to occur. That the conflict that has occurred has been in the latter category is indicated by the overall positive responses regarding the social, emotional and relational development in the groups.

Callahan (1983: 38) contends that it takes three years for a group to develop relational cohesiveness and identity states and that this only comes as a result of crisis in these areas in the second year. If this is correct then as the average life of the cell groups surveyed was 20 months (see 6.4.3) it would be expected that many more groups and members would have experienced conflict. The fact that only 29% of cell group members have experienced conflict may indicate that they have not recognized it when it did occur or that many cell groups are not progressing to the stage of true community that can only come as conflict arises and is resolved. This is serious since an unhealthy superficiality in relationships may be being built into the very fabric of future cell group multiplication.

Yet it does not apply to every cell group surveyed. An analysis of the number of people experiencing conflict by cell group (see chart 7, appendix 4 and table 36 below) confirms the impression created from the general data. In 5 cell groups (31.25%) not one member reported experiencing conflict. Less than 25% had experienced conflict in 10 groups (62.50%). Yet there is a wide variation between the cells surveyed. It would appear that 3 (18.75%) of the 16 groups, in which over 50% of the members had experienced conflict, might be progressing more towards maturation in relationships. (That this occurrence of conflict is possibly not related to the length

of time these 3 groups have existed is indicated because they have been in existence 6, 15 and 18 months.)

Table 36. *Frequency distribution of members who have experienced conflict by cell group*

% of members who have experienced conflict	Number of cell groups
<25	10
26 - 50	3
51 - 75	2
76 - 100	1

6.4.15 *The experience of God in the cell groups (Q43)*

Table 37. *Frequency distribution for feeling God's presence when worship or pray for others*

Experience of God's presence	Number of responses for each category	Percentage
Almost always	62	53.9
Sometimes	47	40.9
Never	1	0.9
Don't know	5	4.3
TOTAL	115	100

The respondents were asked, "Have you felt God's presence when you worship or pray for others in the group?" The question of what it means to experience the triune God is dealt with in the thesis in sections 2.2.7. It is obviously a subjective experience that needs interpretation from an empirical perspective. Yet it is meaningful concept to many Christians and is regarded as a necessary and/or positive affirmation of the inner state of a person or a group meeting.

As worship is a cell group activity that occurs at almost every meeting it may be concluded that over 50% of the respondents experience God's presence in a felt way at almost every meeting. When this is added to those who state that they sometimes feel Gods' presence it leads to the further conclusion that 94.8% of cell members have had this felt experience within their cell group. This suggests that the cell group corporate experience of God is a positive and affirming feature of their cell life.

6.4.16 The degree of caring in the cell groups (Q44 to Q50)

The respondents were presented in the questionnaire with 6 physical or emotional needs, that are commonly found within our modern urbanized and secular society, and asked, “Has the group ever helped you personally in any of the following ways?” They were asked to reply either, “Yes” or “No.” These common needs were formulated from the situational analysis of modern South African society found in chapter 4 of the thesis. The results are presented in table 38.

Table 38. *The degree of caring in the cell groups as measured by needs that have been met*

Ranking of frequency of need being met	Response	Variable Number	Number of "Yes" respons-es	% of "Yes" respons-es	Number of "No" respons-es	Number who failed to respond
	Activity					
1	Made to feel not alone	Q46	102	88.7	12	1
2	Given encouragement	Q45	98	85.2	16	1
3	Help in an emotional crisis	Q44	69	79.4	45	1
4	Helped to make a decision	Q47	57	49.6	57	1
5	Brought meals for family	Q48	41	36.0	72	1
6	Been provided with financial support	Q49	40	34.8	74	1

Out of the 114 responses the greatest number of cell members replied that the group had made them feel not alone. The least number replied that the group had provided them with financial support. The assumption behind these questions is that a major part of caring involves meeting felt needs. When needs are met then people feel cared for. If this is correct then it is clear that in three major areas pertaining to emotional needs over 75% of the cell members felt cared for.

Question 50 was asked to determine whether cell group members had experienced a greater degree of caring since becoming involved in the bipolar cell church structure than in previous unipolar structures in which they may have been involved. It is not just concerned with their perception of caring in their present cell group. The results are summarized in table 39 following.

Table 39: *Frequency distribution of perceived care received since members started attending cells*

Perception of care received since started attending cell group	Number of responses for each category	Percentage
A lot more cared for	79	69.9
Somewhat more cared for	24	21.2
Cared for in the same way as before	9	8
Somewhat less cared for	0	0
A lot less cared for	1	0.9
TOTAL	113	100

Over two thirds felt “a lot more cared” for than prior to their belonging to a cell group. When the second, “somewhat more cared for” category is added this means that over 90% felt more cared for indicating that most perceive that their needs are being more effectively met by the bipolar system.

6.4.17 *The influence of the cell group on mobilization for ministry and service (Q51 to Q57)*

The respondents were presented in the questionnaire with 7 activities or attitudes relating to serving others within the group, in the congregation and in the community at large. They were asked, “As a result of attending the cell group have you done the following (referring to these activities or attitudes)?” They were asked to reply either, “Yes” or “No.” These activities and attitudes (see table 40) were drawn from chapter 2 of the thesis in the context of spiritual gifts, the missional nature of the congregation in reaching out to and serving the local community and Jesus’ call to be mobilized as one of his disciples.

Table 40. *Frequency of experience of activities related to ministry and service*

Ranking of frequency of activity	Response		Variable Number	Number of "Yes" responses	% of "Yes" responses	Number of "No" responses	Number who failed to respond
	Activity						
1	Experienced someone else bringing a spiritual gift		Q52	92	80.0	23	0
2	Prayed for somebody by laying hands on them		Q51	84	73.0	31	0
3	Taken a more active part in church life		Q55	76	66.1	37	2
4	Increased your financial giving to the church		Q57	63	54.8	51	1
5	Become involved in volunteer work in your community		Q54	62	53.9	53	0
6	Changed your attitudes on some social issues		Q56	60	52.2	54	1
7	Brought a spiritual gift to the group		Q53	55	47.8	60	0

There were between 113 to 115 responses. A positive response to the question for any of the activities is interpreted as the member having the perception that the cell group has been influential in either providing an opportunity for that activity or in influencing the person to do it. The activities with the two highest rankings are connected with what happens in cell group meetings.

It appears to be the perception of the great majority of the cell members that being in a cell group has exposed them to receiving ministry from others in the area of the spiritual gifts. It has also provided a platform whereby they can minister to others through prayer with the laying on of hands. The perceived influence of the cell group, however, is not just limited to internal group dynamics.

Between half and two-thirds of the members attribute attendance at cell group meetings as influencing them to take a more active part in church life and increasing their giving to their local congregation. Roughly half of the members perceive the cell as having influenced them to become more involved in the community and/or to change their mind on some political or social issue.

Less than half the respondents considered that they had been used to bring a spiritual gift. All the congregations in the survey would consider themselves “charismatic” or Pentecostal and encourage the use of the gifts in meetings. This figure may be an indication of success in mobilization in that at least some have been used by the Holy Spirit in this manner or as an indication of failure in that not everybody considers they have been used. Anecdotal evidence suggests that both may be true! One cell group discussed what the spiritual gifts were and who could be used by the Holy Spirit to bring a gift. The cell was being used to facilitate the use of the gifts. Yet the group was composed of long standing church members who displayed considerable ignorance of the biblical teaching.

6.4.18 Demographic details of cell members surveyed (Q58 to Q62) –charts 5 to 8

- ***Gender (Q58)***

Fifty-three of the respondents were male (46.1%) and 62 of the respondents were female (54.9%) (see table 41).

The gender sample from the cell member's survey shows similar proportions to that found in the figures given by Hendriks (1999: 66) for South African Churches (see table 41) which shows an average of 46.6% male membership and 54.4% female.

