

*THE FORMATION OF LIVED FAITH IN
CHILDREN: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
CONGREGATION AND HOME*

by

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(Promotor: Professor W.J. Schoeman)

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Dedication

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.

- John Donne

For the opportunity of enabling me to invest so much time and energy into this project, I dedicate the outcome of my endeavours to each person who assisted and supported me in the process:

- Prof. Kobus Schoeman (not related) for promoting me through the intricacies of academe and for enhancing the scholar in me.
- Three congregations that opened their doors, exposing their vulnerabilities, so that I could work with them on ministry to families.
- John Howell, trusted friend and cheer-leader, for hours of recording interviews.
- Andre Schoeman for many hours of proofing and enhancing my use of English.
- Beatie, my wife, for her encouragement and unwavering belief that I would be able to pull this off,
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- The DRC congregation of Constantiakruin, granting me support, opportunity and encouragement to develop in this particular field of study.
- Our Lord, Jesus Christ, for calling me to the ministry to families.

*My people, hear my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.*

*I will open my mouth with a parable;
I will utter hidden things, things from of old—*

*things we have heard and known,
things our ancestors have told us.*

*We will not hide them from their descendants;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
his power, and the wonders he has done.*

*He decreed statutes for Jacob
and established the law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach their children,*

*so the next generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.*

*Then they would put their trust in God
and would not forget his deeds
but would keep his commands. -Asaph, (Psalm 78)*

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own work and contains nothing forthcoming from collaboration with third parties except where specifically indicated in the text presented herewith. It has not been previously submitted, in part or whole, to any university or institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

Signed: _____

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UFS

SUMMARY

Youth ministry within the congregation is at peril. The old paradigm is not producing the spiritual leaders and followers of Christ that we hoped for. Even the congregations that invest much of their resources, efforts, labours and time in their youth ministry invest in areas where it is least effective. This deplorable situation appears to be rife, although the research reveals to us a way to address this neglect.

The focus of this research is to show where the current youth ministry model falls short, and why it should be changed. We take an in-depth look at the most recent research concerning families and ministry focused on the home. The state of scholarship also encompasses the development of lived faith and best practices to achieve this.

From this solid, theoretical framework, this study will proceed to do qualitative analysis research via Focused Group Interviews in three diverse congregations to discern what the current philosophy for faith formation is, and how the parents perceive this. This study will then proceed by applying grounded theory to develop knowledge of the problem, and to formulate a theory that may answer the pragmatic question as to how congregations and parents can be more effective in forming lived faith in their young.

This practice-oriented theological project hopes to highlight the partnership between the congregation and the home. Similar to dance partners on a dance floor, the aim of both dancers is to bring to the fore the best in each other. Partners inspire each other to render both of them fluent in the language of faith formation. We believe that this will inspire the next generation to join the dance because of the model presented to them. Lastly, we hope to deduce the transferable concepts that can be applied in congregations everywhere.

Sarel Jacobus Schoeman

THE FORMATION OF LIVED FAITH IN CHILDREN: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
CONGREGATION AND HOME

OPSOMMING

DIE VORMING VAN DEURLEEFDE GELOOF IN KINDERS: 'N VENNOOTSKAP TUSSEN DIE GEMEENTE EN DIE OUERHUIS.

Jeugbediening in gemeentes beleef tans 'n krisis. Die paradigma wat tot op hede gegeld het, het nie die geestelike leiers of navolgers van Christus geskep wat ons gehoop het dit sou nie. Selfs die gemeentes wat baie hulpbronne, moeite en energie spandeer aan hul jeugbediening, sien steeds die wegval van jongmense na geloofsbelydenis. Hierdie hartseer situasie kom wydverspreid voor, al is daar duidelike navorsing wat ons kan help om hierdie probleem aan te spreek.

Die fokus van hierdie navorsing is om te wys waar die huidige jeugbediening-model tekort skiet en hoekom dit sal moet verander. Ons gaan in diepte kyk na wat die literatuur te sê het in verband met gesinne, en bediening aan huishoudings. Hierdie studie sal ook insluit hoe deurleefde geloof gevorm word en hoe geloofsgewoontes hiertoe aanleiding kan gee.

Nadat die teoretiese onderbou gevestig is, sal ons voortbou hierop deur middel van 'n kwalitatiewe ondersoek met fokus-groep onderhoude in drie uiteenlopende gemeentes, om vas te stel wat die huidige filosofie en praktyk van geloofsvorming behels en hoe ouers dit beleef. Hierdie studie sal dan 'Grounded theory' as uitgangspunt gebruik om kennis te versamel van die probleem, en ook 'n teorie te formuleer wat die pragmatiese vraag kan antwoord, nl. hoe gemeentes en ouers meer effektief kan wees in die vorming van hul kinders se geloof.

Hierdie praktyk-gerigte teologiese ondersoek hoop om die klem te laat val op die vennootskap wat tussen die gemeente en die huisgesin bestaan. Soos twee dansers graag die beste in mekaar na vore wil bring, moet hierdie vennootskap die sterkpunte van beide vennote uitlig. Sodoende sal hul vloeiend en vaardig word in die vorming van deurleefde geloof, en mag dit 'n opkomende generasie inspireer om deel te neem aan hierdie geloofs-dans. Laastens hoop ons om oordraagbare konsepte af te lei wat aangebied en toegepas kan word in alle gemeentes waar deurleefde geloof in kinders 'n prioriteit is.

Sarel Jacobus Schoeman

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(The following Addendums could be viewed on accompanying CD)

Primary document 1	- Focus Group Interview Congregation A
Primary document 2	- Second Focus Group Interview Congregation A
Primary document 3	- Structured Interview with pastor from Congregation A
Primary document 4	- Focus Group Interview Congregation B
Primary document 5	- Second Focus Group Interview Congregation B
Primary document 6	- Structured Interview with pastor from Congregation B
Primary document 7	- Focus Group Interview Congregation C
Primary document 8	- Second Focus Group Interview Congregation C
Primary document 9	- Structured Interview with pastor from Congregation C

1. AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE LORD OF THE DANCE

1.1 Introduction - Do You Hear That Noise?

Youth ministry within the Congregation is at peril. The old paradigm is not producing the spiritual leaders and followers of Christ that we hoped for. David Kinnaman's research shows that there is a 43% decline between the teenager and early adult years in terms of church engagement. (Kinnaman, 2011: 215) There is a perceived murmuring prevailing and rising from the ranks of the younger generations that gradually culminates in a crescendo: they are not in harmony with the faith formation that congregations are delivering. Even the congregations that invest much in their youth ministry invest in the area where it is least effective. Moreover, all this is happening while the research shows us a better way. The focus of this research is to indicate where the traditional youth ministry model falls short, and why it should be amended. The most recent research will be looked at and a theory for greater effectiveness will be developed. This theory will be measured against the current state of affairs as evidenced in several congregations. As the practices of faith communities are the building blocks of developing lived faith, this study will look into sound practices, where the young are not murmuring anymore, but dancing to the tune of lived faith. This study aims to presume the transferable concepts that can be applied in congregations everywhere.

1.2 The Dance

Perichoresis (from Greek: περιχώρησις perikhōrēsis, "rotation") describes the relationship between each person of the triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). This term, as applied in Christian theology, was initially used by the Church Fathers of old. The noun originally appears in the writings of Maximus Confessor (A.D. 662) but the related verb perichoreo is encountered earlier in Gregory of Nazianzus (A.D. 389) (Prestige & Cross, 1959: 149). Gregory used it to describe the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ as did John of Damascus (A.D. 749) but he also extended it to the "interpenetration" of the three persons of the Trinity and it was adopted as nomenclature for the latter.

Perichoresis, then, describes the divine dance relative to the actions, movements and rhythms of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit not only in their very unique relationship with one another, but also with regard to their creation. There is a very holy partnership between the Persons of the Trinity, in the same way, as there exists an intimate partnership between God Triune and His people, who portrays his image. The three Persons of the Trinity 'are made one not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other, and they have their being in each other without any coalescence or commingling.' (Prestige & Cross, 1959: 42). Likewise, God interacts with his people, working in us and through us: we cleave and commingle, but retain autonomy and freedom of choice.

In his influential social doctrine of the Trinity, Jürgen Moltmann emphasizes the 'relational, perichoretically consummated life processes' of the three Persons who 'cannot and must not be reduced to three modes of being of one and the same divine subject,' whose unity 'cannot and must not be seen in a general concept of divine substance.' (Randall, 2001: 372) In his article, Randall explains Moltmann's motive, namely his concern for demonstrating the openness of the being of God to man and history and toward the future.

Volf postulates that the identity of a person is inescapably marked by the particularities of the social setting in which he or she is born. In identifying with parental figures, peer groups, teachers, religious authorities..... identity is partly shaped by recognition we receive from the social setting in which we live. (Volf, 1996: 47) This brings to the fore the concept that we find our identities in our relationships. This divine dance forms us as faith community and is the instrument

through which we shape the identities of the young congregants who learn to dance the perichoresis with us.

The God-ness of God and his reaching out to the world, has fundamentally changed our identities. "Ever since God exhibited Godself to us as Father, we must be convicted of extreme ingratitude if we do not in turn exhibit ourselves as God's children." Smit writes. He continues: "Ever since the Holy Spirit dedicated us as temples to the Lord, we should make it our endeavour to show forth the glory of God." (Smit, 2009: 69) It is thus clear that the Triune God has a deep, meaningful relationship within Himself, and he has chosen to lavish his love on his creation. As we are engaged by this loving Being, we find our true identity, and we can become what he has fundamentally made us to be, namely sons of the most high God.

Since humans are created in the image of God, a Christian understanding of an adequate anthropology of humans' social relations is enhanced by the divine attributes, what can be known of God's activity and God's presence in human affairs. As leading Partner, God invites His people to dance with him, by interacting in ways that defy logic, which creates beauty and demonstrates the loving, joyful and gracious manner of His presence in our midst. As Nietzsche said: "I could believe only in a God who would know how to dance." (Tille, 1896)

This perichoresis is reflected in the actions of the Church. Similarly to the way in which the three Persons of the Trinity are dancing with creation, the Church as universally established, is dancing with the Triune God. This dance is also reflected in the local congregation, where the bride of the Groom is prepared for life eternal. Thus the Trinity is a model for life in community: true oneness and glory - the oneness and glory of God - does not consist of standing alone in solitary splendor. It is, rather, a matter of interrelationship. (Gonzalez & Gonzalez, 2008: 92) This is at the core of this study: how can the church of Jesus - who is already engaged in the dance of the Trinity - teach her newest members to join in the dance?

This project *inter alia* refers to a partnership between the congregation and the home. Thus is the language of dancing expressed by creative movements for achieving a give-and-take relationship. This performance (or dance steps) is the perfect harmony presenting the partnership of the Christian church and its children in their everyday lives. The metaphor of the dance will be a golden thread throughout the project, as it describes the dynamic relationship of this partnership.

If “dance is the hidden language of the soul,” (source unknown), let us proceed by developing fluency in this language.

1.3 The Rationale for This Study

As minister serving consecutively in two suburban mainstream congregations for a period of time exceeding 20 years, and youth pastor for the past 14 years, I have met with many children whose spiritual lives have been shaped by traditional youth ministry. I have often observed young persons dropping out of church after confirmation of their faith and I have continually tweaked the process in an effort to close this revolving back door. Through all these efforts, I came to realize that there is a way to predict the outcome of a child’s spiritual development: the key factor is - look at the parents. Whenever parents are living their faith in an active way, chances are high that their children will act likewise.

I am currently the chairman for the Commission for Youth for the Western Transvaal Synod, I often visit congregations, talk to pastors and hear the sad refrain that congregations are losing their young members, that there is a large drop-out subsequently to confirmation and that we invest a lot of effort and energy in children via traditional youth ministry efforts, but the results are lacking and expectations are frustrated. Moreover, having repeatedly been questioned by me, the pastors would share their concern that their respective congregations have no framework for how to effectively engage the parents in their children’s spiritual formation.

The words of Jesus come to mind with reference to Matt 11:16-17: “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;” (NIV). What should have been “Good News” regarding the interaction of the gospel and the youth, whereby passion, energy and movement ought to be released, we find the exact opposite: decline, inertia, staleness and dropping off.

I believe that this research is currently of vital importance. If mainstream congregations do not revolutionize the way they are forming faith in the young generation, the lost opportunity might have unfortunate and serious consequences as much will be at stake. We cannot afford to lose a generation because we got stuck

with an obsolete traditional model of youth ministry. Through this study, I will endeavour to find a better way to help congregations to develop a theory of how to engage parents in this all-important task. The music is still playing, and the invitation stands: come to the dance floor, let us learn to partner in this dance. Our aim is not to step on toes, but to develop rhythm and movement and to recapture the joy of perichoresis.

1.4 The Scope of this Study

1.4.1 The Research Problem

Some dances are performed with a single partner; whilst others are done as a group activity. Some dances are for the entertainment of participants and spectators, whilst others are performed for exhibiting the skills and talent of the dancers. In this chapter, the reason for our desire for dancing will be examined. Why are we undertaking this project? What motivated this study and to what ends are we investing this time and energy? With the first bow leading up to the dance, the essence of the problem will be defined. The study will then proceed with the quest for formulating research questions and will progress along the dance floor towards the purpose of this study.

1.4.2 Problem Statement

The church universal has been charged with the God-given task of making disciples of all people. Although many churches have already started to address their missional calling, that heavenly assignment equally applies to the youth of a congregation. At best, a congregation will establish a comprehensive array of youth activities: Sunday school, youth events, camps, special youth services, and, hired personnel to engage with children and youth. At worst, a congregation will at least offer the minimum activities for youth such as a Sunday school program. In his monumental work with the NSYR (National Study on Youth and Religion), Christian Smith concludes: "Interviewing teens, one finds little evidence that the agents of religious socialization in this country are being highly effective and successful with the majority of their young people." (Smith, 2005: 641) Therefore it is evident that

the underlying problem with this 'traditional model' is vested in the fact that we are focusing our attention on the wrong locality as all of these activities are occurring on the site of the church campus during only a few hours a week. In reality, the place where the most spiritual formation – and lived faith development occur, is the parental home. (Anthony, 2011:114) If the home forms the core of a child's spiritual development, and if the church's main calling is the formation of faith, the question presenting itself is: why do churches not focus on this key issue namely faith formation at the parental home? Very few congregations spend time and energy to intentionally develop a partnership with the home in order to support parents in raising their offspring in an environment of lived faith. As a result, most parents do not know how to communicate their own faith to their young ones.

1.4.3 The research question

The prime research question (PRQ) that this study proposes to address is the following:

- PRQ 1: How can a partnership between the home and the congregation assist us in developing lived faith in children?

Secondary research questions (SRQ) to the above-mentioned prime question, are:

- SRQ 1: What is the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation, and what are the emanating results?
- SRQ 2: What constitutes a lived faith in children?
- SRQ 3: What is the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children?
- SRQ 4: What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children?
- SRQ 5: What constitutes a partnership between congregations and the home in the formation of lived faith in children?

Fundamental to these questions, is the issue of problem ownership. Hermans and Schoeman argues that the roles of the researcher, researched and problem owner can be clearly separated. (Hermans & Schoeman, 2015: 29) Thus a clear answer to the question: Who owns the problem? is needed. On the one hand, the parents own the problem. It is their child, their responsibility. They committed to the baptism vows and they have deep emotions invested in seeing their children growing up with or without the faith.

In the same way, it may be argued that the congregation owns the problem. It has the God-given mandate to make disciples, to teach people the Word and form faith that will last a lifetime, and obviously the available statistics show that it is not efficient in achieving this.

This study argues that when you have two problem-owners, you need to develop a partnership. The two parties involved need to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses and find new ways of developing a symbiotic partnership. The answers to these research questions will aid us in understanding the current state of affairs in order to unlock a better future in faith formation.

1.5 The Interpretive Task. (Osmer's second task)

According to Osmer, there are four interconnected tasks that practical theology needs to attend to. After describing what is going on (the descriptive-empirical task), comes the interpretive – why is this going on? (Osmer, 2008: e-source) The cultural shift from modernism to post-modernism has caught the Church in South Africa unawares. The Boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1954 according to Bengtson) and even the Busters following them were raised in a blissfully ignorant time where the home, school, and church preached the same message. An important issue was the removal of Christian National principles from the Heading of the Constitution of the RSA. The previous Christian Nationalism protection has disappeared from amongst others, our schools. The net effect was that the schools as support system has now fallen away and that all other forms of religious orientations now have to be allowed to compete with Christianity. (Bengtson, 2013: 36) Then came the late 20th century and brought many cultural changes: the rapid changes in technology, media, and availability of information brought us new generations: the X-gen and Millennium kids, and in a very real sense they have disconnected with the previous generations. Part of this new post-modern thinking is that religion has been abolished from our school curricula. The majority of parents are not versed in communicating their faith to their young. The majority of congregations trust – or rather hope - that there still are some faith practices occurring at home. In order to fill the gaps, they gradually invest more resources in on-campus youth activities. As Barna's research shows, many parents know that

their lifestyles are so far removed from biblical Christianity that they don't have any spiritual authority, and would rather bring their kids to church so that the 'experts' can teach them the faith (Barna, 2003: 39). The National Study on Youth and Religion in America showed that many parents already believe a variant on the Gospel, i.e. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, and they are teaching their children this hybrid religion (Dean, 2010: 164). At this present time in history a new generation's faith must be shaped, but the tools to do this with have become blunt. If the church does not wake up and sharpen these tools, a lot of vital faith formation will not be realized. With very few dance instructors, no one will be left to teach a new generation the routines.

1.6 Formation of Hypothesis

Few congregations are intentionally aiding parents in their task to raise children who are showing a lived faith (except by providing catechism classes). When congregations are sensitized and trained for this task, there will be a transformation of the way youth ministry is done in the congregation. This will cause parents to engage much more deliberately in their children's spiritual formation which, in turn, will develop lived faith in their young.

I expect this study to reveal a serious lack of thought and consideration on the issue and subject of family ministry. Similarly, my hypothesis is that most congregations and parents have not thought through the process of faith formation: How to proceed, what building blocks to use, where to aim at, and, how to put it all together systematically. Most congregations appear to be very content applying the silo-effect, which implies that each age group is contained and ministered to within the limits of its own silo, albeit located almost next to and in close proximity to each other, yet separate and in total isolation. It appears that most parents are quite happy with this state of affairs, because they have as yet not considered the alternatives.

This study expects to conclude that the majority of pastors and parents would be keen to acquire better knowledge, tools, and assistance with the dance steps to develop family ministry. All of us are partners in the development of lived faith in our young. Additionally, to the aforementioned, this study expects to witness a

frustration with the outmoded paradigm, and that a yearning for better alternatives will surface. Wherever people are dancing, others prefer to be spectators, but everyone has a desire to participate in the dance. They know their limitations, but the desire remains.

1.7 The Normative Task

Rick Osmer states that the third task of practical theology, should be to ask what ought to be going on – the normative task. (Osmer, 2011: 2) The Bible is clear on the subject of faith formation: it ought to start at home, from a very early age of a child. The parents – especially the father (Prov. 4:1, Mal 4: 6 and Col 3:21) – have the mandate to facilitate his children’s spiritual development. Not only are the agents named in the Bible, but also the method is shown: This ought to occur by means of: i) caring conversations, ii) worship, iii) service and iv) rituals and traditions (Anderson, 2003: 31).

The Christian tradition has at its disposal a considerable number of powerful examples where this norm has been set in the past. There is also a large amount of excellent modern research on this subject, that can aid us in our endeavours to discern sound practices: Soul-searching has provided us with insight into what it takes to form lived faith in our young (Smith, 2005: e-source). Our study will bring us to the conclusion that Christian parents should disciple their young in partnership with their local congregation. As Barna states: “To become mature Christians we usually found a symbiotic partnership between their parents and their church.” (Barna, 2007: 133). This study will examine the best practices that could be of assistance in this important pursuit.

1.8 Purpose of this study

First of all, the purpose of this study is to examine the current state of scholarship concerning family-based youth ministry. It is a relatively new field, and a good overview is needed of what has been written so far.

The literature contains an exhaustive complement of ideas and concepts that can be reduced to workable guidelines of intervention that could be applied to assist

congregations in developing a partnership with parents in assisting them in the formation of the faith of their children. That will be the second purpose of this study.

In order to examine this theory for intervention as being a viable method, qualitative research will have to be undertaken in congregations. This research was done in three congregations. One of these represents a congregation practicing a very typical ministry in a predominantly White urban neighbourhood. It offers regular programming, standard Sunday services, and regular youth Sunday school. The second congregation is much more innovative, although still a predominant White Dutch Reformed congregation. It has engaged much more with its community, and it works hard at reaching the lost in its community and have invested more in the ministry to their youth. The third congregation is a young congregation, existing for 7 years. This congregation emerged from the missional passion of the mainstream Dutch Reformed Church, to serve the English speaking community in its area. This is a multi-cultural congregation, comprising Blacks and Whites, Coloureds and foreign persons. This represents an emergent church, focusing on reaching people from all backgrounds and endeavouring not to recycle the saints, but to bring lost people to salvation and building them up in the faith. The researcher proposes to engage with each of the pastors to gain insight into the philosophy, practices and effectiveness of their ministry to their young. This engagement will be succeeded by two focus group interviews in each congregation, to examine the theory and practice hitherto, and establish the affects thereof on the households comprising these diverse congregations.

The data obtained will be used to paint a picture of the current state of affairs in congregations concerning family ministry. This study aims to show the gaps and would like to propose solutions by means of the literature studied. Furthermore, this study will endeavour to formulate the transferable concepts that could assist congregations everywhere to develop a new theory for family-orientated ministry that will facilitate the development of lived faith in children. In this way, more people can join the dance, and experience the joy of witnessing lived faith developing in their offspring.

1.9 Conceptual Clarification

- Traditional Youth Ministry. When this study refers to traditional youth ministry, it refers to practices that most congregations still adhere to in the religious instruction of their young, relative to Sunday school, catechism, youth events, camps and confirmation class. The majority of these activities are occurring on the church campus for a few hours during the week (except for school holidays). Mark DeVries defines it this way: "What I am calling "traditional youth ministry" has little to do with style or programming or personality. It has to do with the place of teenagers in the community of faith. During the last century, church and parachurch youth ministries alike have increasingly (and often unwittingly) held to a single strategy that has become the defining characteristic of this model: the isolation of teenagers from the adult world and particularly from their own parents." (DeVries, 2004: e-source)
- Family. In a pluralistic society such as our own, the notion of family is not understood as being the nuclear family comprising of mom, dad and their two kids. The need is identified, says Cloete, to pay attention to the complexity and diversity that accompanies family and the implications thereof for a family approach in youth ministry. (Cloete, 2016: 1) Family often includes grandparents, or extended family members. For this reason, this study will adopt Anderson's view where "family" and "home" are used as synonyms, (Anderson, 2009: 18) thus we will be looking at family as all the members constituting the household, living together under one roof. It therefore seems helpful to see a family not as a mere structure, but as a context where grace, love and forgiveness are present. (Purvis, 1998: 156)
- Children. Children, youth, teenagers are terms that are here understood as more than a specific age and stage that could be associated with developmental theory. It is an inclusive term denoting the younger generation in a household who "come into this world through families and are therefore to a great extent very dependent on family as a space of learning about life." (Cloete, 2016: 1)

As the Report of Youth Study Commission to the Dutch Reformed Church stated in 1966: When we refer to 'youth', we're not implying a specific age group, we see youth as a unit of people in a specific context on their way to adulthood. (Youth

Study Commission, 1966: 31) We see youth as a holistic unit from birth to adulthood.

- Family ministry. The focus of the congregation of understanding, respecting, and ministering to the (extended) family as a whole, but also to them as a community comprised of individuals at various stages of faith development. (Amidei, Merhaut & Roberto, 2014: e-source). In the words of Sell, family ministry is spiritual and moral ministry. Family ministry is evangelism. Family ministry is discipling. Family ministry is Biblical application. Family ministry is prevention. (Sell, 1981: 25) Cloete describes family ministry as "sharing what we believe, embodying what we believe together, but also seeking together (Faith seeking understanding). In this regard listening to each other's questions, doubts and fears will be of importance in order to establish a trusting community that is open to a diversity of voices and opinions." (Cloete, 2016: 5)
- Partnership. The congregation provides four avenues that can help contribute to the formation of this partnership: First, churches can strengthen family religious socialization. Secondly, they can develop the home as a center of faith formation. Thirdly, churches can educate and equip parents to embed foundational faith practices in family life. A fourth avenue is that congregations can engage families more fully in the ministries of the church. (Roberto, 2010: 134)
- Lived faith. Mathew 22: 36-38 gives us a clear goal to work towards and to use as a standard base against which lived faith can be measured. George Barna emphasizes character-formation as an outcome of spiritual formation. (Barna, 2007: e-source). Nel gives this comprehensive view: The church exists for the sake of the One who brought it into being. The church as the creation of God in this dispensation is fully accountable to God. In essence the church should express the new humanity, recreated in God's image, that represents God on earth. (Nel, 2000: 38)

1.10 In Summary

At the close of this chapter, the scope of the problem is clearly visible. Ps 127:3 states, *"Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him."* (NIV). The

generation which follows, is a divine gift. It also constitutes a divine trust given to us to shape and to mold to the image of the God who entrusted them to our care. The Church has sadly lost its creative imagination so as to fulfil this mission to the best of its ability. However, the music is still playing, and the dance floor is an inviting arena, available to all potential dancers. We are contemplating a graceful relationship between two partners: the home and the congregation. The next chapter will be looking at the dance floor of Practical Theology. Where are we dancing? Who danced before us? Which patterns and styles did they devise for us to learn from?

2. STEPPING ONTO THE DANCE FLOOR: WHERE DO WE START AND WHO IS MAKING AN IMPRESSION IN THE FIELD OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY?

2.1 When the music commenced

The music starts, the dance begins. The partners move to the dance floor. The very first thing to do is to orientate yourself. You do not wish to dance into corners, and you certainly do not desire to bump against the other couples. You need to observe the movements of the people, flow of the people, and to find your place on the dance floor.

In quite the same way, this study is stepping up to the gigantic arena of Practical Theology. It consists of a large dance floor, because it has to accommodate all the persons, ideas, fields and streams of thought. However, like any dance, this one begins with the first step, and as we glide along we will encounter a mix of interesting people, thought-provoking ideas, and streams of thought that touch the lives of many people around the globe.

2.2 Who

As time passed and mankind progressed, many brilliant minds were involved in making Practical Theology the science that it is today. These men and women had different ideas for deciding which dancers would qualify for dancing on this dance floor. This is their story:

2.2.1 Practical Theology, a Dance for the Clergy

Let us start this chapter with the granddad of Practical Theology. The very first steps were taken by Frederick Schleiermacher. In 1811 he produced the *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology* in which he divided theology into three fields: philosophical theology representing the roots of the theological tree; historical theology representing the trunk or body of the tree; and practical theology which addresses the practice of the leadership of the church being the crown of the theological tree. His reference to practical theology was considered a collection of techniques, borrowing from other disciplines and applied as the rules of the art of practicing theology. (Dingemans 1996:82) Schleiermacher developed the *Critical Reflective Equilibrium Method* as a tool for philosophical theology to interpret the reality of Christianity and religion. Its purpose is to profile the nature of Christianity in relation to other communities of piety and differing activities of the human spirit. The notion of "church" refers to religious communities in general, not only to the Christian church. Different pious communities express piety (*Frömmigkeit*) in diverse ways. (Fiorenza, 1996: 21) With these first bold steps, Schleiermacher defined Practical Theology as a unique field of study characterized by its own rich dimensions and concepts. This field was regarded as the domain of pastors and spiritual leaders where they could learn the methodology of applying their in-depth theology to the practices of the church.

F. D. Schleiermacher's idea that practical theology was the completion and 'crown of theological study' suggested the possibility of a better integration between practical theology and the other theological disciplines. Nevertheless, Schleiermacher saw practical theology as no more than the craft of church management, the channel through which the theories of biblical and systematic theology flow to nourish the life of the church. "The present structures of church and ministry were accepted uncritically, as was the assumption that the subject addressed itself exclusively to the practice of clergy." (Schweitzer, 1999: 8)

2.2.2 Practical Theology, a Dance for the Church

In the 1970s and 1980s, a handful of scholars teaching at universities pushed for a renewed understanding of practical theology. Recognizing the winds of

transition and the erosion of the theological encyclopedia, and bolstered by the recovery of practical philosophies (from Aristotle to Marx to American pragmatism to postmodern deconstruction), prominent individuals such as Don Browning, James Fowler, Edward Farley, Lewis Mudge, and Thomas Groome sought to turn the bastard discipline into a prince (or at least a mutually acceptable sibling). (Root, 2014: e-source). It is as if a new dance emerged, the rules of this dance have changed. Root continues by stating that these scholars made a convincing case for postulating that concrete communities of practice (whether congregations or other social manifestations of lived practice) represent the very text of practical theological reflection because these communities are places of embodied theology, places of practical wisdom.