Table 41: *Gender percentages for South African Churches (Hendriks 1999: 66)*

	% male	% female
Anglican churches	46.9	53.1
Apostolic Faith Mission	46.3	53.7
Baptist Churches	46.1	53.9
Catholic Churches	47.5	52.5
Congregational Churches	46.8	53.2
Dutch Reformed Church	48.1	51.9
Methodist Churches	46.4	53.6
Pentecostal/Charismatic	45.6	54.4
Presbyterian	45.9	54.1

- *Age (Q59) – see 6.3.17 table 18: Comparison of pastor's and cell members questionnaires*

One hundred and twelve cell members responded to this question. The youngest respondent was 14 and the oldest was 69. The survey reveals, as would be expected, that there was a much smaller percentage of members in the 19 and under category in the 16 cell groups surveyed than

in the average of the estimates given for the pastor's questionnaire in the 27 congregations surveyed. The estimates of the under 19 age group included a far greater age range than would be in cell groups. It seems probable that this is because:

1. Although many churches have "Youth Cells," which cater for the senior high school age group, these cells must be adapted to the needs of youth and therefore operate differently from a normal adult cell. Therefore neither the church leaders nor the researcher considered them suitable for study for the purposes of this thesis.
2. The only age group in this under 19 category which would be in adult-type cells were those who have graduated from high school, and thus would be in the 17 to 19 age range.

There is a bias in the sample towards those in the 40 to 64 age group. This may be explained as an anomaly of the random sampling procedure used.

There is also a difference between the estimated figure for the over 65 age group given in the pastor's questionnaire and that given in the cell members questionnaire. This is understood because of the difficulty many in this age group would have in attending evening cell groups.

It is also a possibility that those in this age group are more traditional in their approach and would not want to get involved in a concept that is so recent. Be this as it may it does suggest that there is a place for cell groups that meet during the day so that those over 64 will find it easier to attend.

- ***Education (Q60) – see 6.3.17 table 16: Comparison of details supplied by pastors and cell members***

One hundred and fifteen cell members responded to this question. There is a slight bias towards the more educated end of the profile compared to the pastors' estimates for their congregations (compare columns 2 and 3 in table 16). This may be due to their error, that some who have less schooling feel intimidated by the composition of the cell groups in these more highly educated congregations and therefore are not involved or it may be anomalous sampling bias.

- ***Language spoken at home (Q61) – see 6.3.17 table 17: Comparison of details supplied by pastors and cell members***

One hundred and fifteen cell members responded to this question. There is good correspondence between the language profile of the cell members' questionnaire and that of the pastor's questionnaire. It does show a slight bias towards a greater number of English speakers compared

to the pastors' estimates for their congregations but this is not significant (compare columns 2 and 3, table 17). A comparison of columns 3 and 4 also reveals that the cell members questionnaire included many more English speakers than the average for the Western Cape (43.3 as opposed to 20.1%) and no speakers at all of the 11 other official languages as opposed to 19.8 % in the province.

- ***Socio-economic profile as judged by type of accommodation (Q62) –see 6.3.17 table 19: Comparison of housing details supplied by pastors and cell members***

The sample for the cell members' questionnaire has favoured those in a higher socio-economic bracket than is the average for the congregations surveyed (compare columns 2 and 3, table 19). This may be either because they are not included in the cell groups of those congregations or because these groups were preferentially selected by the random sampling. A comparison of columns 3 and 4 also reveals that it is higher than the average for the Western Cape.

6.5 Analysis of results and conclusions

The results obtained by the questionnaires were analyzed in three steps.

1. Ratios, indices and variables were established which were used to measure the effectiveness of the cell church concept as formulated from the premises conceptualized in 3.5.1. These applied only to the Pastor's questionnaire.
2. The relationships between the variables were analyzed to determine if any other factors other than the cell church approach was affecting the results, such as the location of the congregation, method of transition, age profile etc. This applied only to the Pastor's questionnaire.
3. The results were summarized for both questionnaires and discussed taking into account the procedures in points one and two above.

6.5.1 The ratios used to measure effectiveness

The following indices were used to measure effectiveness of the practical theological actions and change among the congregations surveyed:

1. **The absolute attendance trend (AAT)** over one year (attendance for 2001 (PQ V5) minus attendance for 2000 (PQ V6), shown as V5-V6), *chart 4; column 5 in appendix 3*. It was originally intended to do this over a 4-year period but most congregations were found not to keep accurate records of attendance or make reliable estimates of attendance beyond two years.
2. **The attendance trend ratio (ATR)** - *chart 4; column 6 in appendix 3*. This was calculated from the average estimated present Sunday attendance (PQ V5) divided by the last year's average estimated Sunday attendance (PQ V6) shown as V5/V6. This provides a ratio that shows how the attendance is increasing or decreasing which is relative to the present attendance and is independent of the size of the congregation.
3. **The absolute cell trend (ACT1) over one year** - *chart 4; column 7 in appendix 3* This is the number of cells for 2001 (PQ V27) minus number of cells for 2000 (PQ V28) shown as V27-V28.
4. **The absolute cell trend (ACT2) over two years** - *chart 4; column 8 in appendix 3* This is the number of cells for 2001 (PQ V27) minus number of cells for 1999 (PQ V29) shown as V27-V29.
5. **Attendance to cell ratio 1 (ACR1)** – *chart 4; column 9 in appendix 3*. This was calculated from the estimated present Sunday worship attendance figure (PQ V5) divided

by the present number of cells (PQ V27) shown as $V5/V27$. It is possible to use this as a ratio since according to cell church theory and praxis cells are multiplied when the average attendance is from 10 to 15 people on a regular basis. This limits their size. This was confirmed from the visits to the cells in 16 churches for the cell members' questionnaire. The average number of members in responding cells was 7.2. The average number of members in the cells who responded was 7.2, although the actual membership could possibly be calculated out as 9.2 people since the average attendance per week is 78% of the total number of members

6. **Attendance to cell ratio 2 (ACR2) – chart 4; column 10 in appendix 3.** This was calculated from the estimated Sunday worship attendance figure for 2000 (PQ V6) divided by the number of cells in 2000 (PQ V28) shown as $V6/V28$.
7. **Cell multiplication ratio 1 (CMR1) – chart 4, column 11 in appendix 3.** This was calculated from the number of cells that the congregation has at present (PQ V27) minus the number of cells that it had in 2000 (PQ 28) divided by the latter (V28) shown as $V27-V28/V28$. This is the most accurate measurement figure available from the survey information and shows how well the cells are currently multiplying in relation to the last year's performance.
8. **Cell multiplication ratio 2 (CMR2) – chart 4; column 12 in appendix 3.** This was calculated from the number of cells that the congregation has at present (PQ V27) minus the number of cells that it had in 1999 (PQ V29) divided by the latter (V29) shown as $V27-V29/V29$. This conveys a more accurate picture of the cell multiplication trend within the congregation which smoothes out any “hiccups” that may have occurred in the trend due to the odd aberrations or problems. V29, however, may not be such an accurate figure as V28.

6.5.2 An analysis of relationships between the variables or differences between means

The data from the leaders' questionnaire and the cell members' questionnaire provided many dependant variables. “A dependant variable is one that is measured or recorded by the investigator” (Witte & Witte 1997: 7). These were statistically analyzed with the aid of a Friedman two-way analysis of variance test. The variables tested for a relationship using this analysis are presented as a two-way table in charts 5 and 6 in Appendix 3. The result of the testing is shown in the cell formed by the intersection of the variables concerned as either “no relationship discerned” or “relationship indicated by χ^2 test.”

The following definitions may be helpful in interpreting the conclusions:

- An analysis of variance is an overall test of the null hypothesis for more than two population means (Witte & Witte 1997: 346).
- The null hypothesis proposes there is no relationship between the variables being analyzed.
- A one-way analysis of variance is an overall test of the null hypothesis for equality of more than two population means (Witte & Witte 1997: 346).
- A two-way variance test, tests whether differences exist among population means categorized by two factors or independent variables (Witte & Witte 1997: 346).
- The χ^2 test evaluates whether observed frequencies reflect the independence of two qualitative variables (Witte & Witte 1997: 408). The χ^2 may not be a valid test when the number of data samples for a cell is less than five. The diagnostic result of a χ^2 test is called a “p-value.”
- The p-value for a test result represents the degree of rarity of that result given that the null hypothesis is true. It measures the probability that the null hypothesis is true. Smaller p-values tend to discredit the null hypothesis and to support the research hypothesis (Witte and Witte 1997: 332). It gives an indication of whether there might be dependency between the variables.
- In this instance a p-value of equal to or less than 0.05 (5%) was taken as indicating that there may be a relationship between the two variables concerned.

The following conclusions may be drawn from the two-way variance testing of the data gathered in the Pastors’ questionnaire:

1. In no case was there sufficient sampling to give the required number of 5 or more data counts for a valid χ^2 test for every cell defined by the rankings tested for the variables tested. Thus it must be concluded that there was insufficient data obtained to be certain of the result of the χ^2 test. The only conclusion that could be arrived at was that the results “give **some** indication” or “**appear to** give no indication” of a relationship. Where the results give some indication of a relationship this indicates that further research, which concentrates upon obtaining a larger amount of data for that particular relationship, might yield interesting results. It also means that no variables can be definitely discarded as influencing the data, although it would appear unlikely that these variables would do so.
2. Charts 5 and 6 in appendix 3 reveal that the χ^2 test yielded a p-value of greater than 0.05

for the majority of variables tested. Therefore it may be concluded that there is a very low likelihood of there being a relationship between the variables tested.

3. The p-value of the χ^2 test was less than 0.05 (or 5%) for - Area with ACR1; Area with Absolute Cell Trend for one year; V46 with ACR2; Accommodation against CMR1. This gives an indication that there may be a relationship between these variables. Thus there is some indication of a possible relationship between:

- The area in which the church premises is situated (variable = AREA) and the attendance to cell ratio for 2001 (ACR1).
- The area in which the church premises is situated (variable = AREA) and what the trend is for the number of cells between 2001 and 2000 (ACT1).
- The method used to equip the congregation for transitioning to cells (pilot group, training course or both together) (V47) with the attendance to cell ratio for 2000 (ACR2).
- The type of accommodation the congregation live in and the cell multiplication ratio for 2001/2000 (CMR1).

It appears that it is possible that three variables may influence the data and the functioning of the surveyed cell churches. These are firstly, the area in which the church building is located, secondly the method used for transitioning and thirdly socio-economic (as measured by accommodation) factors within the congregation. A further study gathering a greater spread of data for these variables would determine whether or not this is so. The possible influence of these variables must be borne in mind when considering the interpretation of the effectiveness of the surveyed churches.

6.5.3 Relation of empirical results to theory

6.5.3.1 Introduction

The above frequencies and statistical analysis gathered from the two questionnaires were then used to judge the effectiveness of five actions: proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service. They were also used to determine the social and time dimensions of change on these actions and thus measure the effectiveness of the transition process in the cases where congregations had transitioned from a more traditional structure to a cell church structure. The results will be considered systematically using the practical theological actions established in

chapter 1, measured by the criteria enunciated in chapter 2 and the conjectural premises enumerated in chapter 3.

6.5.3.2 Proclamation

In 3.5.3 it was conjectured in the second premise that a cell church is more effective in proclamation than a unipolar church. This is based on the first premise that proclamation is effective in today's world through multi-level assembling with a small group component.

Although this premise applies to the action of proclamation it incorporates within it the concept that proclamation will usually only be effective if the other practical theological actions are being effectively enacted. Thus whilst proclamation will not normally be very effective unless it becomes the primary objective of a congregation (Callahan 1983 xxii) its success depends upon all the other actions also being effective. The effectiveness of proclamation will be judged using the interrogative criteria of adaptability, mobilisation, mission, discipleship and serving the poor.

a) Adaptability as measured by:

i. A contextualisation of the gospel

Contextual adaptability may be judged by how successfully the congregation is evangelizing the area it serves in mission. Two criteria are used in this study – comparing the composition of the congregation with that of the area it serves in mission and the number of unchurched people the individual cells are incorporating through conversion.

As the study progressed it became increasingly obvious that comparing the composition of the congregation with that of the area served in mission is:

- Beyond the capacity of this present study because it is a very time consuming and difficult criteria to ascertain.
- The precise area the local congregation serves in mission can only be established with difficulty. It cannot be taken for granted because of the varying histories of congregations.
- The latest census figures are not available and the 1996 census figures will be unreliable for some communities situated in such a rapidly developing metropolis as Cape Town.

- It needs qualitative research to determine what the results mean. If the composition of a congregation is approximately similar to that of the area it serves in mission then this may be because it has adapted so that it is successfully proclaiming the gospel in this area. However, it may also be because the congregation was founded in that community and has never needed to change because the community has remained stable for many years.

There are indications that such research would be profitable. Statistical analysis of the data suggests that there is some indication of a possible relationship between the population trends in the area in which the church premises is situated and the proportion of church members in cell groups and the rates at which cells multiply.

As regards the effectiveness of the individual cells concerned in reaching the unchurched the evidence is ambiguous. Some 21.8% of cell members stated that they were converted since joining their present cell group and 15.6% state that this was due to the influence of their group. Yet the average length of time people had been in cell groups (see 6.4.4) is less than the length of time they had been worshipping in the congregation (80.9 months in CMQ3). This appears to indicate that most cell members had initially come into the congregation through attendance at worship rather than through attending a cell group. Thus the cell groups themselves seem to be mainly recruiting attendees from the worship service rather than recruiting them from direct contact with the community. It appears that the intimacy of the cell group is conducive to these unconverted members making a commitment to Christ. But the verdict is still out as to whether or not the cell groups are adapting for proclamatory effectiveness into their communities as envisaged by cell church theory.

ii. Adaptation to post-modernity

The fact that 80% of cell members recorded that they had experienced someone else bringing a spiritual gift in the cell and 47% recorded that they had, themselves brought a spiritual gift indicates that there is some adaptation in the cell groups to the experiential aspect of post-modernity. The 94.8% who recorded that they sometimes or always felt the presence of God in the group reinforces this conclusion.

b) Mobilization as measured by the extent to which members are mobilized in the action of proclamation

This involves the assessment of the number mobilised in some sort of evangelistic activity, the number who profess to have been converted through the influence of a cell group and the number of cell group members who have seen a friend commit their lives to Christ whom they have invited to a cell group activity or event. Three comparative standards may be used to judge the success of mobilization in mission:

1. *Callahan's (1990: 11) indices for congregational vitality*
2. *Estimates of mobilization of church membership in the United States*
3. *Wagner's (1976 & 1984: 93) research concerning evangelistic effectiveness*

1. *Callahan's (1990: 11) indices for congregational vitality*

Table 42. *Callahan's (1990: 11) growth indices*

Type of Church	Members	Constituents	Persons Served in Mission
Rapidly growing	100	125	100
Stable and growing	100	100	75
Stable	100	75	50
Stable and declining	100	50	25
Dying	100	25	10

Callahan (1990: 10,11) uses the ratios between members, constituents and persons served in mission to determine how effective a church is being in mission. This is judged by the degree to which church members are being mobilized for mission. Mission is defined as “seeking out the lost” (Callahan 1983 xxii). Thus it equates with the activity of proclamation as defined in this study. Members are “resident members marginally to fully active in the life of the church” (Callahan 1990: 10). Constituents are “nonmembers participating in one or more activities of the church two to four times or more in a six month period” (Callahan 1990: 10). Persons served in mission “are those individuals in the community, neither constituents nor members, intentionally ministered to in terms of their human hopes or hurts” (Callahan 1990: 10).