James Fowler discusses this move away from applied or 'trickle-down' theology (Fowler, 1999: 74): That older arrangement of the division of labour in theological education rested upon an unfortunate understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. The description of practical theology as constituting applied theology identifies the problem namely that we were working with a 'trickle-down' understanding of applied theology. The assumption was that the creative work in theology continued in the fields of Biblical Studies, Historical Studies, and most especially, Systematic Theology. Ethics, because it touched upon the practical and political aspects, occupied a somewhat ambiguous position. Unknowingly, theological faculties adopted the positivist bias toward what could be called pure reason, scholarship that proceeded in accordance with the canons of pure research in the sciences. In theological education, the results of scholarly inquiry and constructive interpretation in the so-called classical disciplines of theology would be appropriated and applied in the work of church leadership and pastoral practices. Thus, practical theology viewed its work as derivative and second-hand. From this perspective, pastors and educators were encouraged to regard themselves as consumers of theology, but not as producers. And laymen – dancing in the background - were simply viewed as being passive receivers of this second-hand theology transmitted by pastors and educators. (Fowler, 1999: 76)

Practical theologian Don Browning persisted with the idea that for theology to be practical, and for practical theology to be generative, it must move into a practice-to-theory-to-practice mode (Browning, 1991: 13). From the practical

viewpoint one proceeds into reflection, and that reflection, Browning asserted, leads to refined action. The problem with theology proper and practical theology by itself was that both were stuck in a theory-to-practice model, and therefore could not become practical because their initial action, or first attention, was focused on the un-lived and abstract. Browning did not come up with this practice-to-theory-to-practice paradigm out of the blue. By rather drawing from the work of hermeneutical philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, Browning showed that this perspective was endemic to interpretation itself (ibid: 34). Practical life is fundamentally a process of interpretation, being hermeneutical in nature. This is how communities such as the congregations Browning studied, formed practical wisdom. Thus, the dance drifted away from classrooms and theory towards practice and real lives.

Rather than envisioning practical theology as primarily theological contemplation of the tasks of the ordained minister or the leadership of the church, as was the view of Schleiermacher, these later trends define practical theology as critical reflection on the church's ministry to the world. "I find it useful to think of fundamental practical theology as critical reflection on the church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation." (Browning, 1991: 36) The Dutch theologian, Gerben Heitink, adds to this debate, that the empirical data, which the social sciences uncover, is of the utmost importance for theological reflection. This leads him to "an empirically orientated Practical Theology, which opts for a point of departure in the actual experiences of people and the situation of church and society, and is characterized by a theorizing approach that attempts to do full justice to empirical data," (Heitink, 1999: 221)

According to Gijsbert Dingemans, the debate pertaining to Practical Theology has centered around the following four issues (Dingemans, 1996: 83):

- a. The field of this discipline. Is it to determine the activities of the ordained ministry of the church? Or is the church itself (the local congregation) in its capacity as an instrument of preaching the gospel in the world, the proper objective of practical theological studies? Alternatively, should practical theology deal with the impact of the gospel (or even religion) in society?

- b. The academic status. Does practical theology belong to the social sciences? Is it a practice-based science or an empirical science? Or is it a normative theological discipline? During several recent years the debate has been directed at additional aspects such as the methodology and the normative background.
- c. The methodology of the discipline. Should the methods applied be derived from a quantitative conception or from qualitative and hermeneutical approaches of the social sciences? Presently the discussion is particularly about:
- d. The normative background of practical theology. What is implied when stating that practical theology is a “theological” discipline? What is the significance of normative points of view and where are they emanating from?

If Schleiermacher focused the first steps of the dance on the practice of the pastor, it is obvious that the scope of practical theology has widened since then. Miller-McLemore explains that practical theology is executed in four related but distinctive localities, which therefore suit unique audiences and objectives. She explains that practical theology is:

- (a) A discipline practiced by scholars, albeit also,
- (b) An activity of faith practiced by believers. She however continues by explaining that practical theology can also be defined as,
- (c) A method used for studying theology in practice, and finally
- (d) As an area of learning embracing sub disciplines (inclusive of pastoral care, homiletics, liturgy, and youth ministry) located in seminaries and universities. (Miller-McLemore, 2011: 42) In this way the dance floor has been filled not only by professional dancers, but by everyone who opted to participate in the dance.

2.2.3 Practical Theology, a Dance for the People

As can be established from the aforesaid, the available area of the dance floor is rather spacious. This implies that there is ample room for everyone to partake in the dance. Apart from the conventional and commonly encountered dances, the Latin dances have gradually come to the fore during recent years. There are some theologians of the 20th century, who were dressed in the bold red colours of

liberational theology, and stepped up to the dance floor. “Practical theology and liberating practice is directed toward society”, claims Gansevoort. (Ganzevoort, 2009: 13) Theologians such as Gert Otto, Andreas van Heyl and Juan Louis Segundo made a strong plea for a fundamental change and liberation of society (Dingemans, 1996: 4), to which practical theology should contribute. In the Netherlands Rob van Kessel and in South Africa John de Gruchy argued that it is the primary mission and vocation of the Church to serve society at large, whereby practical theologians must become Christian humanists! De Gruchy defines the practicing of theology as “a committed engagement, a way of being, a passion, a contemporary and existential engagement with the gospel in the world of daily reality”. (De Gruchy, 2014: 39)

As practical theology developed, the fringes of the dance floor have been explored, whereat not only the clerics are partaking, but also the church, and the whole of society, each and every community encompassing each and every individual believer. Henning Luther argued from the point of view of the lay person—a theology of the “Subject”. He challenged us to see the people on the dance floor – they are engaging in the art of the dance. Frits de Lange, Ernst Lange, Gijsbert Dingemans and Daniel Louw were grappling with the issues of meaning and vocation, and being human amongst others. (Dingemans 1996: 86)

Practical theology commenced with a few bold steps, and then diversified to fill every corner of human need and experience, but when you stand back to view the whole scene, it is obvious that the “human living document” is the central text of practical theologians a la Anton Boisen. Miller-McLemore pirouettes with this concept, arguing that it would be more useful to regard the text not as a “human living document” as much as the “living human web.” She argues for a deeper appreciation for the cultural location of the individual, recognizing that we all live in cultural webs such as gender, race, and economic realms, and these cultural experiences correlate with religious propensities. Miller-McLemore explains that “Genuine care now requires understanding the human document as necessarily embedded within an interlocking public web of constructed meaning. Clinical problems, such as a woman recovering from a hysterectomy or a man addicted to drugs, are always situated within the structures and ideologies of a wider public context and never purely interpersonal or intrapsychic.” (Miller-McLemore, 2012: 81). Cahalan & Hess were quite clear as to the importance of human

interconnectivity: “Because human beings are inextricably interconnected, the document that is our primary text is relationality, and we began to say that our primary text is the living human web.” (Cahalan & Hess, 2008: 19)

“Practical theological approaches are contextual, local, and stay close to experience.” (Fowler, 1999: 43) Swinton and Mowat says something similar: “Irrespective of the theological and methodological diversity, the common theme that holds Practical Theology together as a discipline is its perspective on, and beginning-point in, human experience and its desire to reflect theologically on that experience.” (Swinton, 2006: 13) Wherever a practical theologian is busy applying his art, people will be found there. People are the crowning glory of God’s creation. They are the object of His revelation and actions through the ages. People’s very existence is embedded in rich culture and history. Practical theologians will always endeavour to understand and apply faith when dealing with people. Indeed, we become Christian humanists!

Religious activities constitute the essence of practical theology’s reflection, and these are directly related to human stories. In some way or another human stories are linked to the story of God. Rituals and liturgy embody stories from the spiritual tradition and bring them back to life once more. In this way, new participants can add their stories to the tradition. (Ganzevoort, 2011: 3) Thus meaningful actions in religious communities can be interpreted as constituting the “text”. People are dancing with their God(s), and an observant scholar can learn much from watching the dance.

2.3 What

As previously shown, there is a rich tradition of knowledgeable people who have laid the foundations of Practical Theology. When you have intellectuals of this caliber focusing on a particular field of science, opinions are liable to differ on what exactly the object of the study of Practical Theology ought to be. Let us follow the thread of this particular dance in order to determine which aspects of Practical Theology should be studied.

2.3.1 Studying the Actions of the Dancers

Since dances vary in many respects, and each dancer has his or her own preferences, there can be no single methodology applicable to study this prevalent diversity. Both Van Der Ven and Furet started out by describing and explaining the actions of the people being studied: empirical theology or a theology of action if you would (Dingemans, 1996: 4). In this way, practical theology collects facts and knowledge regarding religious practices, that enable others to check and verify.

In course of time, other individuals realized that there are more aspects for consideration regarding people and their behaviour than those which are conspicuous from the outside. The complete human document needs to be read hermeneutically. Human actions are the results emanating from a complexity of thoughts, perceptions, emotions, values, and experiences that are entrenched in the background of every person studied. Theologians like Don S Browning and Gijsbert Dingemans started to add this fourth dimension to the picture which constitutes a thick description to define and analyze reality.

Ruard Ganzevoort explains the current dilemma of Theological faculties which cannot exist in a pluralistic society solely for the benefit of a single denomination or even a single faith. For instance, at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, for instance, the theological faculty presently provides training in theology and religious studies to students from the most orthodox protestant churches, and the very liberal Dutch Mennonites, evangelical Baptists and Pentecostals, Muslim chaplains and even Hindus. In this particular context Ganzevoort defines the definition of Practical Theology as the hermeneutics of lived religion (Ganzevoort, 2009: 3). There will always be actions and meaning embedded in our relationship with the sacred. The main question will almost always be: what is happening and how we can live life more prudently relative to the sources of religion and the conceptions of the divine? This study is undertaken in a hermeneutical mode as this may engender the constructing meaning in what is found.

2.3.2 Studying the Practices of the Dancers

One exiting new way of interpreting the human-and-divine dance, is the study of practices. Claire E. Wolfteich articulates what a practice comprises: she states

that “Practices are theory-laden; they embody and enact belief. Practices also are deeply formative; they shape belief, religious identity, and community. Practices also invite us into spiritual wisdom and transformation. Practice is built into ancient Christian traditions of passing on spiritual wisdom.” (Wolfeich, 2011: 254) Swinton and Mowat take this one step further. These practices are not intended for human flourishing only as “the key thing in this understanding is not that the practice brings particular benefits to individuals or communities (although it may do). The important thing is that the practice bears faithful witness to the God from whom the practice emerges, and whom it reflects, and that it enables individuals and communities to participate faithfully in Christ’s redemptive mission. Thus the efficacy of practice (the good to which it is aimed), is not defined pragmatically by its ability to fulfil particular human needs (although it will include that), but by whether or not it participates faithfully in the divine redemptive mission.” (Swinton & Mowat, 2006: 22) Swinton and Mowat tango with this empirical knowledge and deep description when they state: “Practical Theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s . . . redemptive practices in, to and for the world.” (Swinton, 2006: 6) We partake of the dance, because that is where life abundant that Christ came to give is found. To dance is to live!

Theologians such as Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass examined fundamental Christian practices (sacraments), such as baptism and Holy Communion (Root, 2014: e-source). These practices are at the core of all theology: the death-to-life paradigm of a theology of the cross. Swinton and Mowat explain it as follows: “Christian practices are a reflection of the Church’s attempts to participate faithfully in the continuing practices of the triune God’s redemptive mission to the world.” (Swinton, 2006: 24)

Practice itself has become a text for studying. In certain practical theologies, practice becomes the locale where divine and human fingers interlace to lead us into perichoresis with the Almighty. Practice is the human-constructed vehicle that brings God’s presence. These practices may not have their origin in human constructs; they may be practices given by God. However, when practices are studied or examined, the methods of the social sciences lead practical theologians

to regard them first and foremost as phenomenal human constructions. (Root, 2014: e-source)

2.3.3 Studying the dancers in South Africa

Our own South African context has enabled Practical Theology to adapt its rhythms and movements while adopting this new kind of dance. During the eighties of the previous century Jonker defined Practical Theology as the service of the church based on the norms of Scripture (Jonker, 1981: 39) During the nineties this view has been extended to include empirical methodology (Pieterse, 1993: 25) and an active scientific approach (Burger, 1991: 60). As this was happening at a time of great social upheaval in South Africa, certain Practical Theologians such as Cochrane, De Grucy and Pietersen adopted the contextual approach. By the late nineties, Louw states that: “One should rather think in the direction of hermeneutics, namely as an interpretation of the meaning of the relationship between God and reality from the perspective of the Christian faith.” (Louw, 1998: 48)

The radical socio-political revolution that occurred in South Africa during the last decade of the twentieth century forced all institutions of higher education to transform, and to search for knowledge that is contextual – in order to keep in touch with the practice of Theology – from whatever faith, religion, and spirituality we might encounter in our complex demographic composition. (Schoeman, et al, 2012: 126) Not only may certain privileged races and peoples dance; everyone is now allowed to participate in the dance. This new order brought about a rich diversity of dances and creative momentum to Practical Theology.

2.4 How

Hitherto we have met the people who populate the dance floor of Practical Theology. We have examined the actions and dances that we propose to study. Subsequently we will scrutinize the factors which enabled the practical theology to move forward up until now. Theologian Richard R Osmer gave practical theology some useful tools to develop its art. Osmer has provided what he calls his “reflective

equilibrium model of practical theology.” (Osmer, 2008: e-source) He explains that this tool does not constitute a method per se, though some have used it that way. Rather, it is a model that endeavours to explore the shared operations of those calling themselves practical theologians. Osmer’s model seeks to provide a synopsis of the activities of practical theologians. Osmer has defined practical theology, then, as consisting of four core tasks: the descriptive, interpretative, normative, and pragmatic. These four core tasks, broadly applied, articulate what practical theology encompasses and delivers. These tasks surround four central questions.

2.4.1 The descriptive task

The descriptive task deals with the question of what is happening, and utilizes tools of thick description in order to answer this question. These tools could include case studies, questionnaires, appreciative inquiry, participant observation, and so forth. Osmer calls it the descriptive-empirical task. Here we collect information that assists us to discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.

Once more we are confronted by the human text. Actions, practices and the deeper meaning behind them are the sources of our data. Practical Theology then becomes the Theology of Practice.

2.4.2 The interpretive task

In the second instance, we are dealing with the interpretive task. Regarding this task, we draw from theories pertaining to the arts and sciences to gain a better understanding and explanation of the reasons for the occurrence of these patterns and dynamics. The interpretative task requires to know why something is happening, and transfers the descriptive findings so as to enable conversation with frameworks which endeavours to explain the phenomenon experienced and examined. These frameworks are usually cultural, psychological or anthropological in character. These two core tasks of practical theology cast it unequivocally in concrete and lived context. Practical theology, whether it starts with a crisis, established practice, or lived belief, is placed first and foremost on the ground. (Root, 2014: e-source)

2.4.3 The normative task

Osmer postulates that there is a third core task to practical theology, namely the normative task. The question that triggers this task asks what ought to be happening. (The normative). Osmer explains in clear terms that though the normative is the heart of the specifically theological motion in practical theology, theology has already been present prior to the operation of this task. The normative task – the third movement - utilizes theological concepts and texts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, simultaneously constructing ethical norms so as to guide our responses and ability to learn from sound practice.

2.4.4 The pragmatic task

The abovementioned exposition leads us to the pragmatic task which requires us to answer the question as to what we should then do. The researcher is now devising strategies for action that will affect situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation regarding the “feed-back” emerging when they are enacted. As a matter of fact, Osmer in the appendix to his Teaching Ministry of Congregations, explains that the outcome of these four core tasks, which are shared by all practical theologians, are nevertheless activated in different ways depending on an upper lens, which includes things like one’s view of praxis, one’s theological anthropology, and one’s cosmology. (Osmer, 2005: 182)

2.5 Why

Having considered the “who” and the “what” and the “how,” this study now turns to the “why” question. The fruit reaped as a reward for the work done, must have fundamental meaning. There has been a large amount of discussion on this matter, and it is represented as follows:

2.5.1 Because we believe

There is another definitive pattern emerging from the past decades of practicing practical theology: “Practical Theology is in fact theology. However, there are benefits of a more explicit correction as follows: As theology, practical theology is normative. It makes demands on those who practice it to live by the sacred and transcendent convictions it professes. Greater clarity about our theological and not just our practical contribution is one of our challenges but success in this realm will advance the discipline and its value for religious communities and the common good.” (Miller-McLemore, 2011: 59)

2.5.2 Because of the gospel

In this vast landscape we call Practical Theology, there is an entrenched image that is central to it all: “It is important to return to Paul, the cross, and the great inversion implied in the incarnation because in academic theology we are constantly in danger of forgetting that the foundations of our subject matter and its *raison d’être* are a-rational, deviant and evangelical. Although we move with the steps of critical reason and scholarship to understand religious faith and practice and its significance, we are explorers within a faith tradition; some of our most distinguished and creative predecessors have been labelled as mad!” (Pattison, 2007: 283)

Hawkes echoes this call when he says “But truth is not simply logical; theological truth is certainly not. Nor is the understanding of truth reached purely by logical processes. This is understood now even by the philosophers of natural science. Scientific theories are not reached by ‘simple’ induction (still less by deduction). Frequently the process of theory building involves the exercise of creative imagination, which intuits a hypothesis, which must then be tested and can never be finally and absolutely proven. The hypothesis, or theory, always remains open to revision; and is always an approximation to rather than a complete description of reality.” (Hawkes, 1984: 47) When a dancer does not think about the moves and it comes naturally, that is where the magic lies. We people of faith have an inner compass, where true north subsides in the Gospel, and we can do nothing else but orientate ourselves to that point.

2.5.3 Because we have a mission

Andrew Root offers us a timely reminder that practical theology should always realize that the church has a mission of translating and transferring the gospel. Churches regard themselves as instruments of Christ in this world. I call these real experiences of God's coming to people in concrete and lived ways the "evangelical experience." By "evangelical" I refer to something broader and connected back to the Protestant Reformation— experiences akin to those of Luther, who contends that he experienced a distinct occurrence of divine action, namely that Jesus came to him. By "evangelical experience," I refer to the centrality of the commitment to a God who comes to us, calling each of us to confess our sins and follow the Jesus who lives. (Root, 2014: e-source)

John Swinton gives us this excellent definition of practical theology: "Practical Theology . . . is dedicated to enabling the faithful performance of the gospel and to exploring and taking seriously the complex dynamics of the human encounter with God." (Swinton, 2006: 11) "While we have suggested that the starting point for Practical Theology is human experience, in fact this is not strictly the case. God and the revelation God has given to human beings in Christ is the true starting point for all Practical Theology."

Practical Theology should always be aware that the church has a mission of translating and transferring the gospel. Churches regard themselves as instruments of Christ in this world. This view has been strongly emphasized by Karl Barth since he wrote *Kirchliche Dogmatik* circa 1951. As David Bosch reminded us in *Transforming Mission* (1991), God is on a mission to liberate mankind. His mission culminated in the sending of His own Son to our world. And so, the Son sent the Spirit to empower us, that we may join in this mission to declare the Kingdom of our Lord. Being part of God's mission lies at the core of Practical Theology. We are obliged to find ways in which the community of believers can be effective in being instruments of change. Devising and developing better ways of being disciples in this world, where our lived faith can translate to people who have not tasted the goodness of our God, is our ultimate task. (Bosch, 1991: e-source)

2.6 Where

As we cannot be everything to everyone, this study emanates from a specific situation from a specific person, to serve a specific situation. Let us therefore zoom in on the arena where this study positions itself. Where exactly does this author dance on this spacious dance floor?

2.6.1 Close to Barth

The first dance partner we would like to emulate, is Karl Barth, who emphasizes that all of life centers in Jesus Christ and what He has done on the cross. The church and all believers that are part of the church are called upon to be imitators of Christ, following in His footsteps, showing His way to the world where God has placed us.

2.6.2 Close to Anderson

A second mentor participating in the big theological dance is David Anderson. He refers to this gaping hole in the church's practices as "the great omission": if the majority of believers in the West is habituated into the church via a previous generation, why do congregations not invest their resources so as to develop ways of rendering this discipling more effective? In Anderson's own words: "the actual practice of valuing families as a God-given source of faith formation, is much neglected." (Anderson, 2009: 12) The aim of this study is to facilitate the great commission of Christ to His church.

As such, this study resembles the viewpoints held by David Bosch and Darrel Guder and stresses that the mission of God towards man must "continue today in the worldwide witness of churches in every culture to the gospel of Jesus Christ." (Guder, 1998: 4) The purpose of this project will be to assist the church in complying with the great commission we have received. We would like to see lived faith formed at an early age, to empower followers of Christ to be witnesses to mankind who needs to experience the life abundant. This witnessing process has its roots in the parental home at an early age, instilled by trustworthy persons by means of their life styles, actions and words. That appears to be the most effective way.

2.6.3 Close to Osmer

We are considering Osmer's four movements according to his methodology. We propose to describe, in rich format, the occurrences within those three congregations (see chapter five). After we have heard the voices and the stories, we are proceeding by asking the interpretive question: "Why is this happening." In chapter six, we are going to present our findings on these tough questions. This study also intends to exhibit the findings in the context of the normative question: what should be happening. Finally, this study will reply to the pragmatic question: "What should be done?", in chapter seven. Which strategies and actions are able to move the church forward from where we are presently standing? There appears to be an elegant flow to his reasoning, and this study will continually return to those movements. This study will add a qualitative approach to the descriptive task.

2.6.4 Close to Miller-McLamore

Another useful aid in this study's self-understanding, is found in Miller-McLamore's four quadrants. She states that we are engaged in practical theology as (a) a discipline practiced by scholars – utilizing as many scientific tools as are at our disposal. However, we are also engaged in practical theology as (b) an activity of faith undertaken by believers – as we are compelled by the love of Christ. Furthermore, as a pastor to a congregation, the author is involved in this project as (c) a method used for studying theology in practice, and hopefully this knowledge would become part of (d) the curricula pertaining to sub-disciplines (such as pastoral care, homiletics, liturgy, and youth ministry) offered at seminaries and universities.

2.6.5 Close to a post-modern understanding of habits and practices

Throughout this project, you will note that there is a leaning towards a greater appreciation of the postmodern understanding of habits and practices which are assisting with the formation of faith in ways deeper than our intellect can fathom. In this respect, Mary McClintock Fulkerson, a systematic theologian who turned

practical theologian, made considerable progress. Her book *Place of Redemption* (2007) would resound not only in the field of practical theology but also in theology more generally. While undertaking her own ethnographic research (sight observation) at a small interracial, inter-abled community in Durham, North Carolina, Fulkerson explored the factors which allowed this unique and beautiful community to be a place of welcome, a place where Black, refugee, and disabled people all found a home. With incredible sophistication, Fulkerson advanced beyond cognitive beliefs and cognitive theological catechesis as the factors that allowed this community to become a place of welcome. Rather turning headlong to the cultural, Fulkerson argued, through Bourdieu and postmodern place theory, that habituation was the engine that drove this little church. In other words, through and by practices, a habitus of seeing and being with was created. The community was actualized not through intellect (as so often is assumed by theology) but through bodies, owing to the bodies of those present in the community. Fulkerson shows, through Bourdieu, that our bodies possess culture, and in our bodies, a habitus of culture is created. (Fulkerson, 2007: 11) She explains the rationale for her turning to practical theology and what it allows for: "Attention to the worldly, situational character of Christian faith directs me to the task of practical theology." (Fulkerson, 2007: 7)

2.6.6 Close to Dykstra

In this arena of labour, stands also Craig Dykstra. As a practical theologian at Princeton Seminary in the 1980s, Dykstra sought after a perspective that would move Christian education beyond the stale paradigms of knowledge appropriation and/ or development and into regarding Christian education as a way of life. Dykstra worked to turn the field from its infatuation with psychological development theory around in pursuance of a theological language, especially a theological language that could connect to concrete life. In order to achieve this, Dykstra not only returned to theological language but to the very actions, the very practices, he believed that theological language possessed or indicated. Therefore, instead of attending to developmental theory, Dykstra's perspective of Christian education revisited what he called "the disciplines," the classic actions of prayer, worship, hospitality, and so forth. (Dykstra, 2000: 2) He regarded these disciplines

as providing “a way of life” that attended to the individual’s needs but was not individualistic in nature, and sought after a way of life to be lived in the present but was bound by the past, to a tradition embedded in generations of practicing communities. Dorothy Bass claims that: “Those who participate in practices are formed in particular ways of thinking about and living in the world.” (Bass, 2008: 29) As Ganzevoort says: “Praktische theologie dus als hermeneutiek van de geleefde religie.” (Practical Theology is the actual hermeutics of lived faith.) (Ganzevoort, 2007: 3)

“Indeed, we believe,” say Dykstra and Bass, “that it is precisely by participating in Christian practices that we truly come to know God and the world, including ourselves.” (Bass & Dykstra, 2002: 24) This can be seen in their succinct and helpful definition of Christian practices: “Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God’s active presence for the life of world.” (Bass, 2008: 18) In other words, these practices were socially done but given to the church by God, cementing these practices in normative theological language. For Dykstra and Bass, practices (worship, prayer, and hospitality, to name but three of their twelve) become the actual link between divine and human action. There is much to be commended in this perspective, and much that connects with this author’s own understanding of Christian education. It has far less to do with intellectual (classroom) training, than with modelled behaviour instilled by all the hours that kids are with their parents doing life together. In the normal daily practices of the believer, his or her child will be aware of the continued and active presence of God. Dykstra and Bass furthermore explain: “Rather than speak of a Christian way of life as a whole, therefore, we shall speak of the ‘Christian practices’ that together constitute a way of life abundant.” (Bass & Dykstra, 2002: 18) They continue:” By ‘Christian practices’ we mean things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.” Thinking of a way of life as made up of a constitutive set of practices breaks a way of life down into parts that are small enough to be amenable to analysis, both in relation to contemporary concerns and as historic, culture-spanning forms of Christian faith and life. At the same time, practices are not too small: each Christian practice is large enough to permit us to draw together the shards and pieces of particular understandings, beliefs, events,

behaviours, actions, relationships, inquiries, and skills into sets that are capacious and cohesive enough to show how they might guide one into a way of life.

Kathleen Cahalan offers a rich overview of practice that connects to Dykstra and Bass's normative/ theological interests. "First, a practice is understood as an intentional action, which, secondly, takes place within a community and tradition of shared meaning and purpose. Third, practice is an embodied action, an expression of identity, knowledge, and conviction through bodily action. Fourth, practices are corruptible, meaning they are intertwined in personal sin and failings as well as oppressive forms of systematic power and evil. And fifth, practice is a spiritual exercise that requires attention to the immanent and transcendent presence of God." (Cahalan, 2010: 99)

For Dykstra and Bass, participating in the divine through practice has the effect of bringing forth the good of life abundant to concrete communities. This life abundant resembles (or actually is) the result of doing a practice; the very good of doing the practice is regarded as a manifestation of God's act in the practice. (Bass, 2002: 22) They state, "Normatively and theologically understood, therefore, Christian practices are the human activities in and through which people cooperate with God in addressing the needs of one another and creation." This allows wonderfully for concrete actions to have theological depth. Christian practices also have a normative dimension that is thoroughly theological in character. That is, our descriptions of Christian practices contain within them normative understandings of what God wills for us and for the whole creation and of what God expects of us in response to God's call to be faithful. Christian practices are thus "congruent with the necessities of human existence as such, as seen from a Christian perspective on the character of human flourishing." (Bass, 2002: 22)

All of this may be further scrutinized in Dykstra and Bass's reference to discipleship. Practices as means of grace give the human actor "a way of life," and a way of life, in theological language, can be understood no more directly than as discipleship. This attention to discipleship reveals the positive elements of their perspective, as they articulate that the purpose of practical theology is to assist people into following Jesus Christ. (Root, 2014: e-source)

2.7 Closing Comments

It appears that divine action itself emanates from embodied practices of people. As we partake of the dance, we become dancers. We are dancing our way into a new lifestyle. Our expectation is to explore these practices in real faith communities and to find ways in which these practices may be identified and amplified in ministry. As this study progresses into the interviews it will consistently ask questions concerning regular habits of faith that parents model and children emulate, the see if this is an important part of faith formation. “If you are what you love and if love is a virtue, then love is a habit”, states James Smith (Smith, 2016: e-source). This means that our most fundamental orientation to the world— the longings and desires that orient us toward some version of the good life— is shaped and configured by imitation and practice. This project endeavours to accentuate their worth as a means of forming lived faith in a younger generation. It proposes to show how practical theology as a discipline exercised by scholars, is linked to practical theology in its capacity of ministry done by the experts in the field (whose voices will be heard in the next chapter). Yes, professionals can dance, but ordinary, everyday people may likewise have joy on the dance floor. This study therefore proposes to demonstrate how the above exposition is connected to practical theology being exercised by believers in everyday practices that have a major impact on faith formation regarding their offspring. In this way faith formation constitutes a powerful witness to the world of life abundant found in Christ.

Chapter 2: Stepping onto the Dancefloor: Where do we start and Who is making an Impression in the Field of Practical Theology?