The assumption is made that there is a connection between a church's effectiveness in mission as measured by a ratio of constituents and persons served in mission for every 100 members and whether it is rapidly growing, stable and growing, stable, stable and declining or declining. The emphasis is on the effectiveness of the body as a whole not on individual members. A further

assumption being made that there is a connection between the health of the body and the activities of its composite individuals in proclamation. This is supported by the interpretation drawn from the four major church metaphors in chapter 2 of this study.

The above theory may be adapted to determine what is happening to the cells in the survey. Cell church theory that regards cells as “ecclesia in ecclesiolae” may be used to justify this adaptation. “Members” may be equated with cell members; “constituents” with those who have been invited one or more times to a cell meeting over the last 3 months and “persons served in mission” as unchurched people with whom cell members have shared their faith. The number of times constituents have been involved in activities has been reduced from two or more in six months to one or more in three months, as this would be more accurately remembered.

Out of the group of 115 cell members surveyed, individuals had invited 140 people to a cell meeting or event. This gives a ratio of 122 constituents per 100 cell members. Out of the group of 114 cell members, individuals had shared their faith with 1142 people. This gives a ratio of 1001 people served in mission per 100 cell members.

Table 43. *An analysis of the 16 congregations using Callahan’s (1990: 11) growth indices*

Category	Number per 100 members
Constituents	122
Persons served in mission	1001

If the above adaptation is accepted then comparing table 43 with 42 indicates that according to Callahan’s ratios the cell groups are rapidly growing since a rapidly growing church has a ratio of 125 constituents and 100 people served in mission per 100 members. The number of people with whom faith has been shared may be exaggerated, may include the same person several times or church members yet the number of persons served in mission still gives an impressive figure. It is still impressive despite the fact that it is inflated by the efforts of a few highly motivated individuals. These figures seem to indicate that there is much witnessing (people served in mission) and relational evangelism (constituents) being enacted by the cell group members.

2. *Estimates of mobilization of church membership in the United States*

Table 44: Percentages of cell members involved in an evangelistic activity

Evangelistic activity	Percentage who performed activity	Percentage who did more than the average for each activity
Cell members who successfully invited someone to a cell group or church event or meeting in the last 3 months	43.50%	31.30%
Cell members who shared their faith on a person to person basis in last 3 months	83.30%	21.30%
Cell members, with non-Christian friends that have become Christians and have attended cell meetings or church activities in last 24 months	20.00%	20%

The cell member survey revealed that 43.5% of cell members are involved in relational proclamatory action (see 6.4.12 and table 44), since this percentage have successfully invited someone to a cell meeting or church event in the last 3 months. The percentage involvement is far above the 18.5% average of the estimations for church members in any church activity in the United States (see 4.5.3, fig. 5). No congregation can function without members being involved in the other actions. Therefore it is to be imagined that the total percentage of cell members involved in all church activities is higher than the 43.5% involved in just the action of proclamation. Further research may reveal that it is approaching the 55% suggested for a growing church.

3. *Wagner's (1976 & 1984: 93) research concerning evangelistic effectiveness*

It is apparent from table 44 that that not every cell member is involved to the same degree. The culminative frequency column of the statistical frequency procedure for CMQ26 reveals that only 15 of the members (13.0%) were responsible for successfully inviting 80 (50.0%) of the guests to a cell event. The same frequency procedure for Q27 also reveals that only 12 people (10.5%) were responsible for sharing their faith with 601 (52.6%) of those served in mission. In Q29 only 20% of cell members record that one or more of their non-Christian friends who attended any of the cell group's activities or events in the last 24 months have become Christians.

The reason for this may be:

1. Some people are being more obedient than others to Jesus' command to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

2. Some have no unchurched contacts, friends or family in their circle of influence.
3. Some are more enthusiastic and obedient because they have some “gifting” in this area and are therefore more effective which causes them to be more motivated.

Wagner (1976 & 1984: 77 ff.) has considered the last two reasons for a skewedness in proclamatory activity. Evangelism is an activity that is included within the action of proclamation. Evangelistic effectiveness may be judged by the number who when presented with Jesus put their trust in God through accepting Him as Saviour and Lord and serve him as their king in the fellowship of the church (Wagner 1984:21). Wagner (1976 & 1984: 93) has formulated the working hypothesis from his research into church growth that most evangelistic effectiveness in any congregation comes from the:

- The 10% who have the gift of evangelism. (It must be noted, however, that Wagner (1976 & 1984: 87,88) believes his research reveals that in many congregations only 5% of those who have it are using this gift.)
- Members who have been Christians for less than two years and still retain unchurched contacts, friends or family in their circle of influence.

What this means in practice is that it is only a few percent of any congregation who according to the above standards are both evangelistically active and effective.

CMQ 29 is interpreted as indicating that a person who has a non-Christian friend who attended a cell group activity or event over the last 24 months and seen that person become a Christian has been, in some way, instrumental in that person’s conversion. It is assumed that they have been effective in evangelism. Using Wagner’s (1976 & 1984: 93) standards the responses to CMQ 26, 27 and 29 may be interpreted to show that either one or both of the alternatives given below are at work:

- A large number of members are using their evangelistic gifting
- Or, a large number of new Christians are being mobilized to reach their “oikoses” (circles of influence).

If this is accepted then the cell groups appear to be proving a very effective structure for facilitating those with the gift of evangelism and new Christians in effective evangelism.

c) Mission as measured by:

i. The establishment of a missionary identity

The research did not directly establish any instrument to measure the extent to which the surveyed congregations had a missionary identity. The evidence presented above concerning

mobilization in the proclamatory action does suggest, however, that there is a greater degree of missionary identity in the churches surveyed than the situational analysis reveals is common in many South African churches. To this must be added the very high level of faith sharing and successful invitations to cell activities or church events, the increased importance of faith sharing for cell members, as well as anecdotal evidence from some cells groups which were visited concerning organising special events to build relationships with the unchurched.

ii. Numerical growth for attendance for a congregation at worship services on a Sunday

The numerical attendance for a congregation at worship services on a Sunday over a period of time was compared in order to establish what trends exist (AAT and ATR). This criteria, however, has its problems from the point of view of accuracy (see 6.3.5. and 6.3.6), because of what it does not indicate about the spiritual commitment of the congregation and the statistical significance of the results. It is preferred therefore not to use this criterion, by itself, as a measure of effectiveness.

iii. The numerical growth of cell groups attached to a congregation

Comparing the number of cell groups attached to a congregation over a period of time in order to establish whether a trend exists and what it is (ACT and CMR). This is a far more accurate measure of effectiveness since numerical growth in the number of cells implies an increase in those committed to the church's vision and therefore probably to Christ. It is a figure that can be measured much more accurately than attendance, especially over a period of two or three years.

The results of such a comparison (see 6.3.12) reveal that the average number of cells per congregation was 28.7 in 1999 compared to 31.9 for 2000 and 35.4 for 2001. This may be an indication that a larger sample will show that this is a significant increase. It does not give much idea, however, of how this may compare with the trends in the number of home fellowship groups in comparable unipolar churches nor whether those being incorporated into cells are "recycled" Christians or have been converted through the congregation's missionary proclamation.

iv. The number of cell members who have professed conversion as a result of cell group activities

The results of CMQ13 as recorded under 6.4.10 showed that 15.6% of the existing members of cell groups believed that the cell group they were attending was influential in their conversion to

Christ. As calculated in 6.4.10 this gives a result of an approximate annual conversion rate of 3.3% per cell for people in which the cell group has been in some way perceived as influential by those undergoing this experience. Whilst this rate is small it does indicate that the cell groups are experiencing some degree of effectiveness in mission.

v. *The number of cell groups that have been influential in bringing members to commitment*
Nearly a third of the cell groups (31.3%) had never been influential in influencing members to make a commitment to Christ. There are no existing standards by which to compare the success of individual cell groups in influencing their members to make a commitment to Christ. It is perhaps significant that the average length of time for the existence of the “non-influential” groups was 14 months as opposed to the mean length of time of existence for all the cell groups, which was 20 months. This means that the non-influential groups had been in existence for a less period of time than those cell groups that had been successful in influencing commitment. Thus suggesting, as might be expected, that the longer a cell group had been in existence the greater the likelihood that they would be influential in someone making a commitment to Christ.

vi. *The success of the congregation and/or cell in incorporating new believers*
The success of proclamatory activity from a missional perspective must also be judged by how effective it is at incorporating new believers into a congregation. Ideally this should be calculated by comparing the proportion of those who having made commitments in the recent past (say up to one or two years ago) are still attending worship services and cell groups. Yet it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain these figures since those who have not followed through with commitments are usually no longer present in the congregation.