3. AN ANALYSIS OF THE DANCE THUS FAR

3.1 Introduction

“Teenagers can embody adults’ highest hopes and most gripping fears. They represent a radiant energy that opens doors to the future for families, communities, and society,” writes Christian Smith (Smith, 2005: e-source). He adds “but they also evoke deep adult anxieties about teen rebellion, trouble, and broken and compromised lives. Parents, teachers, and youth workers behold their teenagers with pride, hope, and enjoyment, but also often worry, distress, and frustration. We are looking on at the recital from the stands, and we are contemplating: How are our teenagers doing in life? What is happening to our relationships with them? How will they turn out? Happy and responsible? Troubled and depressed? Or worse? Such personal ambivalent feelings about teenagers are amplified in the discourse and images that animate our culture and institutions. Our youth, it is often said, are the future, our hope for a brighter world.”

You may ask why this is important. Why would the spiritual formation of children be of such paramount concern? George Barna states: “We discovered that the probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her Saviour was 32% for those between the ages of 5 and 12; 4% for those in the 13 to 18 age range; and 6% for people 19 or older. In other words, if people do not embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour before they reach their teenage years, the chance of their doing so at all is slim. In other words, by the age of 13, your spiritual identity is largely set in place.” (Barna, 2003: e-source)

A second major concern, is that we are not effective in the formation of faith in children. This lack of effectiveness becomes evident when children mature and exit the church and even exit the faith. With reference to this exodus from the church, Tom Gillespie, president of Princeton Seminary, has pinpointed this problem: “The

truth of the matter is that the chief cause of our membership decline is our inability over the past quarter of a century to translate our faith to our children. Put simply, we are unable to keep our children in the church when they become adults. As a result, we are not only a dwindling church but an aging church as well.” (Gillespie, 1988: 6)

This chapter would like to explore the theory of the dance: what knowledge the Church has collected over centuries concerning the perichoresis: how do we join the divine dance with the Triune God? The study will look at research on how this dance is conducted, where and how has it failed, and what would be the best possible way to teach this dance to a new generation of dancers. In order to sift through the mountains of data, this chapter will be ordered in accordance with the research questions posed earlier in chapter one:

In 3.2 – 3.3 the Secondary Research Question number one (SRQ1) will be looked into: What is the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation, and what are the emanating results?

In sections 3.4 – 3.7 the study will endeavour to answer the second Secondary Research Question (SRQ2): What constitutes a lived faith in children?

Section 3.8 will be dedicated to Secondary Research Question three (SRQ3): What is the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children?

The next part, namely section 3.9 will help in discovering some answers to Secondary Research Question number four (SRQ4): What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children?

Lastly, section 3.10 will be dedicated to answer Secondary Research Question five (SRQ5): What constitutes a partnership between congregations and the home in the formation of lived faith in children?

3.2 Scary Statistics: The Reason for this Study

Mark Holmen postulates that if current trends in the belief systems and practices of the younger generation continue, church attendance will within the next ten years be half the size it is presently. His research inter alia indicates:

- 61% of today’s young adults had been churched at a particular stage during their teen years, but they are now spiritually disengaged.

- The Southern Baptist Convention reports that their congregations are currently losing 70 to 88 per cent of the young people after the expiry of their freshman year in college, and that the possibility exists that those young people might never come back.

- In terms of one particular study, 90% of youth active in high school church programs drop out of church by their second year of college. (Holmen, 2010: 28) To quote Dawson McAlister, a national youth ministry specialist: “90% of kids active in high school youth groups do not go to church by the time they are sophomores in college. One third will never return.” (McAllister, 1996: 41)

As the graph for church membership of the younger generation indicates a decline, another graph indicates an increase in the numbers of “nones” in American society, who state that they are “none of the above,” (when asked to tick a box from a list of religions), and therefore claim no affiliation with traditional religion. By 2012, the unaffiliated represented almost 20% of the U.S. adult population, having doubled in only one decade. (Bengtson, 2013: 7)

This disruption of the transmission of faith, is escalating like a snowball. It has now been established that almost six out of ten unaffiliated young adults come from families where their parents were also unaffiliated, indicating that the omission of religion is indeed transmitted from one generation to the next. Atheism is not a break from a family’s religious tradition but actually represents continuity with the family’s moral and ethical value orientations. We have noted that there is a high degree of intergenerational similarity (continuity) in non-religion today and the transmission of non-religion from parents to their children can be seen to have increased to a far greater degree than in the recent past. (Bengtson, 2013: 152)

In the Netherlands, the bond with the church has drastically diminished among members, according to Bredenkamp and Schoeman. Among the youth, in particular, the connection with the church is extremely tenuous; numerous members having a weak church affiliation are contemplating the option of terminating their membership. The remainder of the congregation increasingly comprise of older persons. (Bredenkamp & Schoeman, 2015: 126)

Our mainstream Reformed Churches in South Africa clearly indicate that they are also subject to this global shift that is happening. The total membership of the Hervormde Kerk dropped during the period from 1972 to 2000 by 21 000 members, while the membership of the youth was bisected. This dropping-off trend

is sadly escalating as is evidenced by the loss of almost 60 000 church members during the period 2000 until 2010.

The Gereformeerde Kerk suffers under the same fate. During the period 1990 to 2010 it lost more than 30% of its membership. However, the most disturbing statistic is that for that same period it lost more than 65% of its youth-members. (Handelinge van die GKSA, 2012: 509)

The Dutch Reformed Church has also not evaded this tide. Although the number of adult members roughly remains unchanged for the period 1972 until 2010, there is a significant decline in youth-membership dwindling from 775 000 in 1972 to 248 000 in 2010. (Schoeman, 2014: 4)

Looking at these results, we cannot but help to ask: What is going on? If the Church is doing such a poor job of retaining its youth, it needs to do some serious introspection to discern which of the current philosophies and practices of faith formation is not functioning well, or have become outdated. Let us proceed and see if this study can find answers to some of these questions in the literature.

3.3 Explanations: Why are We in this Deep Hole?

Quite obviously, these statistics are alarming to any community of faith. Nobody wishes to witness something which it regards so dearly, losing its status amongst its offspring. This trend has been studied and written about on numerous occasions. There appears to be a myriad of reasons for this trend. Let us therefore focus on some of them.

3.3.1 Ineffective congregational youth programs

One could certainly point a finger at the church. Kenda Dean states, for instance: “Since the religious and spiritual choices of American teenagers echo, with astonishing clarity, the religious and spiritual choices of the adults who love them, lackadaisical faith is not young people’s issue, but ours. Most teenagers are perfectly content with their religious worldviews; it is churches that are—rightly—concerned. So, we must assume that the solution lies not in beefing up congregational youth programs or making worship more “cool” and attractive, but in modelling the kind of mature, passionate faith we say we want young people to

have. The National Study of Youth and Religion reveals a theological fault line running underneath American churches: an adherence to a do-good, feel-good spirituality that has little to do with the Triune God of Christian tradition and even less to do with loving Jesus Christ enough to follow him into the world.” (Dean, 2010: 4) She continues: “Churches seem to have offered teenagers a kind of “diner theology”: a bargain religion, cheap but satisfying, whose gods require little in the way of fidelity or sacrifice. Never mind that centuries of Christians have read Jesus’ call to lay down one’s life for others as the signature feature of Christian love (John 15:13), or that God’s self-giving enables us to share the grace of Christ when ours is pitifully insufficient.” (Dean, 2010: 10)

Mark DeVries pinpoints this problem even more exactly: “What I am calling ‘traditional youth ministry’ has little to do with style or programming or personality. It has to do with the place of teenagers in the community of faith. The defining characteristic of this model is the isolation of teenagers from the adult world and particularly from their own parents.” (DeVries, 2004: e-source). George Barna has this to add: “Most churches simply enrol kids within a program when they show up; and the churches may not have—or even seek to have—any contact with the family whatsoever, apart from encouraging the parents to attend the church and to keep bringing their children. Thus, a majority of churches are actually guilty of perpetuating an unhealthy and unbiblical process wherein the church usurps the role of the family and creates an unfortunate and sometimes exclusive dependency upon the church for a child’s spiritual nourishment.” (Barna, 2003: e-source)

Interestingly enough, the Sunday-school movement itself began as an outreach to unchurched poor children. Its founders never intended that it should take over the role of Christian parents. (DeVries, 2004: e-source). Mark Yaconelli writes: “If we are to keep young people involved in the church and if we are to renew our congregations, we first must acknowledge that many of our current forms of youth ministry are destructive.” (Yaconelli, 1999: 2) However, the local church allowed itself to structure youth ministry as but one particular program of the church, in lieu of an integrated theologically driven mission of the church. Thus, the last 20 to 30 years have seen youth ministry moving from a mission-driven, outreach-oriented, culturally sensitive expression of God’s incarnational care for all people, to an

entertainment-based series of events, programmes, options, and classes. (Senter, 2001: e-source)

Eminating from her research project undertaken in order to determine what congregations are doing relative to faith formation in children's ministry, Karen-Marie Yust (2002: 14) identified the following startling tendencies:

- a. A propensity to moralize. "Moral values" are more important to many parents than formation of faith. Parents would often wishfully say things such as: "I want my kids to develop positive role models and be subjected to positive influences from other 'good' kids. I want them to learn the things they are not taught at school, for instance, how to be good persons, caring persons, and to treat others with respect. I want them to learn to discern between good kids to play with and bad kids to avoid."
- b. An increasing emphasis on printed materials. Many youth workers choose the curriculum according to the "Look and feel", rather than on the content, and the style of learning presented in the materials.
- c. The adoption (often uncritically) of experiential learning methodologies.
- d. The development of technology-based supplemental teaching tools, such as software programs, CD-ROMs and web pages. Although these are derived from a variety of dogma's, and theologies, youth workers will use such materials if they "sound cool."
- e. A propensity to prescribe prayer practices or eliminate them altogether. Adults should not presume competency to mediate children's spiritual experiences by positioning themselves in a capacity to act between God and children as informers, but must contemplate with children the relationship between children's personal spiritual experiences and the tradition's understanding of who God is and how God is present to us in all aspects of our lives.
- f. A propensity to replace the scriptures with other interpretations of the biblical story.
- g. The substitution by contemporary cultural icons of traditional liturgical symbols.
- h. An assumption that "busyness" and "productivity" are necessary to enable children to acquire knowledge.

- i. A tendency to rigidly script the teacher's role as a means of reducing teacher anxiety, and ensuring that specific information is conveyed to children.
- j. A negligence to educate teachers regarding the theologies and educational philosophies behind the study materials they are using.
- k. Children's ministries often rely heavily on the vision, energy and creativity of one or two persons in the congregation, usually – but not always – the Director of Christian Education or an associate pastor. If any of these persons were to leave, the innovative ministries they are trying to create would revert to more traditional models or would cease to exist.

This mode of children's ministry implicitly states that children do not really "belong" to the church in their capacity as children. Instead, children (and their families) are treated as recipients of the educational services provided by the Church. She states that "this attitude fosters the development of children's ministries within a culture of consumer satisfaction rather than a practice of genuine hospitality." (Yust, 2002: 15) Add to this Malan Nel's question whether we (the church) have lost the radical nature of the faith community as disciples of Jesus and seekers of the Kingdom? (Nel, 2009: 99). Nel quotes Rasmusson, stating that Christians have often, throughout the history of Christendom, sought acceptance through belonging to an organization that is conservative, accepts secular order, dominates the masses, has universal claims, and therefore uses ... the state and the ruling classes to sustain and expand its domination and to stabilize and determine the social order. This is classical Christendom, devoid of lifegiving and lifechanging power.

Despite the recognition of the powerful role of parents and other primary care-providers in the faith formation of children and young people, many congregations persist in failing to emphasize the importance of parents in their children, youth, and family ministry programmes. Religious education programmes deployed at church often operate in isolation from the home, not as an extension of the home. Many parents do not know what their children are learning at Sunday school or confirmation, let alone participate in intergenerational or family religious education programmes. Moreover, parents are not equipped with the sense that they are primarily responsible for the faith formation. (Bunge, 2008: 349). Bunge continues that it is imperative that congregations include parents and primary care-providers in their programmes, and emphasize that faith formation is a cooperative

effort between home and congregation. Congregations should persist in finding ways and means to engage and support parents to such extent that faith formation becomes vested as part of everyday life and practice. Her criticism of the North American context is almost equally applicable to the South African mainline denominations.

3.3.2 Irreverent perceptions of the Church

When author David Kinnaman studied the perceptions of persons 18 to 29 years of age, pertaining to Christianity for the writing of his book 'UnChristian', one of the salient features he encountered was that the majority of those persons held the opinion that Christianity was hypocritical. 85% of young people who are not Christians, nevertheless had sufficient exposure to Christians and churches so as to conclude that present-day Christianity is hypocritical. This negative perception has been similarly expressed by young churchgoers of whose ranks almost half agreed that Christianity was hypocritical (47%). (Kinnaman, 2013: 42) Many of these young adults believe Christianity is hypocritical because the version of Christianity they experienced was something that was "done" only at church and not at home. Children have not experienced the benefit of religious living and therefore the joy it brings.

Religion has become one of a number of tools possibly to be found in a person's toolbox of life - a mere instrument. It is supposed to support people in certain ways and/or in certain situations for instance to be happy, to overcome problems, to be a good person and to comfort us during trying times. In this regard, Christian Smith concludes that: "For most U.S. teenagers, religion is something to personally believe in that makes one feel good and resolves one's problems. For most, it is not an entire way of life or a disciplined practice that makes hard demands of or changes people. Stated differently, for many U.S. teenagers, God is treated as something like a cosmic therapist or counsellor, a ready and competent helper who responds in times of trouble but who does not particularly ask for devotion or obedience." (Smith, 2005: e-source). Viewed as such they "believe" for what they can get out of the deal. And if God does not conform to their expectations, they will easily drop the "faith." Smith states that what their interviews almost never uncovered among teens, was a view that religion summons people to embrace an obedience to truth regardless of the

personal consequences or rewards. Hardly any teens aired their views directly on more complex religious subjects such as repentance, love of neighbour, social justice, unmerited grace, self-discipline, humility, the costs of discipleship, dying to self, the sovereignty of God, personal holiness, the struggles of sanctification, glorifying God in suffering, hungering for righteousness, or any other of a number of historically key ideas in America's main religious tradition, namely Christianity. What very few U.S. teens seem to believe, to put it one way, is that religion is about orienting people to the authoritative will and purposes of God or about serious, life-changing participation in the practices of the community of people who inherit the religio-cultural and ethical tradition. "As far as we could discern, what most teens appear to believe instead is that religion is about God responding to the authoritative desires and feelings of people. In simple terms, religion is essentially a tool for people to use to get what they want, as determined not by their religion but by their individual feelings and desires." (Smith, 2005: e-source)

Smith furthermore concludes that the de facto dominant religion among contemporary U.S. teenagers is what might well be called "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." The creed of this religion, as codified from what emerged from their interviews, resembles something akin to:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die. Such a de facto creed is particularly evident among mainstream Protestant and Catholic youth. (Smith, 2005: e-source)

When a congregation — intentionally or not — assumes the family's responsibilities in the arena of spiritually nurturing children, it fosters an unhealthy dependence upon the church to relieve the family of its biblical responsibility. (Barna, 2003: e-source). They relegate themselves to be merely another tool that parents might or might not use. Even more disconcerting, this fallacy creates a template that these recipients might follow in the future when they become parents.

3.3.3 Modern lifestyle issues

Television and the mass media certainly feature among the numerous factors to be considered when we are looking for reasons why our faith is not taking hold in the younger generations: George Barna points out: "Kids ages two to seven average nearly 25 hours per week of mass media intake; the figure balloons to almost 48 hours each week among those ages eight to thirteen." Evidence of the changing times and the new generation in place is the favourite medium of all: The Internet. According to 54% of kids under the age of eight and 73% of kids ages eight to twelve years old they spend more time on the Internet than on television. (Barna, 2003: e-source) Sociologist, Smith adds to this: the average American teenager watches 21 hours of television per week and views 360 000 television advertisements before graduating from high school. Furthermore, 65% of kids aged 8 to 18 years, have television sets in their bedrooms, quotes Smith. (Smith, 2005: e-source) That kind of exposure dwarfs the exposure to religious influences that even the most religiously active teenager might encounter. Needless to say, this volume of exposure changes the foundations on which faith is based namely a biblical worldview. On the other hand, the NSYR data show that the most religiously involved American teens appear to watch less television during the week and over the weekends and are much less likely to watch R-rated movies. They are also less likely to use the Internet to view pornographic Web sites and on average watch fewer pornographic movies, videos, and cable programmes per year. Finally, they spend considerably less time playing action video games. (Smith, 2005: e-source)

Faith mirrors culture. Actually, the faith that teenagers develop during adolescence, serves as a kind of barometer of the religious inclinations of the culture that surrounds them, giving parents, pastors, teachers, campus ministers, youth pastors, and anyone else who works closely with teenagers fifty-yard-line seats from which to watch America's religious future take shape. (Dean, 2010: 9) Already in the 1960's the Report of the Youth Study Commission of the NG Kerk reported that the process of secularization leads to alienation: Alienation from God, and from human-relationships, where people live only for their own interests and they become de-Christianised. In other words, they don't believe anymore, and all Christian values are eliminated from life. (Youth Study Commission, 1966: 38)

The influence of mass media is most acute in children between the ages of 5 to 12 years. If you endeavour to shape a person's life—whenever you are most concerned about his or her moral, spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional or economic development—it is during these crucial eight years that lifelong habits, values, beliefs and attitudes are formed. (Barna, 2003: e-source) The negative result obtained from spending time with mass media, is that it replaces time spent with the family. In 1997 Search Institute conducted a survey of high school students, of which 86% stated that they felt disconnected from and adults, and that they feel devalued by those adults. Only 22% of those high school students said they could communicate positively with their own parents. (Freudenburg, 1998: e-source)

3.3.4 Family-related issues

When it concerns our failure to pass on the faith to the next generation, the culprit that is fingered the most, is definitely the collapse of the nuclear family. Mark DeVries states bluntly that: “one of my working assumptions is that the contemporary crisis in youth ministry has little to do with programming, and everything to do with families.” (DeVries, 2004: e-source) David Popenoe, professor of sociology at Rutgers, claims that during the past 25 years, family decline in the United States, as in other industrialized societies, has been both steeper and more alarming than during any other quarter century in American history. (Popenoe, 1998: 17) Although they might not be using the term "decline," some scholars now agree, with a growing tinge of pessimism, that the family during this period has undergone a social transformation. Some scholars refer to "dramatic and unparalleled changes," while others refer to "a veritable revolution." (Blankenhorn, 1991: 39)

Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University lists nine cultural shifts that have taken place during the past generation, comprising changes which have increasingly separated children and youth from the world of adults, especially the adults within their own families:

- a Fathers' occupational choices which take them from home for lengthy periods of time,
- b An increase in the number of mothers working away from home,
- c A critical escalation in the divorce rate,

- d A rapid increase in the number of single-parent families,
- e A gradual decline in the numbers of the extended family,
- f The evolution of the physical environment of the home relative to family rooms, playrooms and master bedrooms,
- g The substitution of adults by the peer group,
- h The isolation of children from the work environment,
- i The insulation of schools from the remainder of society.

This last-mentioned factor induced Bronfenbrenner to describe the current U.S. educational system as "one of the most potent breeding grounds for alienation in American society". In neighbourhoods, schools, social activities, their own families and even at church, young people are afforded less and less opportunity to be with adults. (Bronfenbrenner, 1974: 60)

As compared with previous years, the structure of the Western family has become noticeably more complicated in recent decades. The rise in rates of marital separation, divorce, remarriage, single parenthood, and cohabitation of unmarried partners has created significant numbers of American teenagers living in family forms other than nuclear families involving two married parents of children. This is a trend evidenced all over the world. Do family structure variations make for any difference in levels of teenage religiosity? Are adolescent youth in certain family types more or less likely to be religiously involved? According to the findings, the answer is positive. In their epic work SOULSEARCHING, Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist found that the U.S. teenagers who are most likely to be more highly religious are those whose residential parents, mostly both biological parents but also including step-parents, are married. The reasons explaining any family structure association with religiosity are not hard to imagine. Parental separation and divorce are disruptive life course events that usually restructure relational networks and generally depress religious participation. Divorce and the death of a parent often precipitate emotional crises for parents and children alike, which can be expressed as resentment or anger toward God. Many religious traditions also oppose cohabitation, birth out of wedlock, and divorce, and so, intentionally, or not, likely raise the discomfort level for potential adherents in those life situations who are religiously involved. Furthermore, as a matter of parental attention and family resources, it is generally more difficult for one parent to mobilize and sustain family congregational religious involvements than it is for two parents. Finally, it may be

that some religious traditions exert on-going moral and ideological influences on their adherents that actually reduce their readiness personally to consider cohabitation, separation, divorce, and birth out of wedlock. (Smith, 2005: e-source)

According to the research of the Baylor College of Medicine, "Children in step-families have more behaviour problems, less pro-social behaviour, and more life stress than children in nuclear families." Similar research (from Princeton, the University of Wisconsin, and Louisiana State University) shows that youth who grow up in step-families or single-parent families are much more likely to drop out of school than those who grow up with both parents. And according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, adolescents who are not living with two biological or adoptive parents are between 50% and 150% more likely to use drugs or need treatment for addiction.' (Strommen, 1985: 64) Bengtson, in referring to his research, reports: "The transmission of faith is severely interrupted by divorce: In our study, divorce frequently disrupted religious transmission to the next generation, even if the parents were similar in their religious identity." (Bengtson, 2013: 128) Don Browning notes that children (especially young boys) living remote from their biological fathers, on average, experience more difficulties in life. They are more often jailed, perform more poorly at school, and have more babies out of wedlock, suffer mental and physical abuse more frequently, have more difficulties getting jobs, and have more problems with successfully forming stable families in adulthood. (Browning, 2005: 2)

"Good family process is important, but on the whole intact married couples do a better job of it", says Browning. (Browning, 2003: 8) Why? They are on average more invested in both their children and each other. The Bible's long march toward endorsing monogamy and its caution about divorce, leads to much the same position. Therefore, the South African statistics are so compelling. In a research paper by the South African Institute of Race Relations named: First steps to healing the SA Family, these statistics are given (Holborn & Eddy, 2011: 2):

- * Only 35% of children in SA grows up with both biological parents in the home.
- * The percentage of children with absent fathers, jumped from 46% (1996) to 52% (2009)
- * 44% of children living in urban areas, live with single parents.
- * There are approximately 1,4 million aids orphans in SA.

* Only 34% of children live in a household where at least one of the parents has a fixed income.

A family is definitely not a static or one-dimensional reality, claims Cloete. (Cloete, 2016: 3) She refers to the abovementioned study of Holborn and Eddy indicating that the 'typical child' in South Africa is raised by a mother in a single-parent household, or by unemployed parents or adults. The HIV pandemic and violence are some of the contributing factors towards the high counts of child-headed households in South Africa. The evidence is clear that the nuclear household is not the norm in a developing country like South Africa.

Bengtson shows another concern, namely that part of this problem of how family-related issues can prevent the transfer of faith to a next generation, is seated in mixed-faith marriages. Regarding same-faith marriages, 68% of G3 parents have G4 adult children who share their religious tradition. For interfaith parental marriages, by contrast, only 38% of parents have adult children who share either the father's (40%) or the mother's (36%) religious tradition. (Bengtson, 2013: e-source)

Up until now, this study has scrutinized divorce, separation of children from their parents, step-families and mixed-faith parents, as reasons for the decline of religious transmission. However, even in households where none of those factors presents themselves, additional reasons are found why faith is not transmitted effectively. Search Institute conducted a nationwide survey of over 11 000 participants representing 561 congregations across six different denominations. The results are revealing:

- Only 12% of youth have a regular dialogue with their mother on faith and/or life issues.
- Only 5% of youth have a regular dialogue with their father on faith and/or life issues.
- Only 9% of youth have experienced regular reading of the Bible and devotions at home.
- Only 12% of youth have witnessed a servanthood event with a parent as an action of faith (Martinson, 2010: 292)

George Barna confirmed the above-mentioned findings by virtue of his research for his book *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*: "We discovered that in a typical week, fewer than 10% of parents who regularly attend

church with their kids read the Bible together, pray together (other than at mealtimes) or participate in an act of service as a family unit. Even fewer families—1 out of every 20—have any type of worship experience together with their kids, other than while they are at church during a typical month.” (Barna, 2003: e-source)

In a South African context, these above-mentioned data are supported. Nel and Van der Westhuizen report that amongst churchgoing young people, * 41% reported conducting regular devotions at home, * 65% talks about their faith, at home, * 19% have never conversed with their parents regarding their baptism, * 58% reports that their mother had shared her story of faith with them, and * 47% reports that their dad had never shared his story of faith with them. (Nel & Van der Westhuizen, 2015: 28) While these kids are still attending church services and are very involved in church activities, the essential faith practices at home are lacking. It is very clear that these parents are not negatively or neutrally attuned to the faith as they appear to be engaged to a certain extent, but they nevertheless do not extend faith formation to their daily lives. This situation naturally begs for the answer to the question: Why? These parents reply to this question by referring to an old paradigm which prevails in these churches: church centred, home supported faith formation. The idea is still alive and well that ‘the church should form the faith in my child. I will support by taking my child to church and make sure that he complies with all that the church expects of him’.

Therefore, although we might talk about being pro-family, most of the structures and routines of western households actually pull families apart regularly and effectively. Our daily work and education systems separate family members for most daytime hours of every weekday. Day care centers and pre-schools remove children from their parents at a very young age. After school, many parents, middle-class parents particularly, schedule their children’s lives with so many programmed activities that they find themselves with very little unstructured time simply to spend together as families. A minority of families with teenagers take most of their dinners together. Additionally, our legal systems and cultural practices pertaining to divorce, make it clear that the keeping of families intact, is by no means a particularly high societal priority.

It appears that teens in family situations involving greater distance and remoteness from parents (spatially and spiritually), feel relatively unloved, not

understood, and not paid attention to by their parents. When the close ties between teens and both parents break down, it appears that these teens are more likely to experiment with or practice the spiritualities of religions other than their own. (Smith, 2005: e-source) Their study revealed that significant numbers of teens presently live their lives with little but the most distant adult direction and oversight. They spend the greater part of most weekdays in schools surrounded almost exclusively by their peers. Their parents are working and otherwise busy. Members of their extended family live in distant cities. Their neighbours tend to avoid becoming involved. Their teachers are largely preoccupied with discipline, classroom instruction, and grading.

Irrespective of how many church leaders preach about the need for parents to personally invest in the spiritual growth of children, adults tend to revert to what was modelled for them, notably that transporting the kids to church and occasional religious events is sufficient. “After all,” explained one mother, echoing a sentiment that has become a very common reply emerging from our research, “that’s what my parents did with me and I turned out pretty good.” (Barna, 2003: e-source)

Parents often seem bent on ensuring that the next generation will have a better life than did the preceding generations — the ability to live “the good life.” But we define that life as the presence of comfort and security combined with the absence of hardship and disappointment. Well-intentioned parents often try to buy experiences and environments that foster a soft and satisfying lifestyle for their progeny. In contrast, a biblical understanding of “the good life” is one that provides and exploits opportunities in order to experience, obey and serve God and other people. (Barna, 2003: e-source) Barna summarises it as follows: “Most church-going parents are neither spiritually mature nor spiritually inclined and, therefore, they do not have a sense of urgency or necessity about raising their kids to be spiritual champions.”

If teenagers are members of the Church of Benign Whatever-ism, it is because we are members as well. The National Study of Youth and Religion’s most incontrovertible finding is that parents generally “get what they are,” in religion as in most things. This holds true for churches as it holds true for families, which implies that we can expect the faith of the young people we love, to reflect the faith we demonstrate to them. Therefore, we need to ask ourselves before we proceed from here: Do we practise that kind of faith that we wish for our children? (Dean,

2010: 39) At the end of their study, Dean concludes that the bad news appears to be the reason for teenagers not being hostile to religion: they simply do not care about religion very much. Religion is not a big deal to them.

When we wrap up this section of our study, we do it with heavy-hearted emotions, because the current research clearly indicates that the transmission of faith from one generation to the next is declining at a rapid rate. If the previous generation has lost the joy of the dance of faith, the next generations will lose their will to even engage. Amongst all the reasons for this decline features the current methodology which the church applies for engaging with its youth, the growing influence that mass media have on the emerging generation and families that are wittingly or unwittingly disrupting the process of passing on the faith. All these factors paint a grim picture of what the future holds for our faith. A new generation is not performing in the dance. They are walking away from the dance floor. Their hearts and passion are focused somewhere else. That situation constitutes the compelling rationale for undertaking this study. So, let us proceed by examining the current state of scholarship, and see if evidence can be found for a better way. In the next section, SRQ2 is addressed: What constitutes a lived faith in children?