One method of indirectly assessing and estimating incorporational effectiveness is to look at the amount of care new believers are being given in the congregation. Paul’s theological praxis (see 1 Thessalonians 2: 7–12, 3: 1-5) and modern ecclesiological theory (Wagner 1984: ff.; Nel 1990: 58; Warren 1995: 310 ff.) suggest that the more care and attention new believers are given the greater the likelihood of their effective incorporation. This may be assessed from the data by establishing:

- Whether or not new believers are being incorporated into cell groups since small groups provide support and care for them that facilitates incorporation (Warren 1995: 325 ff.).How

many new believers are being personally mentored through the cell group structures. The greater the number being mentored the greater the estimated effectiveness of incorporation.

The surveyed cells contained 21.8% of new believers. Whilst it is impossible to judge what proportion this is of those who have recently committed their lives to Christ in the congregation it does show that some new believers are being cared for by the cells. It indicates that a structure is being provided by the cells to care for new believers on a long term, relational basis that will aid their incorporation into the congregation. Moreover, the survey reveals that 79% (in section 6.4.13, table 34) of those who have committed their lives to Christ since they have attended their first cell group meeting or event organised by the current cell group are being personally mentored.

This gives no idea of how many new believers have slipped through the net because they were unwilling to attend a cell group or refused to accept personal mentoring. Yet it does suggest that an effective mechanism is working which is taking long term relational care of some of them, which does not exist in many unipolar churches (Gibbs 1993: 78; Warren 1995: 316).

vii. The making and mobilizing of disciples

The degree to which cells, in the congregations surveyed, are facilitating the making of disciples, may in part, be judged by the degree to which their members are engaged in proclamatory activities, the effectiveness of incorporation of new believers into cell life and their maturation of attitudes towards proclamation.

The high degree of mobilization in proclamatory activity evidenced by the cell groups (see above) surveyed would suggest that the cells are effectively making disciples. This is evidenced by the fact that sharing their faith has become more important for 79.1%, 74 % perceived that they had shared their faith with more people and 81.7% perceived that they had experienced more confidence in sharing their faith. These changed attitudes appear to be resulting in effective proclamatory activity (see table 44 above). All that can be said about the degree to which new believers are being incorporated into cells is that this has happened for some 15.6% of existing cell members in the groups surveyed.

viii. *Ministry to the poor as measured by a congregation's economic profile:*

Proclamatory activity focussed on the poor involves preaching the gospel and proclaiming the liberty of the kingdom to all who are poor in any way (see 2.2.8). The poor are the victims of society. Thus wealth may be no indicator of poverty. However, in order to include an otherwise neglected category this section is concerned with the effectiveness of cell group proclamatory activity in reaching the economically poor with the gospel. This is judged by looking at the economic composition of cell churches and cell groups surveyed.

This study makes the assumption that material welfare may largely be judged by educational level attained (Snyder 1975: 36, 40), language group (May and Govender 1998: 27; Hendriks 1999: 13) and type of accommodation (Heitink 1999: 55, 58). Therefore the poorer sections of our society will approximate to those with grade 7 or less, naturally speak one of the official languages in South Africa other than English or Afrikaans (May and Govender 1998: 27) and live in an informal dwelling. Table 45 shows the participation of the above categories in various selected groupings as compared with their percentage composition in the Western Cape.

Table 45: Percentages of those ranked as “poor” in selected groups

Unit concerned	Poverty indicator	% with grade 7 or below	% with an official language, not English or Afrikaans	% with informal accommodation
All congregations surveyed		14.0	5.1	8.4
6 Congregations founded as bipolar churches		16.1	0.0	3.7
16 Cell groups surveyed		10.0	0.0	4.9
Western Cape		38.0	19.8	19.3

These figures are interpreted as showing that at a congregational level the poor are, in general, being reached by those churches surveyed (see second line down of table 45), although the percentage composition of their congregations is somewhat less for the poor than the 1996 census revealed for the Western Cape. However, 21 of the 27 churches in the survey started as unipolar churches. As membership composition tends to change only slowly in many congregations the figures may be reflecting a historical situation dating from “unipolar” days and

not have anything to do with the cell church concept being applied.

Indeed it is interesting to note that the percentage composition as regarding the poor of those churches begun as bipolar churches (third line down in table) is very much lower than for those churches begun as unipolar churches. This, of course, may just be coincidence but suggests that further research into this area would be profitable and that there is a possibility that cell churches may not be functioning very effectively in this area. The same comment may be made concerning the composition of those cell groups that participated in the survey where there is an even grater disparity between composition of the cells and the demographic profile for the Western Cape.

6.5.3.3 Instruction

In 3.5.3 it was conjectured in the second premise that a cell church will be more effective in instruction than a unipolar church. This is based on the first premise that the maturation of a congregation is more effective when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group component, as in a cell church. Naturally effectiveness in instructional activity will also be affected by effectiveness in other actions of which the actions of celebration and care are probably the most influential in this respect.

The effectiveness of instruction may be primarily judged using the interrogative criteria of discipleship although it will also increase the effectiveness of mission, community building, ministry to the poor, degree of mobilisation, and the experience of God.

The effectiveness of how disciples are being made is primarily to be judged by the degree of transformation towards maturation both individuals and a congregation are evidencing (see 2.2.4.2). This was tested in the cell members questionnaire by asking the respondents whether certain key activities, attitudes or ideas had become more or less important to them since they had joined a cell group (see under 6.4.11, table 29).

As can be seen from table 29, 87% of the respondents perceived that attending a cell group has

made their growth towards spiritual maturity more important to them. Fifty-eight percent or more of the respondents considered that attending a cell group had made nine other key areas of spiritual maturation they were questioned about become more important to them. Fifty-five percent considered that attending a cell group had made having nice possessions less important to them. This is interpreted, as indicating that the simple life-style advocated by Jesus had become more important to them. The three indicators of spiritual growth for which attending the cell group had the most influence in developing attitudes were those concerning the importance of personal spiritual maturity, helping others (84.3%) and prayer (80.9%).

Therefore it may be concluded from the perceptions of the individual members in the 16 cell groups surveyed that the activity of instruction is being more effective for them than in previous structures in which they were involved.

6.5.3.4 Celebration

In 3.5.3 it was conjectured in the second premise that a cell church will be more effective in celebration than a unipolar church. This is based on the first premise that celebration leads more effectively to the maturation of the congregation when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group component. Naturally effectiveness in celebrational activity will also be affected by effectiveness in other actions of which the actions of instruction and care are probably the most influential in this respect.

The effectiveness of celebration may be most adequately judged using the interrogative criteria of community building, discipleship and the experience of God. The essential elements in Christian community building are a feeling of belonging and sense of identity. These come from a perception of being cared for, frequency and regularity in meeting together, having a shared vision, memorable shared experiences of God, establishing relationships and friendships, and mutual maturation of both the individual and the group (making disciples).

a) Community building as measured by:

An analysis of the data seems to support the view that in the perception of the cell members that the cell groups surveyed are building communities successfully, and in some practical theological actions, more successfully than previous structures as judged by:

i. The development of new groups

Community building begins with the incorporation of new members. This happens effectively when at least 25% a congregation's relational groups have been in existence for under 5 years (60 months) since new members tend to join new groups (Callahan 1983: 35 ff.; 1990: 22, 23). Ninety-four percent of the cell groups surveyed have been in existence for less than 5 years (see 6.4.3). By this criterion the cells are contributing successfully to community building.

ii. Regularity of attendance

Regularity of attendance at the multi-level meetings, particularly the worship service and the cell meetings, provides the relational contact needed for community building and identity forming to continue. The 81% attendance at the worship service and 78% attendance at cell meetings indicates a high commitment by the members to these meetings and would enable relationships to grow and an identity to be formed (see 6.4.7 and 6.4.8). "An implicit contract to attend faithfully is the minimum requirement for making small groups work well" (Wuthnow 1994: 156).

iii. The conscious development of intimate relationships within the body of Christ

The data supplied from the 16 cells surveyed suggests that the opportunity for building community provided by this high commitment is being used effectively. Some 93.9% of respondents indicated that they had made new friends within the cell group (see 6.4.14, table 35). In addition 87.4% said that cell group had helped them to feel they were not alone (6.4.16).

iv. The shared, social experience of God

Many in the cell groups (90.4%) are having the memorable shared experience of feeling closer to God. Some 80.1% remember having experienced a spiritual gift being brought in the group (see 6.4.14 and 6.4.17). ((See 2.2.5.5) The gifts of the Spirit are given to individual persons in order for them to serve each other by mediating God's revelation (Welker 1994: 241)). Some 94.8% of cell members report that they, at least, have sometimes had a felt experience of God's presence when the group worships and prays together (see 6.4.15).

b) Discipleship as measured by relational maturation:

One of the purposes of the "discipleship" criterion is the relational maturation of both an individual and the community in which he or she is involved. This maturation automatically

contributes to the building up of a sense of community within the local congregation. The data in 6.4.16, as shown in table 38, suggests that this is indeed happening in the cell groups surveyed. It is particularly evidenced by the 86.1% who have experienced the ability to be more open and honest with each other and the 83.5 % who have experienced a new depth of love for each other.

There are prerequisites for forming the loving relationships commanded and pictured in the Body of Christ and Discipleship metaphors. These are a sense of self-worth (healthy self –love as opposed to egocentrism) associated with a ability to receive forgiveness and to forgive others (Watson 1983: 55 ff., 101 ff.; Crabb 1994: 125 ff.). The 86.1% who have experienced feeling better about themselves, the 79.1% who have a greater ability to forgive others and the 72.2% who have experienced a greater ability to forgive themselves indicates that a transformation is taking place that is enabling these loving relationships to be formed.

In fact the data presented in 6.4.15 indicates that the cells are, on the whole, a place of positive social, emotional and relational development and thus a maturation which contributes to the building up a sense of community. However, the lack of reported conflict experienced by many in the groups may also indicate that either true community with healthy social bonding may never be achieved or else that it is still some way off (see especially 6.4.14, table 35).

c) Organizational integration as measured by:

The degree of integration in the 27 churches surveyed is considered under the activity of celebration since that is the main activity by which the congregation's identity and sense of purpose is built up.

i. Effective administration and organizational structure

The effective administration and organizational structure is supplied by the implementation of the cell church theory (see 5.8.6). A cell church will have this structure by definition. Thus it was not necessary to test it using the questionnaires.

ii. Strong sense of identity

The second component, that of a strong sense of identity produced by relatedness, may be tested by determining the ratio of cell groups to the number who, on average, attend the worship services. The greater the proportion of the congregation that meet in cell groups the greater is the possibility that a strong sense of congregational identity through relationship will develop that

will facilitate the ownership of its goals and vision. The ACR1 ratio measures this for 2001 for the 27 congregations and shows that for this year there were on average 16.1 congregational members per cell group (ACR1 for each congregation given in appendix 3, chart 4).

The average size of the 16 cell groups surveyed was approximately 9.2 members in 2001 (6.5.1, subsection 5). If the average size of these groups applies to each cell group in every congregation then, which is a reasonable assumption in the light of cell church theory (see 5.2.3), then approximately 57% of those who attend the worship service are in cells. Callahan (1983: 40; 1990: 22) suggests that an adequate number of relational groups per an average attendance of 100 every Sunday at the main worship service is between 7 and 10. At 9.2 members per group this calculates out at between 64.4% and 92% of those who attend worship being in cells. The percentage of those in cells is only slightly less than adequate using the above standards.

iii. A well communicated vision

Callahan (1987: 28 ff.) believes that the most important section of a congregation to envision in order to achieve organizational integration in achieving a church's vision is the 20% of the congregation, which constitute the key leaders. They are responsible for delivering 80% of the results. It may be assumed that the time and effort required in belonging to a cell group would mean that it is the most committed members of a congregation who are involved in cell groups. This would include the "twenty-percenters" as Callahan (1987: 29) terms them. Thus in a cell church which is operating on the principles described in 5.2.5, where the Sunday message is discussed and there is close supervision, the structure is provided to effectively envision the "twenty-percenters" and for them to influence the other 37% of the congregation who are in cells. This should provide sufficient organizational impetus to implement the church's vision.

That some sort of process on these lines is happening is maybe indicated from the response to the question (CMQ 25) asking if attending a cell group had played a part in making your church's vision more important, unchanged in importance or less important. A majority of the members, 76.5%, replied that their church's vision had become more important. It would have been helpful if this could have been tested by asking them to briefly write out this vision but this would have required more time to analyze than was available to the researcher. The most valid conclusion that may be drawn from this is that the positive responses suggest that the respondents were displaying a positive sentiment towards the idea of the importance of the church's vision that they perceived had been inculcated in them as a result of attending a cell group. This increased

participation and commitment to a shared vision is evidenced by the 54% who report that they have increased their giving to the local congregation and 66.1% who report they have taken a more active part in church life as a result of attending their present cell group (see 6.4.17).

6.5.3.5 Care

In 3.5.3 it was conjectured in the second premise that a cell church will be more effective in care than a unipolar church. This is based on the first premise that care leads more effectively to the maturation of the congregation when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group component mobilising members.

The effectiveness of care may be judged using the interrogative criteria of the extent to which caring is mobilised, members are being equipped as disciples to care, how the experience of God is facilitating care and how the poor are being cared for. An essential element is that it is becoming an open, loving, enriching, healing, serving community of disciples with deep personal relationships where God's love and care is being experienced through the gifts of the Spirit.

a) Mobilisation as measured by:

i. Mediating the experience of God

The extent to which the cell groups are mobilizing the members in caring may be judged by the percentage of cell members who are mediating the experience of God to others. Two questions cover this in the questionnaire. They concern the activity of praying for another with the laying on of hands (CMQ 51) and bringing a spiritual gift to the group (CMQ53). They focus upon care being mediated through experiencing the love, presence and power of God the Father and Christ the Son through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Some 73 % responded affirmatively to CMQ51 but only 47.8% to CMQ53 (see table 40, in section 6.4.17). This suggests that despite high level of care in this area that a quarter of the cell members may be ignorant of the theological implications of what they are doing.

ii. Nurturing, shepherding and guiding

Some 65.2% of cell members were helping someone else to grow through personally meeting with them (CMQ 30). This indicates that a good number of the members are being mobilized in bringing the love and care of God to others in the group through these particular activities on a personal basis.

b) Discipleship as measured by attitudes towards helping others

The increasing desire to care for others is a fruit of the maturation that comes as Christ's disciples are built up. That this is being facilitated in the cell groups is indicated by the fact that 84.3% responded that helping other people had become more important to them (CMQ21) and 83.5% responded that they had experienced a new depth of love towards other people (CMQ33).

c) Ministry to the poor as measured by:

i. The extent of caring activities

The broad definition for "poor" considered in this section includes those who are suffering in any way (physically, materially, socially or emotionally) and in need of help and care. Questions CMQ44 to CMQ50 were designed to gather responses concerning the effectiveness of this caring in the cell groups surveyed. These responses are presented in table 38 in section 6.4.16.