3.4 The Normative: The Telos We Would Prefer to See.

We all are born into families. Each family of origin is embedded in a community with shared traditions that shape our togetherness and address the core issues of our collective lives including our notions of God. Our larger family units define the values and traditions which the entire group, neighbourhood or suburb respect and adhere to. In our specific communal cultural contexts, we learn our gender roles as small girls and boys and these roles also inform us about our relationship with God. It is here that we learn to dance. We are socialized into the habits, norms and practices of our faith. Though each of us individually bears witness to whom we know God to be, that knowledge is initially shaped by the stories of our various communities. The language in which we best receive God is the language of family and relationship. (Gallagher, 2012: e-source)

We are subject to a theology of belonging. All people, whether children or adults, belong to the family of God, and therefore to the body of Christ, owing to

God's initiative rather than our own efforts. The theological theme of belonging highlights the communal nature of Christian faith, and raises the question of how congregations are to integrate children with the community of faith to which they theologically belong owing to God's initiative whether or not they are recognized as full members by the ecclesiastical structure. In their report on Youth to the Synod of the NG Kerk in 1960, the Youth Study Commission highlighted the roles of the mother and the father in the forming-years of a child. Concerning the household, they state: The family creates an atmosphere in which the child grows up, and the child's soul absorbs this atmosphere. This happens through living and being together. Eating together as a family and playing together creates that atmosphere of love and benevolence. Here a child can feel accepted and cared for. In such a situation, home devotions help a child to grow up in God's presence. Without this, a child is raised without God. (Youth Study Commission, 1966: 45)

Viewed from this perspective, Yust (2002:15) proposes the desired norm:

- a. Effective formation of Christian faith requires the engagement of the family and of the congregation as an extended family of faith, in creating opportunities for relationships with a multiplicity of adults who are also being formed in faith.
- b. Children should be accepted for who they are, and be encouraged to participate in the life of the community (including its leadership) should they have the ability therefore.
- c. Children should be involved in learning contexts that could provide them with resources for acquiring skills in language proficiency, practices, rituals, habits, so as to be enabled to participate with all their skills in the worshipping community.
- d. Children should experience the Christian scriptures as constituting narrative rather than as proof-text or merely as a collection of moral principles. Children must additionally be accorded opportunities for contemplating the way in which their personal story is intertwined with the biblical narrative.
- e. Children should be permitted to encounter the living God directly, mediated only by their own particularity and the various constructs that any individual brings to an experience of the holy.

If so many authors and studies are highlighting the decline of faith in a younger generation, it would benefit us to spend some time for defining what it is that we are aiming for. What do we wish to evidence in our children when the development of their faith is examined? How do we define lived faith?

3.5 The Evidence of Lived Faith in Youth

To Christians, faith implies cleaving to the person, the Godman, of Jesus Christ, and joining a pilgrimage together with other disciples following Him everywhere into the world. Christian formation invites young people into this motley band of pilgrims (dancers entering the perichoresis) and prepares them for receiving the Holy Spirit who calls them, shapes them, and enlists them in God's plan to rectify a capsized world. Teenagers with consequential Christian faith share a profound and personal sense of God's love and forgiveness along this journey. They know that the family stories which the church shares with them along the way, include them as well. These teenagers are confident that Christ has a part for them to play in bringing about God's purposes, and that the journey they embarked on, contributes to God's destination for the world. But such consequential faith, being faith that thrives by confessing a creed, by belonging to a community, and by pursuing God's purpose and demonstrate hope, does not correspond to the faith that the majority of American (or other western teenagers) seem to have adopted, states Dean. (Dean, 2010: 7)

3.5.1 The 8%

One particular method to examine factors shaping religiously committed teens is by focusing on the most highly devoted individuals among them. With reference to the National Survey on Youth and Religion, Smith (2005: e-source) found that only 8% of the abovementioned teens believe in God, attend religious services weekly or more often, testify that faith is extremely important in their lives, regularly participate in religious youth group activities, pray and read the Bible regularly. The study concluded that mature Christian young people:

- Seek spiritual growth, both in privacy and together with others. They contemplate relevant answers to their questions, seek guidance, pursue commitment through conversation, study, reading the Bible, prayer, participating in small groups and visiting retreats among others.
- Are keenly aware of God, and regard God as actively present in their personal lives, the lives of others, and in the world at large.

- Act out of a commitment of faith in Jesus Christ, privately and publicly, through sustained worship, participation in ministry, and leadership in a congregation
 - Turn the Christian faith into a way of life by responding to God's 'call', and by integrating Christian beliefs into conversation, decisions, and actions in daily life
 - Live lives of service by being involved in caring for others and addressing injustice and immorality
 - Reach out to others who are indifferent or in need, by means of prayer, hospitality, conversation, and support
 - Exercise moral responsibility by living with integrity and utilizing faith in making considered moral decisions
 - Speak publicly about faith by speaking openly about Jesus Christ and God's involvement in their own lives and in the world
 - Demonstrate a positive, hopeful spirit toward others and toward life. (Smith, 2005: 80).

At the end of a very extensive study of the religious lives of American teenagers, Smith posed this question: Are religious youth any different from nonreligious youth? Is faith actually consequential in the lives of American teenagers or not? Ironically, although many teens cannot perceive it or are not able to articulate it, the differences between more religious and less religious teenagers in the United States, according to the findings presented in this chapter, are actually significant and consistent across every outcome measure which had been examined, such as risk behaviour, quality of family and adult relationships, moral reasoning and behaviour, community participation, media consumption, sexual activity, and emotional well-being. Religiously active teenagers are in fact quite different from religiously disengaged teens in a host of ways, which suggests that there is definitely something about religious belief and practice that guides adolescents' lives in following positive directions. (Smith, 2005: e-source) This is good news as the Good News still produces good results. Lives do actually change, and there is an alternative to what the current culture is trying to accomplish regarding our youth. Moreover, we, the Church, the Christian parents, hold the key to this better future. After more than 3000 interviews, Smith and his team have created and defined for analysis these four categories:

a. The Devoted (8% of American youth)

Attends religious services weekly or more.

Faith is very or extremely important in everyday life.

Feels very or extremely close to God.

Currently involved in a religious youth group.

Prays a few times a week or more. Reads scripture once or twice a month or more.

b. The Regulars (27% of American youth)

Attends religious services two to three times a month or weekly.

Faith ranges from very to not very important in everyday life.

Closeness to God, youth group involvement, prayer, and scripture reading are variable but less religious than for the Devoted.

c. The Sporadic (17% of American youth)

Attends religious services a few times a year to monthly.

Faith ranges from somewhat to not very important in everyday life.

Closeness to God, youth group involvement, prayer, and scripture reading are variable.

d. The Disengaged (12% of American youth)

Never attends religious services and identifies as not religious.

Faith features somewhat, not very, or not important in everyday life.

Feels only somewhat close to God, or even less close.

Is not involved in a religious youth group.

Prays once to twice a month, or less.

Reads scripture once to twice a month, or less.

It can therefore be declared that 63% of U.S. teens conforms to one of the four abovementioned categories. (Smith, 2005: e-source).

Smith's research enables us to realize that lived faith is not a static phenomenon. It is akin to a scale with different shades of devotion, ranging between disengaged and devout. The position of any individual on this scale would probably never remain fixed at any one point, but would sometimes be found at an extremely devout point, and at other times at a point lower on the scale. The power of Smith's categories is that they provide us with a handle on the concept of lived faith, as it can be defined and measured. Smith clarifies his views on the devout 8% as follows: "Faith for these teenagers is also activated, practiced, and formed through specific religious and spiritual practices. For such teens, faith involves their intentionally engaging in regularly enacted religious habits and works that have theological, spiritual, or moral meanings that form their lives, such as habitually

worshiping with other believers, reading scriptures, praying regularly, practicing confession and forgiveness and reconciliation, engaging in service to others, using and not using one's body in particular ways, tuning into religious music and other religious art forms, and engaging in regular faith education and formation. Religious practices, in short, seem crucial to vibrant religious faith among American teens." (ibid: e-source). They also found that nearly all 'Devoted' teens believe in waiting for marriage to have sex, compared to less than a quarter of the Disengaged who believe the same. Likewise, only 3% of the 'Devoted' believe it is okay for teenagers to have sex if they are "emotionally ready for it," compared to 56% of the Disengaged. With regard to actual physical and sexual behaviour, differences in the teens' beliefs are at least somewhat reflected by differences in their life-styles. (Smith, 2005: e-source)

Moreover, very religious teens appear to be no more likely than less religious teens to experience feelings of guilt, popular stereotypes notwithstanding. The more religious teens are also more likely to think about and make plans for the future, as well as to contemplate the meaning of life. It appears that the more religious teens less often regard life as meaningless than the less religious teens do. Furthermore, in terms of every measure applied, teen religious zeal and involvement are positively associated with greater well-being and more positive perceptions of and attitudes about present and future life. These findings relate to the seven control variables listed above.

What about teenagers' relationships with their parents and siblings? Does religion appear to make a significant difference? Devoted and Regular teens are significantly more likely than 'Disengaged' teens to feel close to, get along with, and hang out and have fun with both their mothers and their fathers. Both Devoted and Regular teens are also more likely than the Disengaged to sense that their parents understand them, love and accept them for who they are, and pay enough attention to them. The more religious teens are least likely to hold the opinion that their parents grant them either too much or too little freedom to develop and express their own views about important issues, and therefore they are most likely to concede that their parents allow them the right amount of freedom. Moreover, the Devoted and Regulars tend to take more dinners per week together with one or both of their parents than the Disengaged do. (ibid: e-source).

The 8% at the top shows a specific understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. As Nel states: “Jesus neither merely conveys information, nor does he tend to enshrine reigning attitudes. Rather, he seeks to awaken an unconditional dedication to, and bonding with, himself. (Nel, 2009: 100) He explains that this noun refers to those who are committed to Jesus as their master or rabbi. Such is, indeed, the main point of New Testament discipleship – ‘disciple’ implies the existence of a personal bond, which determines the whole life of the individual.

There is a close correlation between the statistics obtained from the USA and those of South Africa. We find that the Devoted teens comprise the group that professes to read the Bible every day (46%), those who pray every day – apart from praying at mealtimes (73%), and attend church at least once a week (42%). These statistics might appear to be considerably better than those for the USA, but the sampling frame was done differently. The SA research was not executed with the aid of a sample pertaining to the general populace (as the NSYR did), but with the aid of a sample pertaining to active members of mainstream churches in South Africa. (Nel & Van der Westhuizen, 2015: 70) Both these studies shed some light on the phenomenon of lived faith, and it’s influence on the behaviour of youth. This distinct different way of life, may further be discerned through the use of religious language.

3.5.2 Religious Language

Conversational Christianity, suggests Dean, akin to conversational French, requires immersion in a culture where the language is spoken, as well as first-hand practice using the language with native speakers. (Dean, 2010: 144). Smith and Denton hypothesized regarding the very same issue, and found that the youth they interviewed were inarticulate on matters of faith because no one had taught them how to talk about their faith, or provided opportunities for practising the usage of a vocabulary of the faith. With regard to a striking number of teenagers, it appeared from discussions during individual interviews, that that was the first time ever that any adult enquired from them as to what they believed, and why it mattered to them.

Teenagers who have trouble articulating what they believe about God also seem to have trouble forging a significant connection to God, and young persons who do not have a language for Christ, are unlikely to imagine an identity in Christ. The practical theologian Thomas G. Long points out that we do not merely say those things that we already believe. To the contrary, saying things out loud is part of how we come to believe. We talk our way toward belief, talk our way from tentative belief through doubt to firmer belief, talk our way toward believing more fully, more clearly, and more deeply. Putting things into words is one of the ways we acquire knowledge, passion, and conviction. Long contends that we “talk ourselves into being Christian,” which means that talking about Jesus Christ actually deepens our identity as people who follow him, while simultaneously extending Christ’s call to others. (Long, 2005: 235)

The earliest form of discipleship education (and, as Paul’s relationship with young Timothy reveals, the earliest form of youth ministry) was apprenticeship. Talking about Jesus is no substitute for following him, for Timothy or for us; yet talking about Jesus is necessary to claim and confess our identity in Christ, and to discern through the community of faith the footsteps we should follow. People who “speak Christian,” as Hauerwas puts it, speak the truth in love; it is this speech, not doctrinal sophistication or facile God-talk, that marks the mature follower of Jesus. Young people who learn to speak Christian learn it from experienced Christians. Youth are apprentices of a community which talks about Jesus, where people testify to what it costs to love Him and to love others because of Him. Most teenagers have few structured opportunities to eavesdrop the grammar, vocabularies, habits, virtues, or practices of mature Christian adults. (Dean, 2010: 151)

Long before we find God in a structure, a place of worship, or at Sunday school, we find God in the face of a loving parent, or perhaps in the tender touch of a grandparent. Alternatively, we find God in the conversations about life, and the meaning of existence, inclusive of the good and the bad, conversations pertaining to the faith and references to the Bible, and God’s great deeds of the past.

God is in our stories. Our theology— our God story— is embedded in our creation, culture, and family stories. We cannot paint God differently than our experience guides us, colouring God with the language we have learned from our families and communities. If parents intent to instil a lifelong faith in their offspring, a certain way of achieving this requires caring conversations richly laced with faith.

Roland Martinson's view states that our ethos (a way of life) must be accompanied by a grounded mythos (a life perspective). Whatever else families are doing, whether intentionally or not, whether constructively or not, families are passing on values and faith of one kind or another to their children. (Martinson, 1997: 3)

Firet has this to add: This appears most clearly in the family where the upbringing, and hence the didache, begins and belongs ... The "transfer of dedication" consists especially in the initiation of the child into the story of Yahweh and his people: it implicates him personally so that it becomes his story. The child is initiated into the story with a view of where he has to go. The "way" did not begin when he was born: it started with the Exodus. He was there when it happened ... The didache is not primarily an explication of history, or of the words and works of Yahweh. It is first of all the act of implicating the young Israelite in the story of Salvation. He learns to say and experience "we" – the "we" of the covenant. (Firet, 1986: 54)

"Religious education and religious formation are sometimes understood as processes for transmitting the central beliefs and practices of a religious tradition. Religious education is, in my view, however, the re-asking and re-engagement of the depth questions a religious tradition has asked," says Carol Lakey Hess (Cahalan & Hess, 2008: 38) Throughout all children's development, there are times when they continually ask questions about almost everything, religion included. Quite often parents are not comfortable with answering these questions, and they do not encourage the asking of questions. Hess points to Paulo Freire's philosophy that all education commences with asking questions. Curiosity should be encouraged and developed. The Church can teach parents to be comfortable in this space where questions abound. Not all questions need to be answered immediately. Sometimes we grapple with such questions over a longer period. Sometimes we need asking those questions from the Bible text or from our faith tradition and see what we find. In such a way children are incorporated into the faith and become proficient in mastering the language, the stories, and the fundamental truths for entrenching their faith.

At the end of this particular section, it becomes clear that a number of youngsters have indeed joined in the dance. They are actually dancing quite well. The characteristics of lived faith are clearly evidenced in their daily lives, and in the rationale underlying their conduct. They display a rhythm, and a smooth step that

shows in their habits and practices. For these youngsters the dance is not a foreign, forced experience, as they actually own it. They enjoy the dance and the dance has taken control. The question, however, arises: Why are only these kids dancing, and the others not? What actually inspired them to join the movement and give of themselves to the dance? Let us therefor consider those factors in the following section.

3.6 Factors Affecting Lived Faith in Children.

Mark DeVries states that the theme of family-based youth ministry is that the family and the extended family of the church are the structures (or walls of the canal) that most naturally move a person toward faith maturity. As a teenager moves into adulthood, the extended family of the church will begin to exert the most formative affect on a young person's faith. The primary task of a family-based youth ministry is to "pass the baton" of faith formation to the extended family of the church. Because traditional youth ministry takes place outside these structures, young people in those ministries are more susceptible to the juvenilizing forces of youth culture. (DeVries, 2004: e-source) When a congregation keeps all the youth together in a young "silo", while all the mature adults are worshipping in their own "silo", the young are deprived of the example of mature faith. The dance is disrupted, the routine of faithful perichoresis cannot be observed and transmitted to a next generation. In their Effective Christian Education Study, Search Institute posed the question pertaining to the factors which exert the greatest affect on the faith of school-aged children today. From the total of 11 000 answers received from respondents, one common denominator surfaced: Family religiousness is the most important factor in faith maturity. The particular family experiences which are most closely connected with greater faith maturity, comprise the frequency with which an adolescent talks with mother and father about faith, the frequency of family devotions, and the frequency with which parents and children together are involved in efforts, formal and informal, to help other people. (Benson, 1990: 38) In this section the answers to SRQ3 are going to be explored: What is the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children?

Dean guides our attention to the same direction as Benson and states that the problem might be found in the fact that most youth ministry is not performed by youth ministers. Neither young people nor youth ministry can be separated from the church as a whole, any more than the musculature of the Body of Christ can be separated from its circulatory system. We have known for some time that youth groups do important things for teenagers by providing moral formation, learned competencies, and social and organizational ties. However, youth groups appear to be less effective as catalysts for consequential faith, which is far more likely to take root in the rich relational soil of families, congregations, and mentor relationships where young people can perceive what faithful lives look like, and encounter the people who love them by enacting a larger story of divine care and hope. (Dean, 2010: 11) Holmen summarizes his views by stating that the local church plays a role in the development of children, but its involvement is not the key to success in raising godly children. The critical factor is that what takes place at home. Parents exercise an overwhelmingly significant affect on their children's growth to spiritual maturity. (Holmen, 2010: 10)

Smith makes a very important observation, stating that contrary to popular albeit misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence affecting the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents comprises their parents. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be very influential as well, but normally, parents are most important in forming their children's religious and spiritual lives. (Smith, 2005: e-source). To back up these claims, his data show that approximately three out of four religious teens in the United States consider their own religious beliefs somewhat or very similar to those of their parents. However, their religious beliefs are more similar to their mother's than to their father's beliefs. Only 6% of teens considers their religious beliefs very different from that of their mother and 11% very different from that of their father. (ibid: e-source).

3.7 What Type of Parent is Needed?

Barna describes his views as follows: Parents are normally very influential in shaping the religious and spiritual lives of their teenage children, even though they

might not realize this. It seems that many parents of teens rely primarily on the immediate evidence of the overt attitudes, statements, and sometimes behaviours that their teenage children dole out to them on a daily basis in order to appraise the current level of parental influence. Many of the attitudes and statements that teenagers communicate to their parents, do not exactly express great admiration and gratitude for and readiness to listen to, emulate, or voluntarily obey their parents. Many parents therefore appear to conclude that they have lost their influence in shaping the lives of their teenage children, and that they no longer make any significant difference. Their young have left the dance floor. But for most, this conclusion is mistaken. Teenagers' attitudes, verbal utterances, and immediate behaviour are often not the best indicators for estimating parental influence on their lives. For better or worse, the majority of parents do factually still profoundly influence their adolescents — often to a larger extent than their peers do — notwithstanding their children's apparent resistance and lack of appreciation. This parental influence often affects the religious and spiritual lives of such adolescents as well. By simply living and interacting with their children, most parents establish expectations, define normality, model life practices, set boundaries, and make demands which influence teenagers for the greater good. Most teenagers and their parents might not realize it, but extensive research in the sociology of religion, suggests that the most important social influence in shaping young people's religious lives is the religious life modelled and taught to them by their parents. (Smith, 2005: e-source).

The initial emotional bonds which we form, are those with our parents, and the nature of these bonds affects us throughout our lives. According to many young adults, parents have been the primary influence on their spiritual and religious development, and relations with parents are linked to their first conceptions of God. (Bengtson, 2013: 71) His research shows there is a higher rate of parent – child similarity for those who perceive a close relationship compared to those who sense their relationship is not close. It could therefore be expected that when a child feels close to a parent, such child is more inclined to imitate or model that parent, for instance being highly involved in church activities. Close parent – child bonds are more conducive to religious socialization, and in the absence of close parent – child bonds, this transmission effect is less likely to occur. (ibid: 74). Bengtson explains this even further by stating that a prerequisite for religious transmission, is having

a close bond with one's father as it matters even more so than having a close relationship with the mother. Clearly, the quality of the child's relationship with his or her father is important for the internalization of the parent's religious tradition, beliefs, and practices. (ibid: 76).

During the penultimate decade of the 20th century, Baumrind developed a theory of three basic parenting styles, namely autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. (Miller, 2010: e-source) Her research shows that the social bond strengthens when parents develop a democratic style of parenting in terms of which children are encouraged to participate in socially acceptable patterns of behaviour and motivated to think independently while still respecting authority. Parents support their children by influencing their choices for the good, motivate their children's will-power, but stay firmly in control. In 2000, Dudley & Wisbey performed a survey which confirmed the above-mentioned facts. It was established that of all children growing up in religious households, those who reportedly were growing up with parents who exerted "affectionate constraint," a mixture of care and control, produced the largest percentage of enthusiastic members and the fewest drop-outs. (Dudley & Wisbey, 2000: 39)

A study by the National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) underscores the benefit of parental involvement. The survey of 1,115 teenagers revealed a clear linkage between certain types of parental behaviour and children who are likely to be free from chemical dependency. A sampling of the abovementioned parental habits, includes:

1. Parents are involved in the lives of their teens, including assisting with homework, and/or attending the teens' extracurricular activities.
2. They take at least five sit-down meals together with their children weekly.
3. They attend religious services together with their teens.
4. They set curfews for adherence by their children.
5. Parents regard drug use as being dangerous and morally wrong.' (DeVries, 2004: e-source).

The NSYR clearly shows that the importance of faith to teenagers closely tracks the importance of faith to their parents. Parents to whom religious faith is quite important are thus likely to be raising teenagers to whom faith is also quite important. (Smith, 2005: e-source). Commenting on the abovementioned findings, Dean states the following observations: "The majority of young people who say

religion is important to them come from families who have intentionally invested in their children's religious formation, and come from congregations where they feel at least superficially connected to God, even when their theology does not live up to church teachings." (Dean, 2010: 27). Highly devoted teens belonged to families and faith communities that shaped and supported their understanding of the nature of the God whom they belong to, why they are on earth, and where they are going in life. (ibid: 42).

In order to define specific social and personal factors that distinguish the actions of highly devoted religious teens, Smith found the following concerning parent religiosity: Teens with parents who attend religious services more often and to whom faith is more important, are more likely to be religiously devoted than teens whose parents attend church less often and to whom faith is less important. Concerning the relationship of teenagers with their parents: Teens who declare that their parents tend to understand, love, or pay attention to them more, are more likely to be religiously devoted compared to teens who say their parents tend not to understand, love, and pay attention to them. Concerning parental marital status: Teens with married parents are more likely to be religiously devoted than teens with divorced parents. (Smith, 2005: e-source).

Among their findings, the NYSR reported that the majority of U.S. teenagers follow in the footsteps of their parents regarding religion. Contrary to popular opinion, teenagers tend to go along with the religious beliefs and level of commitment of their parents, not necessarily because they buy into it, but because they do not consider religion worth arguing about. Religion seldom appears to be a source of conflict for teenagers. As Smith points out, the conventional nature of young people's faith lends itself to routine and inertia. While the study did not interview parents about their own faith beyond demographic identification, the evidence suggests that religious commitment, understanding, and practice among teenagers reflect, to an astonishing degree, those of their parents. (Dean, 2010: e-source). Furthermore, the single most important influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents seem to be their parents. The best social predictor of what a teenager's religious life would turn out to be, is to scrutinize their parents' religious lives. By and large, notes the study, parents "will get what they are." While grandparents, other relatives, mentors, and youth ministers might be very influential, parents are most important in forming their children's spirituality. The

study concludes that: “Teenagers do not seem very reflective about or appreciative of this fact.” (ibid: e-source).

3.8 The Elements of Lived Faith Parents Pass On

What are we aiming at in faith formation? Alternatively, to use our metaphor, what kind of dance would we like our next generation to perform? How would their styling, steps and poise be exhibited? What would the judges perceive while the dancers are performing? Let us therefore take a closer look at the desired outcome of faith formation as this study grapples with SRQ2: What constitutes a lived faith in children?

3.8.1 Family devotions

Reflecting on his research in faith practices, sociologist Robert Wuthnow shares his views: “Effective religious socialization comes about through embedded practices; that is, specific, deliberate religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family routines, of eating and sleeping, of having conversations, of adoring spaces in which people live, of celebrating the holidays and of being part of a community.” (Wuthnow, 1999: xxxi) The Effective Christian Education study found that families which express faith, partake of the following activities: often have family devotions, Bible reading at home, and prayer. Furthermore, the abovementioned study found that youth in families which often express faith, partake of the following activities twice as often as those families which do not express faith: Bible reading and prayer in privacy, reading and studying the Christian faith, and they are spiritually moved by the beauty of God’s creation, and have often felt God’s presence in their lives.

It is obvious that a regular reading of the Bible in the home links the child to the stories, the symbols, and practices of their faith. It forms the Christian identity within them and shapes their actions through the values and patterns of thought that have been formed. On this topic, David Anderson has this to say:” The Christian faith shapes the whole of our lives and involves a lifetime of study, reflection, and prayer. Family devotions provide a way to learn more about the Bible and Christian tradition as a family, and apply the teachings to daily life as a follower of Jesus

Christ. This understanding of devotional life includes public worship, bedtime prayers, Bible reading, table grace, and praying alone at any time of the day and night.” (Anderson, 2003: 178)

Lawrence O. Richards elucidates this point when stating that “the modelling of committed parents, the intimacy of family love, and the opportunity to see the implications of God’s laws as they were followed, together constituted the most powerful educational design ever devised.” (Richards, 1991: 123) Clearly then, lived faith constitutes spending time with the Bible and prayer.

One of the side by-products from having regular home devotions is that it contributes to developing a Biblical worldview, which enables our young people to quickly size up a situation and respond in ways that are consistent with what they believe to be appropriate. Unfortunately, in the majority of households the worldview is shaped by the media and television. This default is corrected by a parent who acts as a spiritual leader so as to intentionally and strategically lead a young person through a process designed to guide the youth in gaining a worldview which is consistent with God’s truths, principles and desires for His creation.

Barna has found that the cornerstones for developing a Biblical worldview comprises:

Cornerstone 1: The Bible.

Cornerstone 2: A Commanding Knowledge of Biblical Content.

Cornerstone 3: The Identification of Organizing Principles.

Cornerstone 4: A Burning Desire to Obey God.

His research concluded that the majority of churches teach good Biblical content but unfortunately fail to tie it together into a logical and comprehensive framework that makes sense and provides practical counsel. (Barna, 2003: e-source) Regular family devotions, coupled with caring conversations about life, and how they relate to our faith, comprise the absolutely best way for developing such a foundational Biblical worldview.

“Weltanschauung” (philosophical view of life) is the term used by Nash when he referred to the conceptual scheme people use to make their judgements. This becomes the template people use to evaluate the world around them and establish how it functions. This perception is useful, because it answers fundamental questions concerning the meaning of life, God, knowledge, morality. (Nash, 1992: 102). Regular home devotions are the key to regulating children’s worldview.

3.8.2 Modelled Christian Behaviour

Intergenerational religious momentum is valued highly in many families. In his longitudinal study of four generations, spanning more than 40 years, Bengtson found that parents invest a great amount of time and effort encouraging their children to stay in the faith. Of significant importance are parental behaviourism that influences religious development. The first category we call “role modelling”—what parents do in setting examples for religious practice and belief, such as attending church regularly, participating in church activities, and encouraging faith development at home through prayers, scripture reading, and religious storytelling. This is what churches and religious leaders teach parents to do. “Moreover, it is important, as seen from our interviews, that parents show consistency between belief and practice: ‘walking the walk and not just talking the talk,’” (Bengtson, 2013: e-source) Certainly, then, one factor is parental behaviour relative to role modelling and consistency. If the parents themselves are not involved in religious activities, and if their actions are not consistent with what they preach, children are rarely motivated to follow in their parents’ religious footsteps.

Barna, in his research, also found an astounding level of consistency between the religious beliefs of adults and children. It should, however, be noted that it appears to be evident that the relative impact of these elements varies according to a person’s age, life stage, family character, and socio-economic standing. In other words, parents exert a much greater level of influence on a child who is two or three years of age than television and/or movies do. However, we find that the opposite is often true by the time the child has reached the age of 16 years. The rule of thumb, therefore, that we have arrived at, would be that parents are well-advised to optimize their influence while the child is relatively young. The older a child gets, the more distracted and vulnerable he or she becomes to non-family influences. (Barna, 2003: e-source)

In a study undertaken with 180 highly religious families, Dollahite and Marks (2009) presented a framework suggesting that religion consists of at least three dimensions of experience:

(a) spiritual beliefs (beliefs, framework, meanings, and perspectives that are faith-based);

(b) religious practices (expressions of faith such as prayer, scripture study, rituals, traditions, or abstinences that are religiously grounded);

(c) faith communities (support, involvement, and relationships rooted in one's congregation or less formal religious community).

Their definition of highly religious families, included:

(a) families relying on God or God's word for support, guidance, and strength;

(b) families sanctifying the family by living religion at home;

(c) families resolving conflict through prayer, repentance and forgiveness;

(d) families loving and serving others in the family, faith community and broader community;

(e) families overcoming challenges and trials through shared faith;

(f) families abstaining from proscribed activities and substances;

(g) families sacrificing time, money, comfort, and convenience;

(h) families nurturing spiritual observance and growth through teaching, example, and discussion;

(i) families obeying God, prophets, parents and Commandments; and

(j) families placing faith and family foremost of personal or secular interests.

Dollahite and Marks have established that these families live faith at home by integrating religious ideas and ideals into home and family life so as to ensure that religion is not solely restricted to a place of worship, or compressed into any one single day of the week. Sanctifying the family also includes creating dedicated times, places, and meanings at home by setting aside times for home-based religious activities such as Sabbath day observance, prayers, or reading sacred texts together, as well as finding sacred meaning in daily domestic activities.

Those parents nurtured spiritual observance and growth through teaching, example, and discussion, and developed their children's spirituality through teaching religious values, "practicing what you preach," and engaging in discussions about the meanings, purposes, importance, complexities, joys, and challenges of religious and spiritual issues. (Dollahite & Marks, 2009: 380)

While the research bears out that modelled parental behaviour rubs off on their children, another factor seems to be operative here. This factor concerns the quality of the parent-child relationship, or what Bengtson calls "intergenerational solidarity." The data indicate that the affective (emotional) dimension of parental behaviour is very important in influencing religious transmission. Parents who are

warm and affirming are more likely to have children who follow them; parents who are cold or authoritarian, ambivalent or distracted, are less likely to have their children following them. Regarding each of the abovementioned dimensions of religiosity, there appears to be a higher rate of parent–child similarity among those who perceive a close relationship, compared to those who perceive that their relationship is not close. It is thus likely that when a child feels close to a parent, he or she is more likely to imitate or model that parent, for example, being highly involved in church. Close parent–child bonds are more conducive to religious socialization, and in the absence of close parent–child bonds, this transmission effect is less likely to occur. (Bengtson, 2013: e-source)

Data obtained from both the LSOG (Longitudinal Survey of Generations) survey and our own interviews indicate that parents who interact with their children during their formative years in a warm, affirming, and respectful manner are more likely to pass on their religious tradition, beliefs, and practices. (ibid: e-source) The quality of the parent–child relationship directly affects how much influence mothers and fathers have on their children’s religious orientations in adulthood and on religious continuity or discontinuity across generations. The young adults featuring as subjects for our study, who felt particularly close to one or both parents, were most likely to have inherited that parent’s religious orientations.

There is, however, a flipside to this notion. Should the quality of the parent–child relationship affect the adoption of the parents’ religion by their children, then, in contrast, a relationship that was perceived as cold or ambivalent reduced the likelihood of cross-generational religious inheritance, according to Bengtson.

Whereas parental warmth appears to be the key for successful transmission of faith, we identified four categories of parenting that were related to inter-generational continuity or discontinuity of faith:

- (a) warm, affirming parenting that the child sees as a consistently close relationship with one or usually both parents;
- (b) cold, distant, or authoritarian parenting;
- (c) ambivalent or mixed-message parenting, when a parent is perceived as sometimes warm, sometimes cold, or where one parent is seen as warm and the other as cold or distant;
- (d) strained or preoccupied parenting, as when parents are distracted by marital and financial, health, or substance abuse.

Children responded best to parents who were unconditionally supportive, who provided consistent role modelling of religious practices, and who did not force their beliefs or practices on their children. In addition, we found that the most successful parents in religious transmission showed love, respect, and patience for those children who decided to follow a different path in religious matters, who often turned out to be “prodigals” upon returning to the former road. Throughout the study, we found that a distant or non-affirming parent-child relationship — particularly where a father is concerned, is often mentioned in our interviews as a catalyst for conversion to another faith or dropping out of religion altogether. (ibid: e-source) Sell made this point clearly when he stated that a parent’s love, like God’s, is to be characterized by mercy, acceptance, and forgiveness. (Sell, 1981: 88) He points to the most clear-cut description of parental love that comes from the lips of Jesus, when he tells the parable of the lost son who is welcomed back to the family after he had wasted his inheritance. This is love modeled in actions.

It is worthwhile to highlight what Bengtson says about the role of the dad. For religious transmission, having a close bond with one’s father matters even more than a close relationship with the mother. Clearly, the quality of the child’s relationship with his or her father is important for the internalization of the parent’s religious tradition, beliefs, and practices.

To summarize: it is true that passing on the faith changes lives and makes a difference. The data show that highly devoted teens’ behaviour and attitudes are different from the rest. In addition, there is a high correlation between highly devoted teens’ behaviour, and what happened in their homes while growing up. Loving conversations, discussions involving how faith relates to our everyday lives, devotions, reading the Bible together and prayer with each other, coupled to a strong parental model of Christian living, is a very strong indicator of faith being passed on from one generation to the next.

These youngsters have seen the dance. Their parents have been dancing this perichoresis with passion and joy, and it has been contagious. Moreover, it was not hard for them to pick up on the dance, because they have the example right before their eyes. Should they stumble in their efforts to imitate, they have the helping hand of a loving parent who will hold onto them and direct them as deemed necessary. This is what ought to be happening in every Christian household. The question is: who is responsible for making all this happening? Should we blame

parents for not being knowledgeable? Does the church have a role to play? Could there develop a partnership for the benefit of passing on the faith?

3.9 Does Church Have a Place in Faith Formation?

Up till now this study has been looking into the extent to which families are able to pass on their religious faith to the next generation in today's rapidly changing society. It has been shown that some families are more successful in transferring their deepest-held beliefs to their children. This begs the question: Why are some families able to achieve their goal of transmitting their faith to their children while others are not? This leads to the next point, namely considering the next Research Question, SRQ4: What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children?

Even though there are huge warning lights flickering, yet the research shows that parents who value their own faith, invest considerable effort in educating their children in that faith, by both word and example. In so doing, they hope to enhance the likelihood of transmitting their religious faith to their children. Sociologist Vern Bengtson unpacked this concept of faith so as to render four distinct aspects: religious intensity ("How religious would you say you are?"); religious participation (frequency of religious service attendance); agreement with a literal or conservative interpretation of the Bible; and agreement with the importance of religion in civic or public life. He shows that relative to each of the years 1970 and 2005, there is statistically significant similarity between parents and their young adult children relative to all of the four aspects of religiosity. This is strong evidence for religious transmission. (Bengtson, 2013: 55).

"It is interesting," Bengtson adds, "that parent-child similarity is highest for those who report attending religious services frequently (weekly or more often); in 2005, 59 % of parents in this group had children who also attend very frequently." (ibid: 62). Therefore, it is feasible that church attendance still plays a vital role in faith formation. That is exactly what this study wishes to explore next. How does it happen? What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children?

3.9.1 Where does the Church fit in?

Dean (2010: 48) made the following observation from die NSYR: Highly devoted young people seem adept at using at least four cultural tools in ways that mark them as members of their traditions:

- (1) They confess their tradition's creed, or God-story;
- (2) They belong to a community that enacts the God-story;
- (3) They feel called upon by this story to contribute to a larger purpose; and
- (4) They have hope for the future as promised by this story.

Additionally, these youths seem to have families and churches that convincingly demonstrate that these tools do actually matter: as something is gained by using these cultural tools "as we do," whilst something is lost by not using those tools at all. (Dean, 2010: 49) A phrase coined by Bill Hybels is applicable in this regard: "The local church is the hope of the world." (Hybels, 2012) Hybels's sentiment resonates in Dean's observations: When we realize that the local church is the bearer of the Jesus-Story, and we assist youngsters to engage herein, then a new dynamism comes to the fore. The local church carries the good news, and invites individuals and families to participate in this good news. They present a new lifestyle namely that one might become a dedicated follower of Jesus. When people find value in this new way of living, and start living in such a new way, faith is being nurtured in those households. When faith is thus nurtured in the household, it will certainly impact those in the house who are still in their formative years.

It might be helpful to define church here. Throughout this study the term "church" is used in the broader sense: As the worldwide body of Christ. The collective people who claims allegiance to the Lordship of Christ. This is a generic term, because people will look at the local expression of church and they will also call it "church". As part of this generic church, we find the term "denomination". This signifies a specific spiritual tradition, or group of believers as a sub-grouping of the Christian faith. In this respect, people will sometimes mean denomination when referring to church ("In our church we baptize infants"). Then there is the local church. Throughout this study this is referred to as congregation. This is the group of believers in a specific area who get together on a regular basis to share their life of faith. Usually they will have a building and an address where they get together to

worship. And here, again, people will often use 'church' to refer to this local expression of the universal family of God.

When churches start to regard themselves as a vital link in the chain of passing on the faith, they develop new patterns. Dean expands on the type of church that nurtures highly devoted faith: Among other things, they are more likely to appoint full-time youth ministers, have a variety of programmes for teenagers, and opportunities for young people to participate in religious practice and leadership. According to the Exemplary Youth Ministry study, these congregations are also more likely to: • portray God as living, present and active • place a high value on scripture • explain their church's mission, practices and relationships as inspired by "the life and mission of Jesus Christ" • emphasize spiritual growth, discipleship, and vocation • promote outreach and mission • assist teens with developing "a positive, hopeful spirit," "live out a life of service," and "live a Christian moral life." These congregations regard young people, not as moralistic do-gooders, but as Christ's representatives in the world. (Dean, 2010: 83) Cloete quotes Nel when he states that "in a family approach to youth ministry, parents are seen as indispensable partners in ministry, for youth workers will never replace the family context. The family is seen as the primary hermeneutical space where children come to an understanding of themselves, others, the world and God." (Cloete, 2016: 2)

Freudenburg confirms that "the most effective faith formation occurs when parents assume the role of the primary youth ministers in the church, and the family or home is the God-ordained 'institution' for faith-building in children and youth and for the passing on of the faith from one generation to the next." (Freudenburg, 1998: e-source). Freudenburg developed the under-mentioned nine broad questions in order to frame his quest for a family-centered church structure and programming. The questions:

1. In what respects would the Church's vision for ministry need to change?
2. How should the vision and direction for developing faith through families in the church change the methodology in which we exercise Christian education and youth ministry?
3. As a minister of the youth and education in the church, how will my duties change?

4. What kind of continual education will I need in order to prepare for a ministry that puts families at the center of faith development?
5. What does home-centered, church-supported ministry look like when we view it from the perspective of all the church's activities?
6. How would other staff roles need to change?
7. How would the church's faith-development structure need to change?
8. Which are the natural programmes in the marriage and family area would need attention?
9. How should the congregation's vision of what the church is supposed to be, need to change?

“Congregations that have grappled with these questions, and started to prioritize youth ministry and support for their parents, investing in trained and skilled youth group leaders, and making serious efforts to engage and teach adolescents seem much more likely to draw youth into their religious lives and to foster religious and spiritual maturity in their young members. This appears to be true of local congregations, regional organizations such as diocese and state conventions, and entire religious traditions.” (Dean, 2010: e-source) Stated negatively, churches that do not invest in their youth, find that the youth are unlikely to invest in them.

Barna has shown that there are five categories of activity that distinguish effective churches from the typical church. Those categories concern perspectives on the spiritual development of and ministry to children, the investment made in such ministry, methods that facilitate the desired outcomes, the content provided through the ministry and the type of workers recruited and released for rendering service which makes an impact among children. (Barna, 2003: e-source). Here is, however, a huge red flashing warning light! Not all churches are effective in aiding faith development in their young people, or in supporting parents to effect this. Barna found that: • Almost two-thirds (64%) of American Senior Protestant pastors claim that their church is doing an excellent or good job of guiding kids to share their faith in Christ. However, Barna found that a large portion of church kids never succeed in sharing their faith in Christ. • Four-fifths (80%) of their Senior Pastors assert that their church is doing an excellent or good job of enabling kids to understand and engage in worship. Barna's studies among kids show that four out of every five church kids do not know what worship is, and a substantial

majority of them admit that they do not feel they have ever experienced God's presence. • Almost three-quarters (74%) of the pastors interviewed claim that their church is doing an excellent or good job of persuading kids to adopt a Biblical worldview. In spite of the alleged adoption of a Biblical Worldview, we know that less than 5% of church kids who are born again, have acquired a Biblical worldview by the age of 13 years. (Barna, 2003: e-source).

Here, as in all of life, there appears to be truth in the maxim: you will get what you measure. Unfortunately, most parents are pleased simply to have churchgoing children, with the result that only the frequency of their attendance is measured. If the children learn anything of positive value while they are at church, it is deemed a bonus, should it ever be noticed at all. Subconsciously we might also be measuring the children's happiness relative to their church experience, or even good and moral behaviour. Most parents have no set targets of lived faith or spiritual growth to aim for. In terms of Smith's survey, it was established that 18% of parents reported that their congregation is only to a lesser extent or not at all, supportive and helpful. Almost one-quarter (23%) reported that their congregation was somewhat helpful in rendering assistance relative to raising teens in the faith. (Smith, 2005: e-source).

George Barna states: "Our national surveys have shown that while more than 4 out of 5 parents (85%) believe they have the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of their children, more than two out of three of them abdicate that responsibility to their church. Their virtual abandonment of leading their children spiritually is evident in how infrequently they engage in faith-oriented activities with their young ones." (Barna, 2003: e-source) It is evident that there is a tendency for parents to relinquish their obligation for developing the spiritual formation of their young, and to rely more on the church to do the job.

Concerning the role of the faith community, a report from Fuller Theological Seminary titled: *Key Informants of Spiritual Development: Emerging Issues in the Field of Spiritual Development* Faith indicated the key influences in spiritual development. Faith communities and congregations are mentioned as key informants to faith formation. Many practitioners and social scientists agree that it is through this community that spiritual development is able to flourish. A church group helps them express their spirituality in practice, in prayer, and so on, that gives them the sense of a community that shares its belief and its faith. (King et al,

2005: 22) As Root says: The inner reality that relationships in ministry possess offers us more than we see at first glance; in their inner reality relationships are the concrete location of God's presence in our midst. Therefore relationships are transformative to people. (Root, 2007: 10)

Seen in this way, the local congregation in essence includes the faith community as larger family. In an inclusive congregational approach, Nel states, youth ministry is at the very least the mediation of the coming of God to the youths as integral and vital parts of the congregation, through his Word and through the service of people, by means of all modes of ministry, in a differentiated and focused way. (Senter III, 2001: e-source) This brings forward one of the most obvious missing links in the normative argumentation: the issue, notion and nature of relationality in Youth Ministry. As Root describes it: God's being is in the becoming of ministry, and we experience the divine being in the lived act of ministering to us. We take the divine being's form (being conformed to Christ— Christopraxis) by taking on ourselves, through the Spirit, the actions of ministry, by sharing in the hypostatic personal being of our neighbor. (Root, 2014: e-source) Thus the faith community becomes the place where youth can experience the divine. Church becomes the body of Christ.

3.9.2 The Church's first Task: to equip Parents for Faith Formation

Since the National Study of Youth and Religion repeatedly points to adolescents' tendency to mirror the religious lives of their parents, nurturing faith in young people means investing in the faith of their parents and congregations. And when it comes to faith formation, the impact of parents is dramatic. Research currently reveals that parents who simply talk about faith in the home and who involve their children in serving alongside them, can actually double and sometimes triple their children's chances of living out their faith as adults. (Strommen, 2001: 130)

Many parents admit their own inadequacy by either abandoning the religious instruction of their children altogether or transferring the task at hand to church "experts," thus assuming a division of labour in terms of which the parents provide moral support only while qualified church professionals provide their children with

the instruction for faith formation. However, faith is a way of life, not merely a mass of information which should be mastered. This implies that youth groups and church educational programmes, albeit important as they indeed are for social networks, religious information, and opportunities for spiritual reflection, play second fiddle regarding the transmission of faith.

Since, generally, 60% transfer of faith is transferred from the one generation to the next, (Bengtson, 2013: 185) and since each successive generation appears to become increasingly less involved in the Christian Church, hence less devoted to matters of faith at home, increasingly more parents are presently two or even three generations removed from the last generation which can recall its own involvement in faith talk, Bible reading, devotions and prayer at home. The majority of parents who are members of a church, cherish a desire to bring “spirituality,” as they might call it, into the home. However, they have absolutely no idea how this could be achieved as they never before have experienced the issues relative to faith in their homes when they were growing up. “Even the strongest families in your church might surprise you with their lack of ability to talk with their children about faith or even a willingness to pray together as a family,” states Holmen. (Holmen, 2010: 43)

The General Directorate for Catechesis (U.S. Catholic Conference, 1998) defines the family as a domestic church, “that is, in every Christian family the different aspects and functions of the life of the entire church may be reflected: mission, catechesis, witness, prayer, etc. Indeed, in the same way as the church, the family is a place in which the Gospel is transmitted and from which it extends.” (Anslinger, 2003: 34). Nel states it in this way: Disciples in the making, make disciples. For the invitation to be valid and worthy of being extended, the so-called ‘adult’ members of the group of disciples (the congregation) need to understand such a precept. Such an understanding defines a missional people who are serious about converting their own children, as well as the ‘nations’, into disciples. (Nel, 2009: 104) Inevitably, some are closer to the young than others: Parents, whether separated or together, divorced or widowed, broken or in the healing process, are ideally situated to be the invitation. Whoever is related to a child has a God-given relational (covenantal) opportunity to be the invitation. (ibid: 105)

John Chrysostom referred to the family as being a little church or a ‘sacred community’, as quoted by Bunge (2008: 351) In his view, this implied that parents

should read the Bible to their children, pray with them, and be good examples. Furthermore, being a little church implied that the family reaches out to the poor and needy in the community. Chrysostom ranked the neglect of children among the greatest evils and injustices. It is clear from this that the early church understood its role in faith formation as it identified the roles of the parents, and provided those parents with the tools, and it nurtured the expectation for faith formation at home.

3.9.3 A Lesson from the Church of Christ of the Latter-Day Saints

High-boundary religious groups have high rates of transmission. Both in Bengtson's studies and in the NSYR the religious group that stood high above the rest when the retaining of their young in the faith was at stake, happened to be the Mormon Church. Bengtson: We found three factors that seemed to explain their success in passing on the tradition. The first factor relates to the strong and intentional bonds between family and church, in which religious activities are built around family activities with high family involvement in religious education. The second factor is the emphasis on parents' role modelling, evidenced in their investment in the tradition and their articulation of its beliefs. (Members received instruction reverting to Church tradition to raise their children in the faith). The third factor is the value attached to family solidarity, characterized by warm emotional relationships, frequent family interaction, support and assistance. (Bengtson, 2013: 190)

Mormon teenagers tend to be the "spiritual athletes" of their generation, conditioning for an eternal goal with an intensity that requires sacrifice, discipline, and energy. A long time before their classmates are smacking their snooze alarms, more than half of Mormon teenagers are rolling out of bed at 5:00 a.m., every single school day for four years straight, in order to attend seminary. Teaching at the seminary is frequently conducted by a parent, and typically involves reflexive practices including journaling aspects pertaining to life and spiritual growth, as well as practical advice on planning and saving money for subsidizing a two-year mission commitment to service and evangelism. Mormon families also commonly practice family devotions and family home meetings, thereby prioritizing religious conversation at home as well as in church. (Dean, 2010: 51-52) Mormon young people are almost twice as likely as other teenagers to pray with their parents at

times other than meals or worship (79%), and as a family to converse almost daily about God and/or religious issues (74%). In 1970, LDS officials decreed that Monday nights would be constituted as family home evenings, forbidding Monday evening temple and ward activities and creating a curriculum for nuclear families to gather for devotions, religious instruction, and wholesome activities. Family Home Evening, described above, is clearly regarded to be a sacred ritual. (ibid: 56).

When examining these statistics, it stands to reason that the key to their strong faith, is the religiosity of Mormon parents. Since Mormons are known for tight-knitted, intact, and religiously devoted families—and since we know that teenagers mirror their parents' faith to a high degree—it stands to reason that Mormon communities would have higher-than-average rates of religious devotion among teenagers. The result is that Latter-day Saints teenagers were less likely to drink, smoke, or engage in risky behaviour. For example, it appears that Mormon teenagers postpone first intercourse longer than most teenagers (to the age of eighteen, therefore for a longer period of time than the majority of other teenagers who appear to indulge in first intercourse at the age of sixteen and a half years). One in eight Mormon teenagers (compared to one in five teenagers in the general population) admits to not being a virgin. Meanwhile, Mormon teenagers evidently excel, rank ahead of other youth in terms of spiritual vitality, hope for the future, and overall health and well-being. The Mormon lifestyle contains personal substance, as young people see it modelled by families and congregations. Latter-day Saints teenagers are significantly more likely than their peers to hold religious beliefs similar to their parents' (73%), attend religious services once a week (43%), and discuss religious matters in their families more often than other teenagers (80% once a week or more). (Dean, 2010: 51)

There appears to be several characteristics which these families have in common, and which gave occasion to a high incidence of intergenerational continuity of their religious tradition. Firstly, there is the strong reinforcement of linkages between families and church regarding religious activities built around family activities and high level of family involvement in religious education. The church has positioned itself as a partner of the household in order to provide guidance, materials, support, and a mandate to parents to develop the faith of their young. Secondly, there is the strong role-modelling emanating from the previous generations' involvement in religious organizations and in the articulation of

beliefs. The majority of Latter-Day Saints cherish the memories of their parents' ways of living, as a source of reference for guiding their own actions. A third characteristic relates to a high level of family closeness, both emotionally and geographically, characterized by frequent family interaction, support and assistance. Additionally, we witness a reliance on the strong social bonds within the religious community, exemplified by a prohibition on marriage or even dating outside of the faith. All these factors suggest strong intra-group solidarity and a degree of insulation from the external world. The net effect regarding the retention of youth members is that Mormon parents are apparently performing the best by retaining 86% of their teens. (Smith, 2005: e-source)

3.9.4 The Protestant Mandate

Martin Luther was convinced that Christian formation commenced with youth ministry, and that youth ministry started at home. Even before his breakaway from Rome, Luther wrote: "If ever the church is to flourish again, one must begin by instructing the young," as quoted by Dean. (Dean, 2010: 112). One of his first goals as a reformer was to teach children the basics of Christian religion. Luther's Small Catechism, widely regarded as an educational masterpiece, was noteworthy for another reason as well. It located teaching out loud in households rather than in not congregations, with the effect of locating Christian formation in the intimacy of families, where children drew direct connections between religious instruction at the dinner table and the lives of people who loved them. The Small Catechism itself was intended for parents (especially fathers). The instructions explicitly indicated "How the Head of the Family Should Teach His Household." It represented an educational stroke of genius, since it effectively ensured that parents, children, and servants learned the core teachings of the church together. Dean states: "Luther would not have been surprised by the National Study of Youth and Religion's conclusion that the best way for youth to become more serious about religious faith is for parents to become more serious about theirs. (Interestingly, in the NSYR's longitudinal interviews, parent religiosity during the teenage years was an even stronger predictor of young people's faith in emerging adulthood.) Research is nearly unanimous on this point: parents matter most in shaping the religious lives of their children." (Dean, 2010: 112)

Protestants place strong emphasis on the Bible as sole source of revelation through the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. Additionally, the Bible is quite clear that parents, not the Church, are primarily responsible for passing on the faith to their children (see Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:5-8). Therefore, the theology of faith formation is quite simple: The Church is called to be a lifelong partner (not substitute) of parents in order to assist people in becoming acquainted with God's story, by telling God's story and being part of God's story 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, beginning in their homes and extending throughout all aspects of their lives. In the early church, Christian families daily taught the ways of God in their homes. Parents were expected to model a Spirit-driven lifestyle to be followed by their children, and families were to transform their home in a sanctuary for God. In a very real sense, the home was the early church—supplemented by larger gatherings in the Temple and elsewhere, but never substituting that which occurred in the homes of believers. (Holmen, 2010: 81). Martin Luther put it this way: "Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel." (ibid: 45)

Both Martin Luther and John Calvin held families in high esteem, considering them to be "classrooms" where faith and values were taught and "laboratories" where faith and values were practiced. "To Calvin, families resembled places of both private and public ministry", reports Martinson (1997: 298) As required by the Old Testament, families in Geneva, Switzerland, were to be places of hospitality to strangers as well as places proving protection and support to members. As for both Old and New testamentary times, families were to be places of instruction in faith and Christian values. Fathers were specifically assigned to "bring up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord." (Martinson, 1997: 311)

3.9.5 Forming faithful Followers of Christ

Right at the very beginning the Church was mandated with the task to "*Go... and make disciples*" (Matt 29:19). This assignment affects all nations, all people groups, all genders and certainly individuals of all ages.

Mainstream churches throughout South Africa seem to still hold Sunday school, catechism and confirmation of faith in high esteem. The research undertaken by Malan Nel on the patterns of faith operative in young adults' lives, showed 66%

claimed that catechism has highly enriched their faith lives, and 92% suggested that the teaching of the faith should be a high priority for churches to pursue. 86% claimed that it was important for them to be confirmed in the church. (Nel & Van der Westhuizen, 2015: 68).

We do know from a number of studies – including Kinnamon, Barna and Smith (See 3.2 and 3.3 above) - that Postmodernism is eroding these religious foundations. Whenever a young person grows up against the background of a secular worldview, and buys into Postmodernism, the reformed tradition of *Sola Scriptura* is rejected, and the notion of the non-existence of absolute truths, dogma or confessions is adopted. (Coetzee, 2010: 30)

In the light of the above, the church has an important role to play in the formation of faith in young people's lives. In the first instance it provides them with a place and space to view faith in action. The Church comprises a community of believers. The way in which members of a congregation greet one another, share their joy, pain and injury with each other, even disagree from one another, is different compared to any other organisation. They are presented with a window into this life of faith each and every time they set foot on the campus of the church.

Popenoe describes this as “the process of social interaction through which people acquire personality and learn the ways of a society or group” (Popenoe, 1998: 80). During the course of this process they are taught the attitudes and motivations of our actions. The norms and values of this body of believers are transferred to others including non-believers. The foundational body of knowledge underlying all of these behaviours, is instilled through the catechism and confirmation process, rendering confirmation of faith the zenith of a young person's personal attachment to God and the congregation of believers. (De Klerk & Dreyer, 2007: 17)

A supplementary benefit accruing from catechism is that it acts as an agent for socialisation. The congregation as spiritual family embracing the parents of catechumens engaging with their spiritual family, acts as a blueprint for forming lasting relationships in the context of faith. As such, the catechumens become part of the “sacramental people” in, with and through their families. In this way we may speak of the church being present in the home, or of the Christian home as an expression of the life of the church. (Priebbenow, 2001: 1)

This journey to becoming a follower of Christ, starts at the very beginning, by way of infant baptism. At the baptismal font the child and its family members are (i) incorporated in baptismal living as an expression of the church's mission and purposes; and (ii) incorporated in the "family" of the church on account of the promises that are made. (Priebbenow, 2004: 9) This twofold movement is expressed in the baptismal rite. From this point onwards the church endeavours to form the knowledge of God to this teachable heart so that a child lacks nothing of spiritual value by the time of confirmation.

Relating to the telling of Biblical stories and narratives of Christian spiritual practices, therefore, contributes to young children's generation of faith memories. Listening to the reading from Scripture and prayers said during the liturgy, contribute to these memories, as does the regular hearing of evidence of God's actions and God's people as recorded on the pages of a children's Bible or the Scriptures themselves. The repeating of the story of a child's baptism embeds that experience in the child's memory more firmly each time it is told, until the child may not be able to distinguish between what is known firsthand and known as a result of the telling. (Yust, 2007: 3)

One of the aims of Sunday school, then, is to develop knowledge of the Word of God in young believers. In 2 Tim 3: 15 St. Paul declares that to know the Scriptures from infancy has the capability to "*make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*" (N.I.V.) This might occur in a variety of formal and informal ways. For example, the Godly Play model for religious education incorporates a more informal approach. Children may use their response time following story-telling to recreate Biblical tales they have heard, by using the wooden and felt story sets that are part of the curriculum. (Yust, 2007: 5)

With respect to the impact of Biblical stories, and how they influence our lives, Kuiper relates the story of Chief Long Lance of the Blackfoot Indians, inhabitants of one of the biggest reserves in Canada. Chief Long Lance remembers the long days during winter when he and his companions as children were instructed by their mothers as moral education was then totally entrusted to the tribal women.

What were the essential elements in this educational situation? One visualises these mothers telling the stories and inculcating respect in their children for the value and validity of the old legends. This is an example of religion in action as evidenced by the "way in which people actually experience and practice their

religion: aspects such as worship, rites and customs, festivals, sacred writings, codes of ethics, institutions and communities and their traditions." (Kuiper, 1985: 8) By scrutinizing these practices, and by learning the skills of participation, one becomes accustomed and socialized. It goes without saying that in a more complex society than that of a tribe, several persons and institutions would be engaged in this process of socialization. A second aspect to this story relative to the Chief's childhood, relates to the fact that the world of the visible religion and culture is explained and sustained by legends "from the dark, unknown depths" of the traditions. One has to hear these tales in order to understand what the purpose of life to them consists of and what the existential meaning of their customs and rituals holds.

By their listening to the legends and tribal stories and by learning the medicine song and death song, they gained a-priori control over their encounters with disease and death. However, this tradition not only legitimated the habits exercised in daily life, but also presented models for experiencing life. Each member of the tribe was warned against the "great shame" of telling lies, and consequently the telling of lies was experienced as deeply shameful. This constitutes a third element regarding the issue of moral and religious education which Chief Long Lance is referring to, in Kuiper's retelling of the story (Kuiper, 1985: 11). We have different legends and stories, encapsulated in the Bible, but their purpose is the same: to form faith in the followers. We expect the parents to convey these truths to their descendants, albeit that the parents expect the congregation to act accordingly.