The fact that the two greatest areas in which the respondents perceived they were cared for were "being made to feel not alone" and "receiving encouragement" highlights the needs of a changing South African society with its breakdown of community, and rapid changes (see 4.4).

The number of cell members who have been brought meals by the group (36%) and received financial support (35%) might seem to indicate a failure to meet physical needs. However, this must be judged against the 23% and 4% respectively recorded for these activities in Wuthnow's (1994:186) analysis of small groups in the United States. The level of care given in the cell groups of the survey far exceeds these latter figures and may be interpreted to show a very high level of practical caring going on within them. This is illuminating when it realised that the sample of churches surveyed drew members from a higher socio-economic group than the average in the Western Cape.

ii. The general perception of being cared for

These figures confirm the general perception of over 90% of the cell group members (see table 39 under section 6.4.16) that they either feel "more cared for" or "somewhat more cared for" than prior to their belonging to a cell group in pre-existing unipolar structures.

6.5.3.6 Service

In 3.5.3 it was conjectured in the second premise that a cell church will be more effective in service than a unipolar church. This is based on the first premise that a church gives itself more effectively to the world when it is structured through multi-level assembling with a small group

component. That this facilitates the mobilising members in their involvement with society, increasing their concern for justice, activity in diakonal service of the poor and participation in any administrative activity in the church which has as its purpose serving the world in mission.

The effectiveness of service in a community may be judged using the interrogative criteria of the extent to which members are being mobilised and equipped as disciples to serve with a preferential focus on the poor. It is a difficult to assess the effectiveness of this action in a congregation because of its very selfless nature. The only real criteria for judging it is, “Is it being performed at all?” and “Is it meeting genuine needs in the community?”

a) Adaptability as measured by structural flexibility

Structural flexibility may be considered to be an administrative function and therefore it is appropriate to include it under the action of service. The 20 surveyed congregations that are transitioning from a traditional unipolar to bipolar structure have accepted the need for structural flexibility. It also seems reasonable to suggest that, in the light of the novelty of the cell church idea in South Africa, that the 7 congregations that began with bipolar structures did so because of discontent with the unipolar structural model and a desire to adapt to become more effective. The time period over which the survey was conducted is too short to assess their continuing reactions to change in society and lack of effectiveness in some areas of cell church praxis.

The disproportionate number of non-institutional churches (see 6.3.2) in the survey sample may indicate that there is a resistance among the main line denominations to change due to their denominational power structures, conservative ethos. It may also indicate that the influential church and kingdom models are antithetical, in particular, to the counter system and mystical communion models prevalent in the cell church concept.

b) Mobilization as measured by the perceptions of members concerning their participation

Table 40 under section 6.4.17 reveals the following pertinent data concerning the mobilization of cell members in service as a result of their attending a cell group. It is the perception of 66.1% that they have become more actively involved in church life (CMQ55), of 54.8% that they have increased their giving to their church (CMQ57) and of 53.9% that they have become involved in community volunteer work (CMQ54).

The greater involvement in church life and giving to the local congregation professed by the respondents suggests that the small group may be being successful in mobilizing cell members in serving the church. The extent to which this is mobilization in the action of service, viz “the church giving itself to the world” would depend upon the extent to which the programs and activities of both the cell groups and the congregation achieve this end. This question was not addressed by the questionnaires. The 53.9% who have become involved in volunteer work in the community, either with their cells or with other groups, indicates that cell members are being mobilized to give themselves to the world in either their personal capacity or as part of a cell group outreach.

Mobilization seems to be an intrinsic by-product of small groups in general. The percentage responses in Wuthnow’s (1994: 320, 321) study to questions concerning these activities were 61%, 50% and 40% respectively. (The first two percentages are for church based groups only, whereas the last percentage is for all the groups Wuthnow (1994) surveyed). This indicates that, in common with other small church based groups, cells groups are encouraging many of their members to become more involved in action of service either with their own congregations or with other groups.

c) Discipleship as measured by a broadening of vision

The apparent “intrinsic” mobilisation effect of small groups may be connected to the motivational impetus to change and maturation that being in a small group seems to provide. The response to several questions suggests that the small groups have been effective in the attitudinal change that is necessary for disciple making to occur. They reveal that there seems to have been a development of a desire to serve and a broadening of horizons as to how to serve that necessarily precedes actual service as a result of the small group involvement (see 2.1.4.2 subsection 3).

The evidence for this is that for 61.7% of the respondents world mission has become more important (CMQ19), 59.1% are experiencing more understanding of people with different religious perspectives (CMQ36), 58.3% are attaching more importance to local community matters (CMQ24) and 52.2% have changed their attitude on a social or political issue (CMQ56). Wuthnow’s (1994) study offers no comparison concerning the first two issues but offers an interesting comparison on the latter two.

In Wuthnow's (1994: 229, 320) study some 55% experienced more understanding of people with different religious perspectives and the 40% had changed attitudes on some social or political issue in as a result of attending a small group. This may illustrate the significant socialising pressure that small groups exert on their members. These when integrated with Christian principles may be very effective in the Christian discipling and maturation process .

d) Ministry to the poor as measured by involvement on the community

The only question which directly touches upon this in the action of service is that dealing with active involvement in volunteer work in the community (CMQ 54), to which 53.9% responded affirmatively. Any work that brings Christ's presence into the world may be seen as a ministry to the poor since it is reaching a community where many are unchurched, and thus by definition "poor" in the broader sense. The fact that over half of cell members perceive that attending a cell group has led to their involvement with the community indicates that it would repay further more specific research.

6.5.3.7 The Social and time dimensions of change

It was conjectured that the success of change in a congregation was dependent upon various factors (see 3.5.3 under "the social and time dimensions of change" where these factors are set out). Two extra dependant variables were discerned to be quantifiable and important as the situational analysis were being described and evaluated and the data collected from the questionnaires was being described and analysed – the location of church (4.5.1.1), the church or kingdom model influencing the congregation (institutional or countersystem.)

The premise of this study is that success is to be judged by the degree of maturation of a congregation in all five actions as measured by the eight interrogative criteria – mission, adaptability, mobilization, community building, making disciples, integration, serving the poor and the experience of God. It was beyond the time and resources available for this study to do this for each of the 27 congregations involved. An attempt was made however to isolate certain dependant variables (see 6.5.2) that might give an indication of maturation and analyze whether there was a relationship between them and the factors listed in 3.5.3 for all the congregations considered as a whole. The results are shown in appendix 3, charts 5 and 6.

The only relationships which were statistically indicated were between:

- The type of area in which the churches were located, designated by the variable AREA (appendix 3, chart 5), and the attendance to cell ratio for 2001 (ACR1).
- The type of area in which the churches were located and the absolute cell trend for one year (number of cells for 2001 – number of cells for 2000) (V27 – V28).
- Whether a training course, pilot group or both approaches were used in transitioning (V46) and the attendance to cell ratio for 2000 (ACR2).
- The socio-economic level of the congregation as indicated by type of accommodation (V66 – V69) and the cell multiplication ratio for 2001 (CMR1).

Whilst these results are much too patchy to be interpreted in any significant way they do indicate that there may be a relationships between:

- The demographic trend in the area which a church serves in mission and degree to which the proportion of those attending worship are in cell groups.
- The demographic trend in the area which a church serves in mission and the multiplication of cell groups in the congregation to form new cell groups.
- The type of approach used to introduce and implement the transition to cells and degree to which the proportion of those attending worship are in cell groups.
- The socio-economic level of the congregation as indicated by type of accommodation and the multiplication of cell groups in the congregation to form new cell groups.