Parents are willing dance partners. They know they have the task of teaching their offspring the dance of faith. But they are asking for guidance. They are in need of a strong dance partner who can lead them in this dance, somebody who knows the technicalities of this dance, someone who has been dancing this dance for a while now. They are asking the Church: come play your role in this perichoresis – show us how to dance, and teach our children to join this dance: We need you to play your role well!

3.10 Developing a New Partnership

The dictionary defines a partnership is an association of two or more people, henceforth called partners. This concept implies co-operation, association, collaboration, coalition, alliance, co-partnership, affiliation, relationship, fellowship, and connection. This definition may be of assistance in striving to formulate answers to the next Secondary Research Question: SRQ5: What constitutes a partnership between congregation and the home in the formation of lived faith in children? The BusinessDictionary defines a partnership as a type of business organization in which two or more individuals pool money, skills, and other resources, and share profit and loss in accordance with terms of the partnership agreement. In absence of such agreement, a partnership is assumed to exist where the participants in an enterprise agree to share the associated risks and rewards proportionately (The BusinessDictionary.com)

Although this definition refers to a formal association in a secular context, the church needs to take this into consideration. For far too long parents had specific expectations of what church should do in training up young people in the faith. For that very purpose church has developed a myriad of youth activities: children's church, Sunday school, youth services and – clubs. The institution of Church also had its expectations for the other partner, namely the parents, who were called upon to bring their children to church, and to have them there on time every time. As the research has proved, those actions expected from parents did not result in effective faith formation; therefore, this partnership needs to be reviewed.

The language of a partnership implies that each stakeholder group has something to contribute and something to benefit by being involved. The reality, of course, is that partnership means different things to different people. Research has indicated that each stakeholder would have a different perception of what benefits would accrue to him or her. (Boudreaux, 1991: 8) Those with more power in this partnership are familiar with the formal, traditional ways of decision-making. Professional knowledge, whether medical, scientific, or practice based, is usually presented with such certainty that there is little room for consumer experiential knowledge. Such processes tend to exclude the "story" of the consumer (weaker party), which may be critical to understanding people's lives. The lived experience of the person having the need on the one hand and the world of professionals on the

other, represent different cultures. This is often reflected in the way partnerships are practiced.

On the surface, it might appear to be a successful partnership as everyone speaks politely to each other, and acts responsibly at the meetings. Nevertheless, if these partners do not attentively listen to each other, and show that they understand the issues at hand, it never really becomes a "partnership," but rather a "consultation." In partnership-language, the predominant usage of the term "we" could be construed as either positive and negative. On the positive side, there might be a sense that "we are all in this together" and that a common direction for future action has emerged. More frequently, the "we" in partnerships almost confirms professional certainty and includes a loss of voice for people with needs. As Elizabeth Janeway points out in *Powers of the Weak*, citizens who are less powerful are generally persuaded by the powerful to mistrust their own motives and voices. This is the essence of "partnership shock." (Janeway, 1981: 103)

Thus, in this new kind of partnership three voices need to be heard and acted upon: Firstly, there are the voices of the parents eliciting their needs, their dreams and their day-to-day realities. Secondly, there is the voice of the church articulating the voice of knowledge relative to the Bible and faith. There is also a third voice which Heyn describes as follows: "This is a voice of three centuries of authority, preaching a sermon about how to be normal! The messages of institutions and authorities become internalized, teaching us to be proper, normal kinds of people as defined by mainstream society, suppressing other more critical, independent voices." (Heyn, 1996: 48) The challenge of this new partnership is to discern these three voices, and never to allow any one voice to drown out the others.

Partnerships that hope to be genuinely transformative and meaningful for parents and professionals must consciously address both "working across differences" and "finding common ground." Without both processes, it is unlikely that groups can create meaningful change. "Working across differences" is a process of naming, mapping, and working with differences, whether they relate to experience, ability, race, class, or gender. (Lord & Church, 1998: 7)

In an interesting analysis, Bell examined partnerships in the private sector from the customer's perspective. He identified several qualities of partnerships, including abundance (a foundation of generosity), truth (candor and openness is valued); and dreams (shared visions). He also noted that partnerships require

elasticity, as opposed to tolerance. Elasticity has give and stretch, whereas tolerance can mean accepting or even suffering in silence (Bell, 1996: 89) From a church perspective with the intent of faith formation, the abovementioned qualities are very important. We have abundant examples of Biblical wisdom and church traditions to draw on. We strive for truth, openness and real lived faith. We have dreams for our children, and we would like parents to dream God's dream in this respect.

To once again engage in our dance metaphor, the congregation assumes the male role. It is obliged to take the initiative and initiate the dance. Should the male take the lead, the female partner has to be treated as an equal. The parents engage in this dance as if they were the female partner, who is expected to follow the lead. Each partner should be attentive to the other partner's movements and guidance, and in order to turn this dance into a working enterprise, each has to satisfy the mutual expectations for this partnership. He should lead competently, and she will follow well.

Freudenburg penned down these questions to ask whether a church desires to enter into a partnership with parents for faith formation at home.

- What are the salient characteristics of a church that really believes the family is the place God intended for faith to be passed on from generation to generation?
- How is a church organization structured in order to model the belief that parents are ultimately responsible for nurturing faith in their children?
- What are the rules and regulations that govern a family-friendly church's practices and programmes?
- Which resources would be available in its library?
- Which training would it provide?
- What would worship comprise of?
- How would it be staffed?
- What would Sunday morning, midweek education, as well as small-group group ministry look like?
- If the church had a school, how would the role of the parents be accommodated?
- Which aspects are deemed absolutely critical for such a church?
- Do we need to revert back to an old paradigm for ministry, or do we need to change to meet the challenge of an entirely new paradigm? (Freudenburg, 1998: e-source).

A number of particular topics which need to be addressed relative to this new partnership, include the following:

3.10.1 Change Expectations

One of the most important tasks of the Church at large, is to render assistance to its member families for becoming the body of Christ within the home whereat unconditional love, affirmation, challenge to accountability, and forgiveness are made known. Church should assist households to learn and share rituals, symbols, and stories of faith and to recognize and claim their special gifts and mission in the world. (Holmen, 2010: 71) In other words, the home becomes a smaller version of what the congregation is supposed to be: a place of grace where believers build each other up in their most holy faith. As Anderson summarizes the above-mentioned: "Where Christ is present by faith, the home is church too." (Anderson, 2009: 33)

The best way to involve the majority of young people more in their faith communities and create a seriousness in that regard, is to get their parents to become more involved in and serious about their faith communities, concludes Smith and Denton. (Dean, 2010: 109) It therefore comes as no surprise that families and communities that encourage practices in which teenagers are to verbalize religious convictions and experiences are more likely to have highly devoted teenagers. Latter-day Saints and Black Protestant families (74% and 56%, respectively) were overwhelmingly more likely than families from other traditions to "talk about God, the scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual things together" every day or a few times a week. Less than one in four mainline Protestant or Catholic families (and less than one in ten Jewish families) did the same. Not surprisingly, the Exemplary Youth Ministry Study also identified parents who "engage youth and family in conversations, prayer, Bible reading, and service that nurture faith and life" as a key asset in assisting young people to developing mature faith. (ibid: 135).

Roberto has written extensively on this subject, and offers the following for consideration: "What if your congregation viewed its community life, ministries, and faith formation through the intergenerational lens provided by the research studies?" (Amidei, Merhaut & Roberto, 2014: e-source) If that were to happen, a congregation would want to strengthen the ability (confidence and competence) of

parents and grandparents to promote religious socialization; be role models of faithful practice; engage in faith practices at home, and develop warm, affirming, and unconditionally support relationships between parents (and grandparents) and their children, teens, and young adults. It would want to focus on the extended family as a unit by bringing together grandparents, parents, and children, and strengthening connections across generations by offering intergenerational learning, service, worship, prayer, and caring relationships. It would want to foster high-quality caring relationships across the generations in a congregation—becoming a 5: 1 church where at least five adults are willing to commit to invest in one child or teenager in a variety of ways. In his book: *Generations Together* he focuses on five essential components of congregational life— caring, celebrating, learning, praying, and serving— that are at the heart of every Christian community. When a congregation commits itself to building a culture of inter-generationality through these five elements, each element becomes a sign of and instrument for the full experience of the body of Christ by all ages and generations.” (Amidei, Merhaut & Roberto, 2014: e-source)

3.10.2 A Philosophy of the Church

Religious formation does not occur accidentally. Teenagers reporting high degrees of religious devotion, did not acquire that on their own; their faith is the legacy of communities that have invested time, energy, and love in them, and where the religious faith of adults (especially parents) inspires the faith of their children. Smith and Denton write, “How religiously serious and involved American teenagers are, is not merely randomly or individually determined, but reflects the influence of particular social locations and especially key social relationships and organizations. Parents, friends, youth organizations, religious congregations, and youth group leaders all appear to have significant influence on the shape and extent of American teenagers’ religious and spiritual lives.” (Dean, 2010: 194) It becomes clear, therefore, that should the Church wish to be relevant in the lives of young people now and in the future, there needs to be a change in the mind-set: Focus on the family as a unit— much more so than the majority of congregations are doing presently. If churches wish to retain the next generation of young people, they

should not ignore families and strengthening connections across generations in their programming.

Malan Nel advises that: “Having spent a quarter-century studying various organizations—churches, government agencies, businesses, schools and non-profit entities—I have found that a few common components surface among those that are effective.” (Senter, 2001: e-source) He explains this further: “One of the typical building blocks is a clear conceptual foundation—a philosophy that permeates every department, programme and policy. Not surprisingly, this was true of the best children’s ministries, too. These ministries have clarified the basics of what they stand for and what they exist to produce. There are definitions of what education, Christian discipleship (or “spiritual formation” or whatever term is in vogue at the time the document is crafted) and spiritual maturity mean. Included within those definitions are statements regarding the appropriate roles of key players: parents, teachers, pastors and church staff, mentors, program directors, and so forth. In light of the above, then, the definition of youth ministry can be further refined to this: Youth ministry is a comprehensive congregational ministry in which God comes, through all forms of ministry and with especial regard to parents (or their substitutes), with a differentiated focus to youths (as an integral part of the congregation), and also with and through the youths in the congregation to the world.” (Senter, 2001: e-source).

One of the key elements of the above-mentioned philosophy regarding ministry, appears to be the acknowledgement that the spiritual development of children is first and foremost the responsibility of parents, and that a church is best poised to assist rather than lead in that process. Drawing on Biblical principles and precedent, a church needs to see itself as serving families by providing emotional, spiritual, and material support to parents as they invest in the faith of their children. In other words, the role of the church is to equip and reinforce rather than lead in this dimension. As the director of children’s ministry of one congregation put it, “Our goal is to become the greatest friend and best support a parent has ever had.” (Barna, 2003: e-source).

Youth ministry and youths themselves are part of the total congregational ministry and not a separate entity. It is an integral part of the congregational whole, in that the whole is never complete without youth ministry. The congregation needs to think of the faith life of youths as essentially connected to the faith life of

adult members. People do not need to reach a certain age before God becomes interested in them and starts working with and through them. Youths are part of the congregation's service to God because they share in God's relationship with his people and are incorporated into the congregation. Youths shall not become a separate entity within the congregation. Even though they are unique and have distinct characteristics, they are not apart from the rest. The relationship of God with the believers and their children, as well as the nature of the congregation as something created by God, makes this impossible.

Youths shall not be neglected or ignored. In the book – *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church* - Nel paints a vision where the congregation does not consist only of adults or only of youths. Youths will be the congregation's responsibility, not merely the responsibility of the "youth workers." Children and adolescents are not simply the charge of a few people who particularly love and understand them and wish to be involved in ministry to them, regardless of how well-meaning these people might be. Youths are the responsibility of parents, Sunday school teachers, elders, deacons, and the membership as such. (Senter, 2001: e-source).

One of the simplest yet most profound strategies for fostering this integration, is to induce the entire congregation into focusing upon the same Biblical principle during the course of a particular week. Irrespective as to whether you attend a worship service, youth-group meeting, small-group meeting, prayer service, men's breakfast or elders' meeting, the very same principle is to be focused on during the course of that particular week. The value of this consistency of focus is that it ensures that everyone in the church is spiritually moving in the same direction, that parents have acquired some core level of knowledge and insight regarding the principle (and thus have the ability to converse with and challenge their children on the subject matter during the week) and that a refined body of spiritual wisdom is conveyed to congregants within a compact period of time. (Barna, 2003: e-source).

Holmen adds the following practical steps for implementing this overall congregational strategy: "Your men and women's ministries equip men and women to live out their faith at home. • Your small-group ministry focuses on equipping people and holds them accountable for living out their faith in their homes. • Your prayer ministry equips every family to pray daily in their homes instead of focusing

on a few big prayer events at the church. • Each sermon you preach will include an emphasis on taking the message home and living it out daily. • Every Bible study your church does equips adults to be like Christ in their homes, community, and world. • Your children's ministry helps equip parents to engage in faith skills with their children at home. • Your youth ministry helps parents get engaged (or stay engaged) with their teenagers' faith journey at home." (Holmen, 2010: 80).

The promoting of the Family-to-Family Ministry affirms the God-given strengths of families, and assists to releasing their immense potential for mutual support and ministry. Families commonly share various expectations, struggles and experiences. Frequently, the best support systems that church families have, comprise other families. A congregation that realizes this, will work towards socialization of families for telling their stories and for learning from one another. (Anthony & Anthony, 2011: e-source)

One of the places where a congregation's heart inadvertently is revealed is displayed at worship. Many congregations have embraced styles of worship which diminish the participation of children in worship, whereby preventing them from being fully exposed to that experience. Many so-called contemporary forms of worship, designed by and for the "Baby Boomer" generation, have denuded worship from ritual, repetition, and symbolism. Marginalization of children in and from worship frequently reflects an understanding of worship as something that humans do. (Priebbenow, 2001: 17)

Central to this reasoning, hovers a profound theological misconception, propagating that God is the object in worship, and the subject of worship is the adult member population, who may partake of the new life through the gospel. Children, to the extent that they are permitted to participate, are equal and needy recipients of God's divine workings in and through corporate worship. Jesus' injunction to "*let the children come to me*" that he might bless them, is instructive here (Mark 10: 14-16). It reflects a theology where Jesus is the Actor – calling His people together and blessing them in worship. An integrated approach to children and worship ushers forward children to receive the good gifts of God, and enables them to fully engage in the whole of the liturgical God-human encounter so that they may receive all of the blessings of God imparted therein. (Balswick & Balswick, 2007: e-source)

3.10.3 Invest in developing the Faith of the Parents

Spanning a period of several decades, the prevailing model of youth ministry in many religious traditions has relied on severing teens from their parents. In some cases, youth ministers have even come to regard parents as adversaries. There is no doubt a time and place for unique teen settings and activities. However, our findings suggest that overall youth ministry would probably best be pursued in a larger context of family ministry, and that parents should be viewed as indispensable partners in the religious formation of their youth. Moreover, one of the most important actions that adults, who are concerned with the outcomes of the religious and spiritual lives of their teenagers, can perform, is to focus their energies and attention on the strengthening of their own religious and spiritual lives as well as those of other adults, especially those who happen to be parents. Ultimately, they most likely will reap from teens that what they themselves as adults portray. Whether they would like it or not, the message that adults inevitably communicate to the youth is “Become as I am, not (only) as I say.” (Smith, 2005: e-source).

In their report to the Synod of 1966, the Youth Study Commission already saw this problem developing, thus they stated: In our broken reality, parents often do not live up to their God-given calling. This might be because of lack of knowledge, lack of will, lack of skill, lack of obedience to God or even lack of faith. Therefore, the Church has the task and responsibility to guide parents, to inspire them and to equip them for this task. (Youth Study Commission, 1966: 57)

Speaking as a parent, Barna writes: “We cannot legitimately pawn off our kids on a church and expect it to do the job we as parents have been given by God. However, we can partner with the church to compensate for our own areas of developmental weakness or inability so that our children mature into dynamic followers of Christ. Working in tandem with other believers is one of the marks of a healthy Christian and a healthy community of faith.” (Barna, 2003: e-source). Nel frames the importance of parents nicely with these words: Within the family God and his ways are interpreted to the members of the family in the most natural way. Within this hermeneutic sphere one learns to understand - in the most spontaneous and "natural" way possible. Certainly God is not only found in this sphere, and insight can still be attained where this sphere is lacking or broken. God is not limited to the family when he wants to enlighten someone. He is sovereign and works as he

pleases. Yet it is also true that he has made the family the primary hermeneutic sphere; it pleases him also - and especially - to grant an understanding of who he is and how he acts within the security of this intimate form of human relationships. (Nel, 2000: 11)

3.10.4 Add additional faithful Adults

One of the first objections to transferring faith-formation to the home, is that not all parents are believers, and consequently not ready to share their faith with their young. Speaking from many years of experience, Mark DeVries suggests that the most important priority a church can have in its work with teenagers is providing them with opportunities for significant dialogue and relationships with mature Christian adults. (DeVries, 2004: e-source).

Churches are unique in this respect as there is an inexhaustible source of adult and peer group role models, providing examples of life practices shaped by religious moral orders that may constructively influence the lives of the youth. Here the youth have the opportunity to observe, learn and practice valuable community life skills and leadership skills.

Earl Palmer uncovered one constant factor among resilient teens. They all experienced the non-exploitive interest, care and support of at least one adult during their childhood years, such as a parent or grandparent, uncle or aunt, older brother or sister, coach or teacher, pastor or youth leader, being adults with no hidden agenda or exploitive design on to the detriment of the youngster. (Palmer, 1992: 4) Smith and Denton pass further comments relative to this matter: "Another important general way religious congregations may better engage youth is through simple, ordinary adult relationships with teenagers. Adults other than family members and youth ministers could be intentionally encouraged to make better efforts to learn teens' names, to strike up conversations with teens, to ask them meaningful questions, to be vulnerable themselves to youth in various ways, to show some interest in them, to help connect them to jobs and internships, to make themselves available in times of trouble and crisis, to work toward becoming models and partners in love and concern and sacrifice. This would no doubt resound positively in broader areas of youth religious belief, commitment, and practice and in youth outcomes more generally. None of this takes a Master of

Divinity degree. It is simply a matter of appreciation, attention, effort, and continuity from ordinary mature adults. However, fostering this will require intentionality on the part of leaders. The NSYR shows that large majorities of teens from all religious traditions report having nonfamily adults in their religious congregations whom they enjoy talking to and who give them lots of encouragement. Jewish teens report the highest percentage (92%) and Catholic teens the lowest (68%). Religious American teens thus do not appear to be entirely relationally isolated from other adults in their congregations. Moreover, even more teenagers would like to have significant relationships with adults in their congregations. The majority of teens who do not have such enjoyable and encouraging adult ties in their congregations—between 56% of those Catholic and 100% of those Jewish teens—say that they wish they did.” (Smith, 2005: e-source).

As and when churches start to unlock the potential of this kind of cross-generational ministry, nuclear families can be greatly assisted and affected by the wealth of support from the extended Christian family of the church. When these two formative families act as a concerted team, we would most likely be witness to the youth growing into a faith that lasts for the long haul.

3.10.5 Re-define Success

The majority of churches have very simple but ultimately debilitating descriptions of success, such as growing numbers of students enrolled, consistent attendance, completion of the curriculum in the allotted time, parental satisfaction, minimal disciplinary problems, and the like. Barna points out that the effective churches hold a handful of very different indicators of success. (Barna, 2003: e-source) The identity of those descriptions is crucial, because in any organization you get what you value and measure.

Foremost, is the experiencing of the widespread involvement of the parents in assisting their children in their spiritual development. A second indicator of success is that the church is strategically equipping parents to help children develop spiritually. A third cornerstone of success is witnessing evidence of transformation in children’s lives—not the mere recitation of facts, but lifestyle transitions that suggest a deeper renovation of the heart and spirit. Effective churches are eager for witnessing growth in all aspects of spirituality, including breadth and depth of

Biblical knowledge, voluntary participation in acts of service, involvement in the activities of a genuine spiritual community, daily engagement in worship, and others, being evidence of children growing in Christlikeness, and refusing to settle for an imbalanced or one-dimensional standard of efficacy. (Barna, 2003: e-source).

Over the past century Christian churches have structured their faith formation programmes (and measured their successes) for children, based on a classroom model. Children's education remains "based on an understanding of learning as the process by which an individual mind accumulates and integrates information at the developmentally appropriate time for the mind to internalize it. Much of contemporary practice regards learning as an activity that is occurring within the mind of the individual child.

In this respect the church has wandered far from the original intent of catechism. Field explains that every inquirer or applicant for membership to the (early) church was examined regarding their motives, their condition in life and their morals ... The church did not want halfhearted Christians who might endanger her principles ... Certain occupations were considered incompatible with Christianity ... anything connected with pagan worship, the theater, or the gladiatorial games. (Field, 1997: 19) Once admitted, they were allowed for three years to attend the Liturgy of the Word, but that was the limit of their allowable public devotion. After the three years, 'an enquiry was made into the conduct of the candidates during their probation ... Those who proved ready then received several weeks of intensive preparation for baptism at Easter' (ibid: 20)

In contrast with this, our classic classroom model structures the education of children in settings graded according to age, which segregate children from learning with their family and with the other generations in their faith community. Children usually have few opportunities for observing the subsequent stage of development so as to urge them on to grow in their faith. They do not quite have an opportunity to observe how their parents, teachers, and other significant adults express their faith through worship, service, prayer and relationships. We know that the faith life of children is nurtured when they are embraced by a family of faith as well as a vital faith community. Roberto and Piffner (2007: 1) provide us with a new standard of measurement, namely the four "Best Practices" which might replace the classroom model:

Best Practice 1. Effective faith formation with children respects the ways in which children learn at present by offering them the learning activities that are experiential, image-rich, multi-sensory, interactive, engaging, and varied in learning style

Best Practice 2. Faith formation with children provides an environment that allows children to encounter the living God directly

Best Practice 3. Effective faith formation engages children and their parents in programmes that involve the whole family in learning together

Best Practice 4. Effective faith formation provides opportunities for children to practice their faith through hands-on participation in the life, ministries, and activities of the congregation. (ibid: 5)

A surprising discovery that emerged from the findings of the Effective Youth Ministry study is that the entire congregation makes a difference in youth ministry in terms of the theological commitments as well as the quality of community life within the congregation. (Martinson, 2010: 83) One aspect that involves both these issues is prayer. The study found that “Prayer is a pervasive, core activity attached to every dimension of the congregation’s relationships, decisions, and activities.” This implies that the teachers pray as a team, usually on a weekly basis, along with other staff and the church leaders associated with the ministry to children. Prayer features when intercessors that volunteer to faithfully pray for the teachers and students get involved. These individuals tend to have regular contact with the teachers and the youth. Because the ministry to children is highly valued in these churches, it is not surprising to find that the entire congregation frequently prays for that ministry. Lastly, another avenue of prayer emanates from the parents. Some of these churches organize prayer times for parents. Thus, on many occasions and in many different ways these youths are exposed to prayer. They hear prayers, see it happening, feel the effects thereof, and are prepared well for participation.

3.10.6 Family Service Projects

Supplementary to the expectation regarding personal service, many of the effective churches endeavour to reinforce the importance of efforts for reaching out by setting up opportunities for families to work together in serving needy people. Many of these churches have discovered that once parents recognize their

obligation to direct the spiritual development of their children and subsequently recognize the necessity of serving others along that journey, they become willing for serving alongside their youngsters in meaningful projects. (Barna, 2003: e-source)

One of the best ways for people to develop their faith is by serving people. Developing the habit of service to others at a young age, tends to alter the attitudes and expectations of young people, resulting in a lifelong practice of helping others. The younger the age of the young persons in whom we instill such a mind-set and lifestyle, the more ingrained these attributes become. (ibid: e-source)

Certain people state that as much as 80% of all youths adopt the life and worldview of their parents. Moreover, it stands to reason that “works of service” (Ephesians 4:12) is derived from a positive attitude which needs to be modelled by significant adults, according to Nel. (Senter, 2001: e-source) In his study of college students engaged in short term missions outreach, Mark Radecke found that the impact of service leads to perspective transformation as students adjust their image of Jesus to accommodate a greater and more nuanced comprehension of His complexity. Service also gives rise to profound questions concerning calling and vocation which further a meaningful life. The exposure to rendering of service results in the additional benefit of generating hospitality and an attitude of brotherly-love towards people you do not know. Nevertheless, one learns to love them as Jesus would. (Radecke, 2007: 26)

3.10.7 Equipping parents

Having rendered many years of service to youth ministry, Mark DeVries states: “Equipping parents for their work as the primary nurturers of their children's faith has been an essentially untapped resource in youth ministry”. (DeVries, 2004: e-source). Churches should learn to be as intentional about equipping parents as they hitherto have done regarding the development of programmes for children, young people and catechism. It appears to be the best course of action, to enter into a partnership with those parents, support them and equip them to pass on their faith to their teenagers as effectively as possible.

If churches would be serious about equipping the parents, we would be able to take parents beyond the basics of scheduled intrusions on their children's schedules

for Bible study, worship, community service projects and prayer times. We would like to add value by teaching parents the skills of creativity in performing those functions, applying proven principles and values to actual issues, and debriefing young people subsequently to such experiences.

Parents are primary mediators in the relationship (or covenant) between God and families, and as such they are key role-players relative to the coming of God to children. Nel calls the family a Hermeneutic Sphere within the Ecclesiological Sphere (lebensraum). God grants the hermeneutic function in a special way to the smaller unit, the family. One could say that the child needs parents in order to obtain understanding: In this regard the Passover meal is a unique example (cf. Exodus 12; see also the well-known reference to families and faith education in Deuteronomy 6). Children must understand who God is and how he deals with people. When the story of God's dealings with His people is told by the people from whom youths are supposed to hear it for the first time, and who they can trust, then the story makes more sense. (Senter, 2001: e-source).

Those stories which today's parents once heard as children from their parents, they recount to their own children, telling the upcoming generation of "the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power and the wonders He has done" (Psalm 78:3, 4). Doug Fields echoes the need for attention toward parenting and the influence of parents on their teenagers: "Each student in our youth ministry is the product of a unique family system which is responsible for forming beliefs, values and actions. If we plan to effectively minister to students in the long term, then we must sincerely desire to minister to entire families, because a youth ministry that excludes parents, is almost as effective as a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage." (Senter, 2001: e-source).

There are a few churches that confront the issue, and seemingly do what is appropriate for helping parents with the fulfilment of their biblical responsibilities. Youth workers who excel herein, provide parents and guardians with the tools and encouragement to carry out the proper functions of home in the spiritual life of teenagers. Black proposes the following practical steps how to start equipping parents: "Plan and conduct classes, workshops, and informal discussions designed to help parents address the needs of raising teenagers "in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Engage teens and adults in parent-youth dialogue sessions to build stronger bonds and improve communication. Make

literature available to parents that strengthen the home in Christian education. Guard the programming schedule to allow for adequate time for families to be together. Offer suggestions for parents who do not know how to handle blocks of unplanned time with their own teenagers.” (Senter, 2001: e-source). Paid staff and persons in ministry can never replace the parents or the role they play in faith formation. They could, however, become friends of the families and could provide help and encouragement to the parents of teens.

There once was a time during which the family had plenty of assistance available for passing on the values of the Christian faith from one generation to the next. The school system then actively taught the importance of Christian virtues, which for example modelled neighborliness for pursuing a Christian lifestyle. Even the secular media (primarily comprising books, broadcasting on radio and television) rendered assistance to the Christian family to raise their children in conformity with Biblical standards. The church was merely one of many voices assisting the Christian family in raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It seems evident that the Church is currently the sole support available to the Christian family.

Senter quotes Lawrence O. Richards on this topic: “When we look at the ideal community sketched in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, we find little explicit instruction on child rearing. However, we do find a clear expression of the social context that God designed for the nurture of faith. That context can be simply defined: Children are intended to be brought up as participants in a loving, holy community.” (Senter, 2001: e-source). The family in ancient Biblical times drew from the larger faith community a shared understanding of what it meant to be the kingdom of God. A continuity of relationships with parents and godly people from another generation appears to be the dominant means of spiritual formation in scripture. We would like to re-introduce that quality of ancient wisdom to the modern household.

Thus, the question arises as to whether there are any specific ways in which parents may be equipped for their task? There are, however, some clues in the available research. Search Institute uncovered several ways families express faith in the home. Each of these is extremely important for nurturing a dynamic faith. Four family practices are particularly important in helping young people to mature in faith during both childhood and adolescence:

1. Discussing faith with the mother.
2. Discussing faith with the father.
3. Conducting of family devotions or prayer.
4. Undertaking family projects in order to help other people. (Freudenburg, 1998: e-source).

Freudenburg concluded that the rendering of assistance to parents in developing a family mission statement, was a very useful mechanism. “Most churches work hard at crafting a statement of purpose, but few of us take the time to write down the reason our family exists. Ours says: ‘Our home is a safe place of shelter from the storms of life.’ It equips our family members to positively impact our home, neighbourhood, community, and world through the gifts God's given them.” (ibid: e-source).

In a modern setting where each member of the household has a busy schedule, time management is becoming increasingly more essential. In the church, we use sophisticated, often expensive, time-management systems for organizing that most precious resource, namely time. We need ways to optimize the use of our time at home, and to secure a peaceful co-existence within the family. Assisting and supporting parents to manage this finite resource would hopefully foster a better faith formation at home.

The time is due for reasserting our partnership with parental homes for furthering the vital task of nurturing spiritual growth in young people. Freudenburg aptly summarizes the situation: “We want families to stop saying, ‘I come to church to learn about Jesus and how to live the Christian faith’ and start saying, ‘I not only come to the church to learn about Jesus and how to live the Christian faith but also to be trained as a teacher of the faith in my home so I can motivate family members to impact our community and world with God's grace.” (ibid: e-source).

Clearly, the age-specific Sunday-school class is vital to the church because it provides a way for Christians who have no family support to grow in the faith. Without support by the family the majority of young people would have no systematic way or means for learning the essentials about Christianity. Age-appropriate classes do just that. Even Christian parents who are actively involved in teaching their kids the faith, need the guidance of the church in providing a systematic plan for learning and growing. This contributes to knowledge of the

Bible and the faith. Nevertheless, to rely solely on this form of religious education has been found to be inadequate. The Church must partner with families so as to develop faith in young people, supplementing the teaching of faith by parents and its modelling at home. The Church must always offer faith-development programmes to homes whereat the adults are not yet ready to teach their kids about Christ.

3.11 Conclusion

At the conclusion of the literature review, it is obvious that current wisdom is trying really hard to teach us some things. There are many studies and authors who are deeply concerned with the status quo in congregations concerning faith formation and the transfer of faith between generations. The studies have been done, the results speak for themselves and we need to take heed of what is going on. The literature has also shown us that there is light in this dark tunnel. The normative, that which we are aiming at in faith formation, is effective in a certain segment of youth. Our study also led us to discern the factors affecting lived faith in children, including the two main actors in this arena: the parental home and the congregation. Like a puzzle that still waits to be assembled, the literature provided us with endless bits of data from which to construe the elements of lived faith, and how a partnership between the congregation and home might be beneficial to the formation of lived faith in children.

It appears that the church has a formidable task ahead of her. Those who are poised to set up their own homes must be trained, and those who are already occupying well-established homes retrained. Pastors, youth workers and the Church establishment have to reassess where they should invest their time, planning and efforts. This study proposes to explore the way ahead. In the following chapters rather trying questions will be put to parents and parishioners in order to establish in which aspects they fall short in faith formation. Chapter 4 will describe the research: what type of data is used in this study, and in which manner will such data obtained from all the partners involved be collected and collated in order to acquire a clear understanding of the descriptive task. Chapter 5 will be dedicated to explaining the current philosophies and practices in the

congregations studied – much in line with Secondary Research Question one (SRQ1): What is the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation, and what are the emanating results? In chapter 6 this study will examine the results, and endeavour to gain suitable knowledge that might alter the current practice of faith formation to develop robust lived faith in children. This is how this study will attempt to answer the Primary Research Question (PRQ1): How can a partnership between the home and the congregation assist us in developing lived faith in children? From this data, transferable concepts (Chapter 7) might be deduced that could contribute to meeting the objectives of the enormous and noble task of handing down faith to the next generation. Let the dance therefor begin!

4. UNDERSTANDING THE RHYTHM – DOING THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

4.1 Introduction

As far as this point, this study has scrutinized the literature and analyzed what scholars past and present had to teach concerning the divine dance of faith formation. The available literature was reviewed so as to obtain an overall understanding of the realities for what they are, and what they are supposed to be. The literature has highlighted the norm from the mouths of many fine scholars. At this particular point of the dance, the flow of the dance is changing direction. This study is now directing its attention to the practicalities of what is happening in congregations. This is where the mechanism to collect data on the secondary research questions SRQ 1 – SRQ 5 is set up. The methodology, strategy, process and reliability of this research project will be looked at. This study would like to engage with real people and real communities of faith, because that is where perichoresis becomes evident. However, this is not to be done in a haphazard way. This project will adhere to the strictest guidelines that science can offer. Therefore, let us consider how practice-oriented theology should apprehend this task.

4.2 From Practical Theology to Practice-oriented Theology

Much of what is sold under the name of Practical Theology is not Practical Theology at all. Practical Theology bases theological theory on practical reasoning embedded in individual or collective human actions which are regarded to be of spiritual and/or religious nature. (Hermans, public lecture 2016) What they practice is in fact lived religion which relate to the studying of people and real lives.

When we devote sufficient time to study the various ways in which people live their faith to the full, we encounter the phenomenon indicating that a difference between the actual and desired situation is evident. In this regard we can benefit from practical reasoning, for instance, Paul Ricoeur who points out that the human sciences could be hermeneutically comprehended the same way in which a text is understood. All actions stem from particular reasons, and there are specific rules for actions within the bounds of a particular community of knowledge, which shares such background knowledge. Practical reasoning is a process of deliberation based on action that embraces purposefulness and involves the human will. (Ricoeur, 1971: 21)

Within the faith community, there are norms that motivate lived faith. We know what should be happening, but praxis shows a different reality. William James calls it the “divided self,” that is a divided consciousness of not having the right will, nor aiming at the right goals. (James, 2002: 165) Although that is true of most men, we strive for a desired self as we know what to do, and what to strive for with the right will. Practice-orientated theology strives to understand this schism between the unified self and its divided counterpart.

The same principle is at work in congregations where we often encounter a discrepancy between the actual and ideal. The historical manifestation relates to the status quo, and the essence of Church relates to that which ought to be. Action problems address the discrepancy between the actual (A_component) and the desired (D_component) situations, where the actors (based on the existing knowledge) do not have adequate knowledge for solving this discrepancy. (Hermans & Schoeman, 2015: 30) This is where the logic of possibility enters the scene. We do have a notion of the desired scenario, and we do have the ability to develop the knowledge base for achieving such solution. There is a presumption that things might be different, even if only the glimmering of an idea that might contribute to the resolution of the question. It is only through the intentions of an acting subject that the truth claim of a possibility can be justified. The human actor justifies the truth of its belief by living according to what might be. In this respect the researcher is no longer the expert, but rather the ignorant person (not-knower), in search of knowledge. Practical Theology therefore have become more humble and less absolute in nature.

Practice-orientated Theology should then also develop practice-orientated methodology. We do not only want to theorize on human actions in the name of God. We are moving into the field of contested interpretations to the ultimate. We are observing an action problem. We would like to develop knowledge that can lead us from the actual towards the desired situation. The desired action can be seen as the possible future. Gerben Heitink described practical theology as an empirically orientated theory of action, says Macallan and Hendriks. (Macallan, Brian & Hendriks, 2013: 199) It is a descriptive and critically constructive way of addressing ecclesial practices within culture and society and also within individual life. Heitink described practical theology as an interdisciplinary approach aimed at renewed action addressing the realities people face within their faith. As such, practical theology is theology for the church which implies a Christian audience and should not be confused with the praxis itself.

4.3 Two Types of practical Research

There are two types of research might be of use in this respect. Firstly, there is Intervention Research which aims at the improvement of the actual situation so as to achieve the desired situation. Secondly, there is Design Research which uses theoretical skills so as to formulate a solution in terms of which we are enabled to move forward. This represents a shift from the ideal (normative, theory) to the actual. Certain principles are designed for taking care of problems encountered, and will often result in a proto-type.

To aid us in this respect, Hermans directs our attention to the two streams for action research, being the Knowledge stream and the Practice stream. (Hermans, 2016) The researcher is responsible for effecting the change that should occur. His tool comprises practical reasoning which should contribute to the formation of theories for change. These theories reside in the new knowledge gleaned from his research. These theories should subsequently be tested and implemented so as to form the new practice. Thus, new practices are derived from new knowledge, and both abovementioned streams are inevitable in practice-orientated Theology.

According to Osmer (2011: e-source), one commences with practice, and proceeds from there along a linear course towards understanding why it is

happening, then onward towards understanding what should be happening, and eventually terminating at an understanding of what one can do now. This two-streamed model provides for much more interaction between the Knowledge stream and the Practice stream, and appears to be more precise. However, both streams are required. Action research on its own creates good change agents, but no research. The research yields theories that must be implemented to see its effect on practice. We need both. Therefore, we start with the problem statement and it includes not knowing, and the method for proceeding towards a desired situation. That problem statement is what one requires for research purposes and is a foundation on which to build theory. “It is about the basic stuff that people struggle with: actual self and desired self and how to move from A to B.” (Hermans, 2016) Practice-orientated research implies scientific research aiming at the building of knowledge about practice and contributing to an improvement of practice. This is an essential part of the church’s self-actualization: we become what we ought to be. (Rahner, 1972: 102)

4.4 The Research Question as Starting Point.

“A problem well defined is a problem half solved,” is an age-old adage yet continually apt. A well-defined research question is one that clearly identifies the topic of the research, and identifies the population that is relevant to the question, and the specific issues of interest. (Steward, 2007: 53)

Critical thinkers from the very beginning attempt to ensure that they are working on the real problem before they attempt to solve it in detail. Jan-Albert van den Berg proceeds along this line of thought when he states that there needs to be congruence between the type of praxis problem we are investigating, and the type of methodology we need for developing new knowledge. (Van den Berg, 2011: 6)

However, before we continue, we need to scrutinize the Primary and Secondary Research Questions:

The prime Research Question that this study proposes to address is the following:

PRQ1: How can a partnership between the home and the congregation assist us in developing lived faith in children?

Secondary Research Questions intends to find meaningful answers to elements that will comprise and complete all the necessary data to answer the above-mentioned prime question. (Refer to Chapter 1.4.3)

One might ask the question as to why we need to know these answers. We do need this information as we care for the formation of lived faith in our young. We realize that the current methodology fails to deliver desired results. It has been noted that there is a steady drop-off after confirmation. Our faith is suffering because we are not making an effort of asking the hard questions. We believe that parents, believers, pastors, and churches wish for better results. Adequate knowledge of lived faith (SRQ2) and the role of parents in developing lived faith (SRQ3) might result in better practice that would take us closer to the desired situation. There is a longstanding tradition of congregational faith formation, and we need to determine what role the church has to play in developing lived faith (SRQ4), and whether a symbiotic partnership between congregation and home is beneficial or not (SRQ5).

What do we plan to do? Our problem appears to be not knowing. We do not know how to engage in better support of, tools for and teaching of families. Pastors have not been trained to regard family ministry as essential to ministry. Thus, we need to know what the current state of affairs is, as per SRQ1. We believe that a change in the knowledge stream will result in a change in the practice stream.

What then is the desired outcome of the research? We would like to see evidence of whether congregations are practicing youth ministry with a specific goal in mind, or whether such youth ministry follows a haphazard, feel-good programme which renders no worthwhile outcomes? Do pastors plan the strategy of developing lived faith in children, or do they expect this from the parents? Are parents supported and assisted in this endeavour, or are they expected to do this on their own? Do parents have a strategy for forming lived faith in their young? What are the habits and practices that parents reportedly are doing, and which of these, if any at all, are bearing fruit? Thus, a clear understanding of the problem in terms of the general research question is critical because it gives rise to specific questions that should be raised by the moderator. (Steward, 2007: 45)

4.5 Our Goal in the Light of the Research Questions

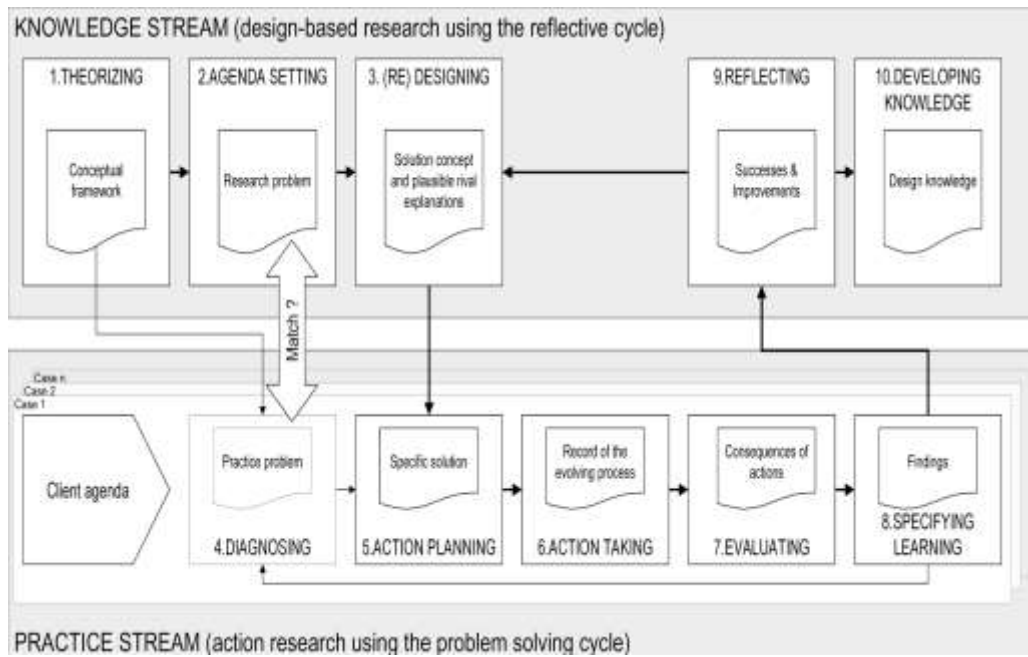
Hence, we turn our attention to the following question: Which phase of the intervention cycle should our research focus on in order to offer new knowledge? As our problem appears to be not knowing, we need to start there by examining current attitudes as evidenced by actions performed in the congregation and at home. This endeavour provides us with a living human text to study as part of the process of developing theory that might alter habits and actions in future.

Our goal is the creation of knowledge for the improvement of professional practice. We evaluate the situation as it is at present, as well as the feelings and thoughts that are prevailing amongst the members. We aim to bring the shared mind-set and belief-system to the surface through qualitative research. We link the views held by the available literature with current practice. The results add knowledge that should contribute to practice in the form of designed principles, or heuristic rules, which are merged so as to generate general solutions for solving real world problems (or solution concepts).

It therefore appears that theory and practice can seamlessly connect in this way. The Knowledge stream enables the development of generic and transferable knowledge. In order to achieve this, researchers utilize rich and detailed case studies as well as case-related reasoning. (Hermans, 2016) ‘Cross case’-analysis, or the comparison between cases plays an important role in creating generic knowledge. Certain questions arise during this kind of research: On which occasion did a general solution lead to the desired effect? On which occasion did it fail to render the desired effect, and on which occasion did it fail us completely? Why did it work under certain conditions, and not under other conditions?

The Practice stream then provides an avenue along which activities aimed at a concrete practice are implemented. The generic knowledge generated is used to intervene in a specific situation. Thus, we are generating knowledge about a specific congregation and a method to bring about change in their context, but simultaneously we are generating generic knowledge that could be useful anywhere.

A useful diagrammatic presentation to facilitate an understanding of this project is demonstrated in the Two Streams model of Andriessen:



When we apply this model to this research, we start with STEP 1: THEORIZING. This implies the building of a theoretical framework for assisting us to diagnose the problem and to identify the causes for its manifestation. In Chapter 3 above we have endeavoured to do just that. We delved into the current state of scholarship and found the indicative (what is) and normative (what should be). This study also provided us with some underpinning to solutions in forming lived faith in children: the literature showed the importance of developing religious language, the development of regular and recurring practices of faith as well as the quality of the parent-child relationship as essential ingredients of a new theory for a new practice.

Next, we proceed to STEP 2: AGENDA SETTING. This represents the stage at which we formulated a knowledge problem, defined the owner(s) of this problem and defined a method for working towards a new practice.

STEP 3 relates to DESIGNING. We examined the available literature more closely, and found a number of generic descriptions for the solution of the problem.

At this stage, we move from the KNOWLEDGE STREAM down to the PRACTICE STREAM.

The next step is STEP 4: DIAGNOSING. Here we implemented Focus Group Interviews to obtain rich data relative to the behaviour of our target audience. Here we engage in the specific problem relevant to this case, not in generic abstractions thereof.

Having obtained a clear picture of factual reality in step 4, we revert to the KNOWLEDGE STREAM in STEP 3: (Re)DESIGN. Now we have accumulated more knowledge of the real world, which knowledge we can display opposite the literature in order to ask for solutions.

This specific study stops here. Henceforth we propose to deliver these data to each of the congregations involved, so that each could engage in STEPS 5 to 8, that is: ACTION PLANNING, ACTION TAKING, EVALUATING and SPECIFYING LEARNING through perusing the findings. Clearly, such data would act as base for a follow-up study whenever it should become feasible.

This study will however complete the process with STEP 9: REFLECTING and STEP 10: DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE. We will have learned much in this process that will help us to understand the phenomenon. This data should be revisited in order to understand how they could benefit the faith community. If we can identify the underlying generative mechanisms for change, we will be able to develop transferable concepts that could be useful in all such cases.

Andriessen (2014) developed this model to explain that we do not seek knowledge for the sake of only knowledge, but knowledge which has value because it contributes to the improvement of the practice that is considered to be the problem. This comprises practice-orientated research.

4.6 The strategy we opt for

Hitherto we have laid the philosophical foundations of what we are about to do. Let us now turn our attention now to the technical detail of this study. How are we going to collect the data? What methodology will we employ? Moreover, how will we analyze the data so generated?

4.6.1 Qualitative Analysis

The data for developing new knowledge are latent in the people and as such, they must be extracted via questions. (Maree, 2007: 47) Words (concepts, terminology and symbols) are the only tools available to us for communicating meaning. Each word is laden with its own complex set of meanings that are often

particular to a specific situation which makes it rather difficult for determining the meaning of words.

This comprises an attempt to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing and understanding of what is being observed. It focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning from their experiences. This brings into account the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioral patterns. Here we encounter an emphasis on the quality and depth of information.

Furthermore, this qualitative approach focuses on people's ideas and notions relative to people's interaction with each other, and their motives and relationships. Reality resides in people's mental constructions, and this reality is revealed by way of habits and actions. This can be observed and questioned in order to come to a better understanding of the deeper meaning of social actions. The obligation of the researcher is to endeavour an understanding of the ways that others have employed reality by asking questions on this subject matter. We ask questions of meaning such as: why do people make particular statements, or why do they act in a certain way? The stories, experiences, and voices of the respondents are the mediums through which we explore and understand reality.

Thus, the researcher is on the alert for patterns, trends and themes that would emerge from the research process. We will endeavour to understand real-life situations from the point of view of the insider.

4.6.2 Utilizing Focus Groups

The basic purpose for utilizing a focus group is to focus. We gather qualitative data from individuals who have experienced some particular concrete situation which serves as the focus of the interview.

A.E. Goldman examines the meaning of the three words in the name: Focus Group Interview. A group comprises of a number of interacting individuals sharing a community of interest. Depth (focus) involves seeking information that is more profound than that which is usually accessible at the level of interpersonal relationships. Interview implies the presence of a moderator who utilizes the focus group as a device for eliciting information. The term 'focus' in the full title simply

implies that the interview is limited to a small number of issues. (Goldman, 1987: 61)

The objective of studying and learning about a particular concrete situation implies that an interview will be relatively singular in focus. This element contrasts with the typical methods for conducting surveys in connection with research undertaken in order to gather statistical measures of numerous topics and variables. This explains the reason why focus groups are commonly employed for purposes of research that is exploratory, clinical or phenomenological. (Steward, 2007: 9)

In this respect, Krippendorff distinguishes two types of data. Emic data are data that arise in a natural or indigenous form. Emic data truly emanates from the subject, and as such, the researcher only minimally imposes it. Etic data represent the researcher's imposed view of the situation. (Steward, 2007: 40) We aim to come as close to reality as is possible by generating emic data in the FGI's (Focus Group Interviews).

The reason why this researcher has selected this particular method, is because the open response format of a focus group provides an opportunity for obtaining large and rich volumes of data from the respondent's own words. The researcher is enabled to obtain deeper levels of meaning, make important connections, and identify subtle nuances in expression and meaning.

A second significant aspect of a focus group is the objective of better understanding of the group dynamics affecting an individual's perceptions, information processing, and decision-making. Live encounters with groups of people will yield incremental answers to behavioral questions that go beyond the level of surface explanation. These encounters elicit the emotions, associations, and motivations that influence behaviour. (Steward, 2007: 9)

We assume that group interaction will be conducive to widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience, and releasing inhibitions that might otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information. Debate and even conflict are encouraged. Participants are enabled to build on the ideas and comments of others. Rich data accumulated in this format helps the researcher to understand what was happening in the group and the reasons therefor. The advantage of FGI (Focus Group Interview) is that it allows opportunities for observing the 'how' and 'why' a person either accepts or rejects the ideas of others.

Steward lists the advantages of the FGI relative to Individual Interviews (Steward, 2007: 46):

1. Synergism, where combined efforts yield more results,
2. Snowballing, where one comment triggers more responses,
3. Stimulation, where the topic becomes unfrozen, and ideas starting to flow,
4. Security, where there is a sense of safety in numbers, and where a person can be more candid being in a group,
5. Spontaneity, where members can choose which questions to answer or where to form an opinion.

Observation constitutes an essential data gathering technique as it holds the possibility of providing us with an insider perspective of the group dynamics and behaviours in different settings. It allows us to hear, see and experience the reality as participants do. The focus is linked to the research question which seeks to determine whether the researcher is focusing on the particular cues and facts being investigated. It is therefore a structured interview which facilitates consistency of the data compiled from different groups.

4.6.3 Recording Interview Data.

In order to capture all the data emanating from the interviews, a voice recorder was used together with a video recorder as back up. This researcher obtained consent (see Appendix D) prior to the commencement of the recording, of which a verbatim transcript has been made. The transcript document was compiled in question-by-question format, and it is attached as an appendix to this thesis. (As this encompass a great many pages, this will be added on CD) The video-recording was made for capturing the non-verbal data. The researcher employed an assistant who corroborated the identification of members who participated.

4.6.4 A Sampling Frame

The subsequent logical step was to identify a sampling frame which consists of a list of subjects who, according to the researcher's believe, were representative of the larger population of interest. Maree states that "qualitative research is generally based on non-probability and purposive sampling rather than probability or random sampling." (Maree, 2007: 79). Sampling decisions are therefore made for

the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information. To answer the research questions.

As the research is focused on mainstream churches, the researcher identified two congregations in different localities, one of which is an old-school type of traditional congregation with a single pastor and basic youth ministry. Throughout this study, we will refer to it as Congregation A. The second congregation is a dynamic congregation in a residential neighbourhood, which has a pastoral team responsible for the conducting of numerous activities and programmes. We will refer to this congregation as Congregation B. However, we could not stop here. We needed to jump the cultural divide to also include a multi-cultural congregation in this study. This will enable us to understand in which respects we are actually similar or not so similar in our approach to forming lived faith in your young. This third congregation is a relatively young, suburban congregation that we will call Congregation C.

As a next step, we endeavoured to locate the raw data appertaining to the way in which the church has hitherto developed its understanding and philosophy of youth ministry and family ministry. The best person to consult in this regard, would probably be the relevant pastor. As the trained expert, he has the most hands-on experience of what is happening and why is it happening in the congregation. Therefore, structured interviews will individually be conducted with each of the pastors involved.

Finally, we required the inputs by parents as they have a vested interest in the faith formation of their young. This study is concerned with the fruits of the current practices of faith formation in the congregation, therefore the parents are the best sources who can evaluate the results critically. Therefore, the interviews were held with parents, and not with the children themselves. Children often focus on felt needs, rather on actual needs. These parents are at the receiving end of whatever the congregation has in mind for their young, and how the congregation goes about supporting, helping and facilitating its family ministry. In order to identify a feasible sample, we directed our attention to catechism classes. All these congregations make use of some structure for schooling their young and we decided to include parents of children aged 10 to 13 in this sample, although it must be said that many of the parents who attended the FGI's had children of different ages, including ages 10 - 13 but also younger and older siblings. These parents reported on any of their

children's behaviour as they saw fit. A method for purposive sampling is involved. Participants are selected on account of a particular characteristic which makes them custodians of the data required for studying. Furthermore, they are parents of children of approximately the same age, all belonging to the same congregation. They are therefore exposed to the same influences operating in their congregation relative to formation of faith and family-ministry. To have a focus group with this sample means that we can expect to obtain the richest possible source of information for answering the research questions. Each Sunday school class comprises members of various households of whom some dedicated to their faith, and others are less dedicated. This diversity is an added bonus to this study. In order to assist us in verifying our data, and to acquire additional diversity, we have decided on two FGI's to be conducted at each of the three congregations.

The initial contact occurred by telephone. The aspirant participant was presented with a brief description of the nature of the research, including an invitation to the focus group interview, and stressing the importance of each person's participation. Participants who were perceived to be of positive inclination, were then presented with the date and place of the interview, and the starting and ending times were also provided. Those participants also received a follow-up telephonic call forty-eight hours prior to the FGI. The focus groups each comprised 6 to 12 persons.

The interview guide set the agenda for a focus group discussion. It was developed directly from the research questions that were the impetus for the research. Its purpose was to provide guidance in order to facilitate the discussion. The purpose of the questions was to stimulate discussion.

4.6.5 The Interview Guide.

The interview guide is the tool for extraction of data from the sampling frame. It will be noted that the right-hand column contains cryptic notes regarding the nature, reasons and status of the questions. (As two of the three congregations, referred to in this study, conducted their business in the Afrikaans language, these Focus Group Interviews were conducted in the Afrikaans language. The third FGI was conducted in English. Consequently, it was deemed prudent to include the

interview guide in both the above-mentioned languages. The English version follows below, and the Afrikaans version is included in Appendix B to this study.)

<p>1. Your congregation offers youth ministry as from age 4 until confirmation class. Your pastor estimates about x% disappear subsequent to confirmation. That is the result of the youth ministry of which your child currently is part. How do you feel about this? Are you afraid that this might happen to your child? Can we do anything to address this?</p>	<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductory question. - Test feelings / emotions - Questioning the success / failure of the present model
<p>2. Think about your child. He/she is involved in a process that is forming his/her faith. What strategy is presently followed in order to assist your child in acquiring lived faith? Could you explain this process to me?</p> <p>2.1 Does your congregation expect any input from you in the process?</p> <p>2.2 How does your congregation support your faith formation efforts with programmes and activities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Probe the parents' understanding of the faith formation process. - They get to verbalize their thoughts on this aspect. - Follow-up: Is there any communication from the congregation's side on this? - Follow-up: the congregation's philosophy on families will become evident here. - Also: Does the congregation invest in its families?

<p>2.3 How do you measure your success with forming faith in your child? Do you have any specific goals that you aim for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goals: stated or intuitive?
<p>3 If the colour of the home is a warm yellow, and the colour of church is a bright red, which orange activities occur in the congregation regarding family-focused programmes where family and ministry meet?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This question checks where the two streams converge. - Can probe these answers further.
<p>4 Which habits relative to forming of faith are practiced by you in your home?</p> <p>4.1 How often do you as family have your meals together?</p> <p>4.2 If there is any specific practice you do at home as to encourage faith formation, and which appears to be successful, share this with us.</p> <p>4.3 Are you prepared to be trained so as to become equipped as a spiritual leader for your child? (How many evenings per month are you willing to set aside in this mission?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the home-stream: habits and practices. - Following up on one specific aspect. - Opportunity for boasting – positive stories. - Follow-up probing commitment: will parents own the problem?

<p>5. List the obstacles that jeopardize more effective faith formation at home. (That could be time / busy programmes / absent father / non-availability of the right materials / attitude / reconstructed families)</p> <p>5.1 Which single thing can your congregation do so as to support you as parent to perform your task?</p>	<p>- Probably the underlying reasons /</p> <p>excuses that have driven behaviour up until now.</p> <p>- After the topic has been unfrozen, the creative ideas might emerge.</p>
<p>6. If you could start over being a parent, what would you do differently?</p>	<p>- Control question: expect some themes to return.</p>

From the above it is clear that we are following what Steward calls a River-model where we aim at depth rather than breadth. (Steward, 2007: 61) To be more precise, we follow two separate river streams simulating two tested concepts, namely, the congregation’s role in forming lived faith but also the household’s role in forming lived faith. We need to examine both, so as to ascertain how they could form synergy.

4.6.6 Setting.

Each FGI was conducted at the church building where the participants were members of the same congregation. Thus, they know this territory. This facilitates a measure of comfort. The seating was arranged in a circle in order to ensure that all the group members were able to see all the others clearly. This set-up facilitated interaction and discussion, and prevented the situation where any member would become a dominant figure, or subgroups would easily form.

4.6.7 Structured Interview

There is yet a further source of qualitative data that we will explore while we are doing our research. Simultaneously with the conducting of our FGI's, we are also requesting rich data from the leaders of each congregation. They are the most informed persons who know what is happening with regard to youth ministry, family ministry and how the congregation approaches faith formation. They are the theologians, the ones who have to think responsibly on how we pass on the faith and develop mature faith in young and old. This will be done by way of structured interviews.