Thus there are indications that:

1. The attendance to cell ratio may be related to the demographic trend in the area which a church serves in mission and the type of approach used to transition.
2. The multiplication of cell groups in the congregation to form new cell groups may be related to the demographic trend in the area which a church serves in mission and the socio-economic level of the congregation.

Both the attendance to cell ratio and the multiplication of cell groups are indicators of the maturation of a congregation in terms of community building and mission. These results suggest that the area which a church serves in mission, the socio-economic level of the congregation and the processes used to transition may have an influence upon the maturation of a congregation and thus the successful outcome of the change process and would repay further research.

One conjecture of the second premise (see 3.5.3.6 Social and time dimensions of change – premise 4) regarding the change process was that there is a relationship between the length of time a congregation has been implementing the bipolar model and the support it receives from the congregation. This was tested using the questions CMQ11 and CMQ12 which asked respondents about their attitudes towards joining a cell group when they first heard about it compared to their attitude now that they were attending a cell group. This may indicate a shift towards a more positive attitude to being in a cell group on the part of those involved since the number of positive and very enthusiastic responses increased from an initial 77.7% to a current 94.6% of the respondents. If this is supported by further research and statistical analysis it would suggest that factors are at work which are winning the voluntary support of cell members over a period of time along the lines of the “diffusion of innovations” hypothesis (see 2.4.2 - The role played by attitudes towards change within the congregation.)

A second conjecture (see 3.5.3.6 conjecture 10) concerning the transition process was that a time period of five years increased the probability of a successful transition from a church without cell groups to one that is experiencing multiplying cells. The average length of time the congregations concerned have had cells is 5.1 years (see 6.3.10). This provides an adequate time frame to test this conjecture.

The evidence from the 16 cells surveyed is that according to the practical theological theory concerning the results of maturation in the area of mission that many of the fundamentals appear to be in place in the actions of proclamation, instruction, celebration, care and service for this to be happening. According to Callahan’s (1990: 10,11) indices and the mobilization percentages drawn from several sources the cell groups should be rapidly growing. Wagner’s evangelistic gift usage indices also indicate that either a large number of members are using their evangelistic gifting or that a large number of new Christians are being mobilized to reach their “oikoses” (circles of influence).

The empirical data is more ambiguous. People perceive that they are being converted through the influence of the cell groups. However, the yearly conversion rate of 3,3% per cell group is not indicative of rapid growth. (At this rate a cell group that began as 4 members would have one person added through conversion only during the 6th year, and one that began as 9 members only during the 4th year.) It is therefore fortunate that cell growth is not dependent upon the influence

of the cell group alone but due, in all probability, to existing church members or former unchurched people who were converted through a worship service or congregational event being added. Moreover, whilst the average number of cell groups per congregation has increased slightly between 2000 and 2001 this may not be considered a statistically significant result.

Thus it is concluded that whilst the evidence from the cluster survey indicates, in many actions, a maturation process that may be an indication of what is happening in many cells the empirical results either do not bear this out or are ambiguous.

6.5.4 Summary

The conjecture being tested is that, “The maturation of a congregation is facilitated more effectively through a bipolar ecclesiological structure than a unipolar structure in today’s society.” The evidence for the standard of maturation in congregations in South Africa as described in the current literature and research is presented in general terms in the situational analysis in chapter 4.

The two questionnaires suggest that:

- In the action of proclamation, maturation is in general being facilitated more effectively within the 27 responding congregations than is the case by the situational analysis for South African churches as a whole (as measured by the interrogative criteria of mission, mobilisation and making disciples). There is uncertainty and even doubt about whether this is happening when proclamation is measured by adaptability and ministry to the poor. No results were obtained as regards the criterion of integration and the experience of God.
- In the action of instruction, maturation is in general being facilitated more effectively within the 27 responding congregations than is suggested is the case by the situational analysis for South African churches as a whole (as measured by the interrogative criteria of mission, mobilisation and making disciples). Although not directly measured it may be fairly assumed that instruction has aided maturation in the activities of celebration, care and service as judged by the criteria of community building and the experience of God. It has contributed to them being more effectively performed for these specific criteria in the 27 responding churches than for South African churches as a whole.

- In the action of celebration maturation is being facilitated more effectively within the 27 responding congregations than is suggested by the situational analysis for South African churches as a whole (measured by the interrogative criteria of making disciples, community building, integration, and the experience of God). The same comments apply as regards the criteria of adaptability and ministry to the poor under the activity of proclamation.
- In the action of care maturation is in general being facilitated more effectively within the 27 responding congregations than is suggested is the case by the situational analysis for South African churches as a whole (as measured by the interrogative criteria of mobilization, making disciples, and ministry to the poor, as defined in 6.5.3.5).
- In the action of service maturation is in general being facilitated more effectively within the 27 responding congregations than is suggested is the case by the situational analysis for South African churches as a whole (as measured by the interrogative criteria of mobilization, making disciples, and ministry to the poor as defined in 6.5.3.2).

6.6 Suggestions to amend the theory for praxis

The following areas of concern have been highlighted by the study:

6.6.1 The apparent lack of proclamatory success by cell groups as regards professed commitments to Christ

The apparent lack of proclamatory success of the cell groups in influencing the unchurched to commit their lives to Christ despite the large number of constituents and people served in mission they are in contact with. Reflection may be needed as to:

- The potential effectiveness of evangelism by cell groups within South African society. Individuals may be more resistant to the influence of relational and community evangelism through small groups than cell church theory predicts, at least within the white and coloured communities which were the main constituency of the surveyed churches. In this case the proclamatory effectiveness of the congregation with its advantages of initial anonymity, less direct personal relationships, crowd influence and attractiveness, and ability to be more

excellent in the area of worship must be recognised and factored into the theory, perhaps more so than at present.

- The protracted length of time taken for traditional unipolar church members to incorporate the discipleship and mystical communion values of the cell church in order to make evangelism effective. The proclamatory ineffectiveness may indicate a lack of skill and “new paradigm” thinking in this area on the part of the majority of cell members who were the original members of the cell groups when they were first formed. They are still unconsciously attached to the values and evangelistic methods of the unipolar church and because they have been church involved Christians for some time have lost contact with unchurched people. One answer may be to introduce more effective values training.

6.6.2 The lack of adoption of the concept by black congregations

Despite efforts to contact congregations with predominantly black constituencies and involve them in the survey only one congregation was involved. This may have been due to the biased and limited nature of the researcher’s contacts. It also reflects upon the lack of involvement in the Western Cape of black churches with such organisations as Cell Church International. The fact that the only “black” church which participated in the survey had tried and abandoned the cell church concept adds to the circumstantial evidence that the “Jethro” model is not known about, or perceived as unworkable, or does not work in the black community.

This would not be surprising since it is a technocratic model requiring a regimented and analytical mind set, which places a high value on literacy, produced by the modern urban society such as characterises South Korea, where the model has been highly effective. Cell church advocates may need to reflect upon this administrative aspect and present the model in a much more simplified manner that is more contextual in the South African scene. The development of the “Principle of Twelve” model (see 5.1.1.), with its greater reliance upon personal contact and relationships to make it work may be another answer.

Other explanations for this apparent lack of adoption by the black community may be that:

1. Many black churches see no need since they have a perceived satisfactory level of community development and care within their culture without the need for small groups, despite urbanisation.
2. Many black churches, especially the AICs, have a satisfactory existing network of small groups operating according to their own principles that are contextualised to modern black society.

6.6.3 Summary

The study appears to indicate that the bipolar church model is being increasing the effectiveness of the churches surveyed in every action to a greater or lesser degree. It has a challenge to increase the proclamatory effectiveness of individual cell groups if that is possible. The greatest challenge, however, if it is to significantly influence the future of Christianity in South Africa is to begin to be contextualised to the culture of the majority, which is that of the black people.

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