Through personal interviews, the investigator follows a rigid procedure and seeks answers to a set of pre-conceived questions through personal interviews. These interviews will then also be transcribed, translated and analyzed in a similar way as for the FGI's.

The guide for conducting the structured interview in English follows below. (The Afrikaans version may be seen in Appendix C to this study.)

<p>1. Do you experience the drop-off of youth subsequent to confirmation? What, in your opinion is the extent of this drop-off? What, in your opinion, are the reasons for this?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Test the hypothesis - This reflects the philosophy which current is being followed.
<p>2. Kindly list all the activities and programs that your congregation currently offers children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports the previous question. - Compare answers to data obtained from the parents
<p>3. A child is born to a household of your congregation. This child attends church until age 16. What is the current process which is followed in order to develop a mature faith in this child?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Testing any form of partnership already in place.

<p>4. Do you experience the silo-effect where each age group is ministered to separately, isolated and forming their own spirituality? What are the pro's and con' of this arrangement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing any existing partnership: church and home. - Follow-up to determine if regular ministries are family-sensitive.
<p>5. If the colour of the home is a warm yellow, and the colour of the church is a bright red, where do you see orange happening here in the congregation where ministry purposefully engages the families?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine whether a plan for working towards specific outcomes is in operation.
<p>6. How do you measure whether you are successful with the forming of faith? Do you have any specific objectives for your young people?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing the presence of comprehension of the normative - Also testing for creative imagination.
<p>7. If you had no constraints regarding time and money, what dreams do you have about what your congregation can do in order to support families?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Control question re questions 5 & 6.
<p>8. If you could start all over again with your own child in this congregation, how would you arrange your congregation's youth ministry differently?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on personal investment.

<p>9. If the current model of faith formation would be labelled “Church-centered, family-supported”, how, do you think, a model which is labelled “family-centered, and church-supported” would look like?</p>	<p>- Testing for comprehension of the process.</p>
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4.6.8 Pre-testing

The researcher devoted ample time for pre-testing the interview-guides with the co-operation of various groups at different times. This proved to have been a very informative exercise. Certain concepts which appeared to be foreign to regular church members, for instance “lived faith” (deurleefde geloof), induced me repeatedly to translate them into more user-friendly jargon namely “mature faith” (volwasse geloof).

Questions 2.2 and 3 apparently were too similar, and I decided to re-think and re-phrase both. I realized that there were certain occasions when I referred to a ‘process’ and other occasions when I referred to a ‘strategy’, which obviously caused confusion and uncertainty, and needed to be aligned so as to reduce such confusion.

When one puts the same question repeatedly to different groups, one gradually becomes more familiar and creative with the subject. Question 4.2 initially read as: “If you would have to identify one particular habit which you practice at home, which really promotes your child’s faith formation, what would that be?” Subsequent to being pre-tested, it was rephrased to: “Say there is a new couple who brings their baby to be baptized, and the congregation would ask you to mentor them occasionally, what would be the one or two things that you would advise them of which worked for you?”

The positive spin-off was that both the structured interview and the FGI elicited a lively discussion afterwards. The questions comprising the interview-guide only acted as a conversation-starter. I therefore realized that I need to be aware of the possibility that group participants might need some opportunity to be de-briefed subsequently to the FGI.

4.6.9 Reliability

Mariampolski describes reliability relative to qualitative studies as “the results [which] are consistent with the data collected”. (Mariampolski, 2001: 206) Agar argues that for qualitative data collection “the intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability.” (Cohen, 2007: 107) Reliability was strengthened by having two FGI’s per congregation in order to ensure that the data correlate, and to include as many variables as deemed feasible.

The researcher has done a validity check so as to compare codes with a different researcher. This is also called the Cohen’s Kappa test. (See Appendix G to this study) This Test was developed to rate the inter-subjectivity of researchers when doing their research in qualitative measurements. According to Baarde, De Goede and Teunissen: “Inter-subjectivity deals with the question to which extent investigation results are dependent on the casual characteristics of an examiner. Would the analysis of the data, when executed by someone else, provide other results?” (Baarda et al, 2005:332) This is a statistic which measures inter-rater agreement for qualitative (categorical) items. It is generally considered to be a more robust measurement than a simple percentage agreement calculation, since it (κ) takes into account the agreement occurring by chance, and expressed as a constant. (Refer to Appendix G) The Cohen’s Kappa coefficient in this case was calculated as being $\kappa = 0.6$, which is rated as a substantial correlation.

A number of the delimitating factors of this study include the following: We acknowledge that this subject consists of open systems which interact with other systems in multiple ways. This makes it impossible to conclusively identify linear relationships between cause and effect (Maree, 2007: 49) It also results in different possible interpretations and perspectives on reality. As this is a qualitative study, the results can therefore not be generalised.

There is also the very real presence of the Hawthorne effect. Briefly, it holds that when human subjects are involved in research, results may become distorted because of the perceived special attention given to some subjects which could in turn affect the feedback received from respondents. (Maree, 2007: 42) This was quite obvious to the researcher. At the start of the interview, it is clear that most respondents have never had a proper discussion on the topic of family

ministry. However, as the interview progressed and the respondents seemingly became more prepared to unfreeze towards the subject, they became actively involved, and concepts which they seldom entertained before, subsequently translated into their opinions.

For performing this type of group interview, the “rational man” syndrome is a given. Persons being interviewed, are inclined to offer the “right” or “socially accepted” answers to the interview questions, and the onus is on the moderator to probe these and to measure behaviour against attitudes.

We assume that the researcher is subjectively involved. Since the researcher is recording the reality in the focus group, his presence and questions and interpretations might adversely impact on the outcomes.

4.6.10 Ethical Considerations

“Research should be based on mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation, promises and well-accepted conventions and expectations between all parties involved in a research project.” (De Vos, 2011: 113)

Our ethical responsibilities are linked up with the science of delivering pure results which are the fruits of authentic work, as well as with the persons who are being studied. For this very reason, RIMS (The watchdog for ethical issues at the University of the Free State) accepted this research proposal.

Pursuant to the principle that no harm should come to the subjects who are participants in the study, we ensured that the actual names of participants would not be mentioned in order to comply with the principle of privacy. Therefore, no statements or opinions that they make, shall be traceable back to them. We used a system where each participant in the FGI was allocated with a coded number to serve as reference relative to the study. Whereas anonymity makes it impossible for statements to be traceable, confidentiality is different in this respect as the researcher and assistant know the subjects involved, have access to their biographical data and what was reported in the interview by whom. However, the researcher and his assistant treat this information with confidentiality, so that none of the data are traceable by the end user of the report. This is in line with what Strydom calls the principle of beneficence, which harbours the obligation to maximize possible benefits and to minimize possible harm. (ibid: 116)

Consent forms containing written informed consent were used so as to ensure that the participants would know what to expect and would willingly be part of this process. (An example of the Informed Consent Letter is included in Appendix D to this study) It was also clearly stated that the interview would be recorded.

Aspects inclusive of the composition of the research population, the sampling procedure, the methodology utilized, the processing of the data, the writing of the report and ethical considerations were contemplated.

4.6.11 Analyzing the Data

Grounded theory, a research methodology primarily associated with qualitative research, was first proposed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967. According to its founders, grounded theory constitutes an innovative methodology, facilitating ‘the discovery of theory from data’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 1) This implies that in grounded theory the researcher is not focused on testing hypotheses taken from existing theoretical frameworks, but rather develops a new ‘theory’ grounded in empirical data collected in the field. As such, these data are deliberately privileged above extant theoretical concepts.

Strauss and Corbin defined a grounded theory that is “inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 23) Thus, it grounds theory in accounts and observations of everyday life. This form of research is more inductive than deductive.

In its initial phase, grounded theory was seen as opposed to theoretical constructs pre-prepared through an elaborate literature study. For Glaser, it appeared that the fundamental concern was based on the premise that a detailed literature review conducted at the outset might contaminate the data collection, analysis and theory development by leading the researcher to impose existing frameworks, hypotheses or other theoretical ideas upon the data, which would in turn undermine the focus, authenticity and quality of the grounded theory research. (Dunne, 2011: 4)

Glaser continues by articulating the benefits of undertaking an early literature review when using grounded theory. In the first instance, it can provide

a convincing rationale for undertaking a study, including a justification for a specific research approach. Secondly, it can ensure the study has not already been done, while simultaneously highlighting pertinent lacunae in existing knowledge. Thirdly, it can help contextualize the study, orient the researcher, and reveal how the phenomenon has been studied to date. Fourthly, it can help the researcher develop 'sensitizing concepts', gain theoretical sensitivity, avoid conceptual and methodological pitfalls and actually become aware of, rather than numb to, possible unhelpful preconceptions. Fifthly, it might promote 'clarity in thinking about concepts and possible theory development'. Lastly, not informing oneself about relevant literature at an early stage can leave the researcher open to criticism. (Dunne, 2011: 6)

Research using classic Grounded Theory, will have the researcher interacting with those respondents being studied and striving to interpret their social world and meanings expressed. Consequently, the conducting of interviews, transcribing of the text, detailing, storing and referring to theoretical memos, are central to classic Grounded Theory. The researcher will ensure that open-coding be defined as breaking data down and delineating concepts or categories to represent blocks of raw data (i.e., themes), and axial coding as linking themes to one another in a meaningful way (Docan-Morgan, 2010: 2) In this way he prepares himself to build inductively an understanding of the participants' realities and needs. The aim is to develop theory derived from, or grounded in, participants' experiences.

During this process, the researcher is 'memo-ing', which is a central component of Grounded Theory, and is fundamentally based on reflective thinking. As Docan-Morgan explains, memos 'reflect the researcher's internal dialogue with the data at a point in time'. The end result is that after being immersed in the data the researcher believes that the findings reflect the essence of what participants are trying to convey, or represent one logical interpretation of data. (Murphy et al, 2011: 5) Charmaz reflects on the process of writing memos: "When grounded theorists write memos, they stop and analyze their ideas about their codes and emerging categories in whatever way they occur to them, Memo-writing is a crucial method embedded in Grounded Theory because it prompts researchers to analyze their data and to develop their codes into categories early in the research process. (Charmaz, 2006: 188)

Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967) modified this approach, aiming at making Grounded Theory more transparent to researchers. (Murphy et al, 2011: 2) They developed Grounded Theory research so as not to produce a set of definitive findings or a description. Instead, it produces an ongoing conceptual theory. This theory will be recognizable to people familiar with the instance and will be adaptable to similar settings.

Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) also offered the realistic and attractive option of initially compiling a general literature review of the area at the start of a study. This approach tallies with the ethical and funding requirements of contemporary research.

The coding process provided by Strauss and Corbin allows researchers to generate categories and identify links between them. It directs researchers to move from open to axial and on to selective coding. Concepts, categories, and sub-categories are continually subjected to questions and comparisons, with the aim of identifying the core category and its links with the others.

This research project comprises fundamentally Grounded Theory research. The researcher did not compile a list of pre-defined codes for applying to the primary documents. His approach was to firstly focus on the data, to peruse such data and to code the concepts embedded in the documents. The coding is thus based on the emic data uncovered from in the interviews.

4.7 Conclusion

We have examined the research project in this chapter. We have scrutinized the what, the why, the how, with whom, to what end, and in what manner? This researcher is convinced that any reader could comfortably retrace the steps and replicate on what has been done hitherto. This elucidates the way in which we acquired our data. These data can be seen in the enclosed Addendum appearing on an accompanying CD). The data obtained from the three aforesaid Congregations A, B and C are attached. For each of these congregations we have prepared three transcripts relative to three structured interviews with the relevant pastor, and transcripts relative to two Focus Group Interviews with parents. A total of nine primary documents were used for analyzing purposes. In the next two

chapters we are engaging with those raw data. We will analyze the data using the powerful tool of ATLAS.TI and hopefully will acquire a notion of what we can learn from the rich text, which happens to be the human being.

Chapter five will be dedicated to the Secondary Research Question (SRQ1): What is the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation, and what are the emanating results? We will trawl the interviews for information pertaining to this question, to be absolutely sure that we understand the current models used in faith formation.

In Chapter six we will have a closer look at SRQ2 – SRQ5:

- What constitutes a lived faith in children?
- What is the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children?
- What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children?
- What constitutes a partnership between congregations and the home in the formation of lived faith in children?

As we research these questions, we do believe that the answer to our Primary Research Question will be forthcoming, namely: How can a partnership between the home and the congregation assist us in developing lived faith in children? (PRQ1). So, let's dance!

5. STEPPING ON TOES

5.1 Introduction

The art of dancing is explicitly demonstrated when the two partners get together, learn to know each other well, have rehearsed their dance repeatedly and know exactly what to expect from his/her dance partner. Such a couple can spontaneously lean into the music, and flow gracefully with the rhythm. They appear to almost effortlessly glide across the dance floor in perfect harmony, attuned to each other's steps, movements, signals and lead. Something really beautiful to behold as it is actually a rarity. More often you will observe amateurish attempts where the couple is not perfectly attuned to the music, often missing the rhythm and getting out of sync with each other. These amateurs sometimes lead off with the wrong foot, or take a short stride in lieu of a long one, so that the net result inevitably is the anathema of the dance floor: stepping on the partner's toes. When you step on your partner's toes, you not only are in the wrong, but you are forcing your partner out of sync with the dance, because that foot is now pinned down and therefore unable to proceed to where it is supposed to be with the next beat of the music. Stepping on toes usually result in disrupting the dance, if not completely bringing it to a halt.

Our study of the three congregations concerned repeatedly brought this image of stepping on toes, to the fore. We interviewed the spiritual leaders of these congregations, and we interacted with their dance partners, namely the parents who collectively are part of these congregations. They quite often uttered words such as: "We're not happy", or, "when it comes to my child's faith development I worry a lot".

In this chapter we will endeavour to address the first of the Secondary Research Questions, namely: What is the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation, and what are the emanating results? (SRQ1) Schoeman defines this exploration of congregations as a search for significance. (Schoeman, 2015: 1) This search for significance includes three distinct lenses, the first lens being theological significance. When we look through this lens at a congregation we engage in “discernment as the activity of seeking God’s guidance amid the circumstances, events and decisions of life” (Osmer, 2008: 137). The second lens to apply in our analytical process, is seeking practical significance, where we look at lived faith and faith practices as they occur in real life. The third lens entails looking at the contextual significance. “A development in practical theology is that it wants to be transformational, not only to people, but also to the understanding and situation of the current context and world.” (Reader, 2008: 7) As each of these three congregations are nestled in its own unique context, we will examine each one separately, and finally draw conclusions by looking through these three lenses. If the transfer of faith from one generation to the next in a congregation can be viewed as a spiritual house, we will be looking at what pillars each congregation has put in place to sustain and uphold this cherished institution. Hopefully this metaphor will give us an idea of how well structured this process of faith formation is to sustain the faith of the next generation.

5.2 Congregation A

5.2.1 An overview of the congregation

Congregation A is a mainstream church, affiliated to the Dutch Reformed Denomination. It is situated in one of the suburbs of an industrial town that has predominantly been inhabited by a White middle-class population. The congregation was founded in 1977 – in the heyday of economic growth, but since then a number of industries have closed down and people have moved following job opportunities elsewhere. This trend mostly affects young families, and not necessarily older people who are secure in their work, or pensioners. This suburb still remains a good location where families can thrive. Therefore, many families opt to stay in the community, and to commute to the distant cities for pursuing their

jobs. This option creates opportunities for parents to place their children in city schools of their choice. There is, however, a drawback as it means spending much more time travelling, and less leisure time available at home.

The net effect of these complications is that this congregation has diminished in the course of time. At present the total membership consists of 694 adults and 146 kids according to the official numbers. In reality, however, up to 40% of these members are attending on any given Sunday. The congregation employs one full time pastor on its staff, and the majority of the youth work, Sunday school and children's ministries are planned, coordinated and conducted by volunteers from the ranks of the congregation. There is only one Sunday service presented on a Sunday morning whilst children's church is running concurrently with it. Following after the Sunday morning service, an hour is devoted to Sunday school activities.

5.2.2 The ministry model

The ministry model of this congregation can be described as communal and relational (emphasizing human relationships in the context of a faith community) (Metzger, 2009: 19) The focus is on establishing a relationship with Christ and the fellow-men. The activities are similar to those that one would find in any traditional model, but they have a Gospel-centered intention. The task, programme, and ministry (duties of the minister) is a means to achieve a deep-set end. The ministry is never the focal point, because the Gospel is always kept in view. The persons who conduct the ministries are by no means perfect, but they are maturing examples for their teams to be followed (Ephesians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9). They are enhancing their sanctification by not concealing their relational challenges. Those who follow them know that there are flaws because of appropriate sanctification discussions held within their community. The issues that matter most to them are character development, spiritual leadership, modelling Christ, dealing with ruling heart issues, family leadership, personal sanctification, repentance, confession of sin, steady growth to maturity, walking in humility, brotherly serving one another, acceptance of real accountability, and Biblical fellowship. This kind of church would not regard innovation in ministry as the main qualifier for a person to lead a ministry. For them, matters of the heart have preference. Both innovation and creativity are necessary, but the character of the

person leading from the front is regarded more important. During our interview with the pastor (The full texts of the FGI's together with the paragraph numbering, are included on a separate CD as addendum, so that the reader is enabled to follow up, and be informed of the source from which the quote is derived. In each case, when reference is made to a quote, it will be indicated in the format noted as e.g. (2:34), which should be interpreted as being Primary Document number 2, Paragraph 34 of the relevant interview.) it was this emphasis on character that filtered through. One of his personal disappointments was that several of the members of the church council were still overly number-driven. The pastor stated: "What have happened in the past, is that, in their confirmation year, people pitch from all over, and they make the biggest promises. Then they sit here for a year, and our members say: Hallelujah, Amen, there are 23 children in confirmation class!! But when you look back, you'll see that only about eight or nine has actually gone the whole way of catechism. So, for a lot of them, it's only a show, and now they and their parents are on the books, and when we look at our statistics we see a lot of them who are not involved in anything." (3:04) This spiritual leader is striving for character development and Christ-likeness as opposed to numbers in attendance and publicity.

Faith formation in this congregation is largely viewed in the traditional sense, and in the interviews with the parents and members of the congregation, as well as the structured interview with the pastor, we discerned that faith formation in Congregation A it is mainly based on four pillars or programmes.

5.2.3 Pillar no 1. The Sunday Service

The first pillar of faith formation appears to be that families are encouraged to experience the Sunday church service together. The pastor's own words are: "I myself believe that we need to be together in one Sunday service. My point is it is like a Christmas tree: we all sit around one Christmas tree: grandpa and grandma, mom and dad and all the children. We are one family." (3:20) This model represents the Sunday service as the centripetal force of what is happening in the congregation, and therefore everybody – young and old – needs to be involved.

From the interviews held with the parents, it became evident that young children have a hard time in having to sit through the Sunday service. "A child sits in the

church service, but his mind is elsewhere, he doesn't listen to the pastor" (1:015), says one mother. Another mother of an eight-year-old child adds: "I mean the sermons are way over their heads. Sometimes I just feel: lower the level. Life puts pressure on our kids to grow up before their time. Jesus said: let the little ones come to me. They must also feel welcome at church. The Bible was written so that regular people can understand it. We need to lower the level." (1:089) Even parents with young adults in the house echo these sentiments: "My kids are older now, and even now they can't listen to the pastor. I have threatened them to ask questions when we come home, and then they will sit upright and listen for a few minutes, but soon they'll start to slide back again. Sometimes they will ask me afterwards what did the pastor mean with this and that, and I would have to explain the whole sermon all over again, and then they would say: so, why didn't he just say that?" (1:204)

Listening to and taking note of these comments, help us to understand the disadvantages of this particular model, namely, that a single Sunday service usually caters for a single demographic more than it satisfies the needs of the others. While adults feel that the service has much to offer them, children sadly often feel left out, overlooked and almost totally forgotten. The pastor however, confesses that: "I think we are still not doing enough for our children." (3:20). His plan to rectify this void, is to involve more young members in the service, either by having competent young people reading some poetry, singing in the choir or an ensemble, or collecting the offerings during the service. These activities undoubtedly help to foster a sense of ownership in the young, but the formal style of the sermon proceedings, the outdated language of the hymns and even the particular Bible translation used, are such that children unfortunately soon lose interest in the proceedings.

By deliberately involving children in the formalities pertaining to the liturgy, this congregation has managed to retain the Sunday service as the main pillar of their faith formation endeavour. The emanating results are positive for the greatest part: "The communion with Easter was very special. Each family received a bag with goodies in. It was different and people were interested" (2:053) This statement by a father, resonated by another father stating: "People like something new and different. When the smaller kids came to sing in the service, we loved that. And also when they had to stand up and go and give their offering, it was different than usual. For a long time, we had nothing like that, but it is starting to happen again. We also see more children coming to Sunday school. It is nice to see." (2:055)

The challenge for this model, is to communicate with every age group attending. Frequently the children are partially involved in some aspects of the liturgy, but then apparently forgotten as the sermon progresses. This creates challenges for parents so as to keep the attention of their offspring focused. In this respect a mother confides: "We have a notebook and we write down the text and the sermon notes each Sunday, and later in the week we will go through it again. And if the little one doesn't understand we will explain carefully to him. It helps, because they cannot concentrate that long." (2:057)

For this very reason certain parents have started a children's church which runs concurrently with the Sunday church service. This is a departure from the traditional model that was not part of the pastor's paradigm as he stated in his own words: "At present I'm acting against my typical nature. I leave them to do their thing. I'm giving more freedom for them to do their ministry." (3:33) Although the pastor is adamant that children's church should not merely be a child minding or care-taking enterprise, but rather an actual church service that is age appropriate, albeit that he has little control over the materials used and the way this ministry is conducted.

As indicated above, this is where the significance of a relational model comes to the fore. Presently there are seven mothers of this congregation who are engaged in making a success of the children's church. The pastor knows these mothers well and is justified in trusting that they have the same vision or similar for the development the faith of their young. One of these volunteers confirms this by stating: "I also think children's church on Sunday are very helpful. We don't just want to entertain the children; we are teaching the Bible. They don't just come for the fun and games." (1:029) This pastor being the church leader, gives them freedom to perform their ministry, and as a result of that, the main service on Sunday is reaping the results. He reminisces that: "One of these moms and her husband taught the little children a song one Sunday. And they put on nice little hats, and just after collection was taken, they marched the children into the service and they sang their song to the congregation." (3:12). And then he adds: "These are the type of things we would like to develop more." (3:12)

Although this congregation devotes considerable effort to retain the Sunday service as its main focus for faith formation, there are also the despondent voices of parents lamenting: "We have a twenty-year-old in the house, and sometimes it can

be difficult to motivate him to come to church with us, so sometimes we even have to force him.” (2:033) Others explain that their children “want a church where stuff is happening and it feels alive, and they will not get it here.” (2:011) Several terms used, include words such as “I find that very sad” (1:005), and even “it makes me nervous” (1:011), to describe the emotions that parents experience when they realize that their young ones will not fit into this particular model which this traditional church has to offer.

5.2.4 Pillar no 2. Sunday school

At the core of the pastor’s understanding of faith formation, features the regular attendance of Sunday school. The crux of regular attendance of Sunday school has not so much to do with gaining specific Biblical knowledge, but rather has to be customized as an activity which has a Gospel-centered intention. Slowly, over time, the youth develop a Biblical worldview and they acquire the language of the faith. This is implicit in the pastor’s understanding of why some children disappear from the church after their confirmation. “But when you look back, you’ll see that only about eight or nine has actually gone the whole way of catechism. So, for a lot of them, it’s only a show, and now they and their parents are on the books, and when we look at our statistics we see a lot of them who are not involved in anything.” (3:04) Therefore, the church board passed a resolution which lay down that you cannot enter the confirmation class without at least also attending catechism class during the previous year also.

In this particular congregation, Sunday school comprises age-specific groups, meeting in separate venues for one hour following on the Sunday morning church service. Each group has a voluntary Sunday school teacher, and these teachers give instruction on specific subject matter that constitutes part of a curriculum for Sunday school. This process culminates in the confirmation class – usually occurring when learners reach the age of seventeen – that is conducted by the pastor personally. In the Afrikaner culture, it is still regarded as a very important rite of passage to be formally confirmed in the church. Although the pastor regards this in a very serious light, there is evidence that certain parents would prefer that this procedure affecting their children should follow the shortest possible route.

The pastor comments: "It is still a big deal for parents that their children be confirmed. But they only want the shortest route." (3:04)

In terms of our interviews it was evident that the culture in this faith community is such that Sunday mornings are reserved for church attendance. Sunday afternoons are utilized by people for open-air enjoyment including driving somewhere, visiting folks and preparing for the week. Thus, if you have children, you need to reserve two hours for church attendance on a Sunday. If you are a child, you are expected to sit through an hour during the main service where your concentration ability was challenged to the utmost, followed by another hour of Sunday school. One of the parental mothers aired her views as follows: "But I would like to add Sunday school here. They do get good information there, but we need to make it more exciting. Sometimes they complain that it is too long on a Sunday morning, but if it is interesting, it wouldn't feel as long." (2:027) Many children sitting through two long classes, back-to-back, regard this as being just too long, and they therefore gradually lose interest.

To make things even worse, is that parents perceive this waiting for their children at church for an additional hour, as a waste of time. We sense that particular sentiment in the following quote: "And Sunday school. I want them to teach my children well. We used to have tests and did Bible quizzes, but it isn't like that anymore. They talk a bit and then go home and they don't learn stuff. We had like a book and we had to go do some homework in it. So, I feel a bit let down by Sunday school as it is now." (1: 053) When parents perceive this commitment yielding no tangible results, they will certainly give up on it.

Frustration is caused by the perception that the importance of Sunday school during the formative years of a child, is not widely propagated or understood by the congregation. The pastor verbalizes his observation by stating: "The kids came very willy-nilly to Sunday school: if you want to come, fine, if you don't want to come, fine". (3:16) Offered such option, the children would rather skip another hour of schooling. Thus the blame is justifiably placed at the feet of the parents. The pastor furthermore states: "So, for a lot of them, it's only a show, and now they and their parents are on the books, and when we look at our statistics we see a lot of them who are not involved in anything." (3:04)

Although the parents are pinpointed as instrumental in their children skipping Sunday school, it appears that the congregation also has some measure of blame to

bear. No serious thought or consideration or critical evaluation were given to the study materials used at Sunday school. This situation has prevailed for a number of years until the pastor investigated the status quo and found: "We have had some Sunday school materials that was very funky and all that, but the content was poor. And this lead to a situation where the grade 8 group of this year cannot even pray the Our Father prayer from memory. They just don't know their Bible." (3:45)

The comments of the parents, suggest that they sense their toes have been stepped on. They approached the dance floor and they gave the first gallant steps. Unfortunately, a very clumsy partner frustrated their attempt for faith formation in their children's lives via Sunday school. One parent had this to say: "I want there to be better structure. There must be structures that assist me in teaching the right stuff to my kids. I grew up with Sunday school outings, and had to memorize scripture. The structure of Sunday school is gone. There is no structure to assist in the formation of the faith of the children." (1:025)

"The thing I miss," says yet another parent, "is, when I was young we used to have Sunday school handbooks, and you had some homework to do, on Monday, Tuesday, and so. You had to fill in stuff, write out a verse and it was good to do that. But our children don't have any of that. I think at one time we had no Sunday school books, so you came to church, but you had nothing to work on in the week." (2:063) Here then appears to be the irony: We have very willing dance partners available. The congregation yearns for a dynamic Sunday school structure culminating in a vibrant confirmation class. The parents are wishing for a structured, well thought-out curriculum for Sunday school teaching in order to enhance the growth of faith in their offspring, but presently very little joy is forthcoming from this part of the dance.

5.2.5 Pillar no 3. Youth events.

When a congregation works in terms of a communal ecclesiology, such as congregation A does, the task, programme, or ministry becomes a means to a greater end. In their relationships, members of the congregation experience the love of God revealed, experience aspects of the faith which is to be modelled, and appropriate sanctification discussions within their community to build their faith is evidenced. Harper and Metzger state: "We must give foundational consideration to

the church as the community of the Triune God because the church derives its core identity from its relationship with the Triune God to whom the church is united as God's people." (Metzger, 2009: 14) As God lives in a community where love and grace abounds, we as church should therefore seek out fellowship with other believers where we are enabled to show the heart and mind of God's love and grace.

During previous years, this has been the staple diet of the youth ministry of congregation A. The pastor explains that: "There was a time when lots more was happening. We had a youth event on Tuesdays with 85 children involved. Last year we still retained a candidate pastor as a youth worker." (3:12) These words of the pastor echo a yearning for times past when youth events were numerous and attendance was at a peak. Instinctively church leaders know that where these kinds of activities are taking place, they are winning ground in terms of relationships and goodwill, and ultimately creating situations where faith formation can take place. For this very reason this congregation invested in acquiring the services of a candidate pastor as youth worker, with the expectation and belief that he would create such a programme that would attract the young ones to youth events. Sadly, this expectation was not realized.

One of the participants contributing to the study lamented that: "Our eldest started to complain: there is nothing for us at our church, and they had friends in other churches who were doing stuff on Friday evenings, so they started to go there with them." (1:077) The majority of adults in this congregation perceive the staple diet of their faith formation to be the Sunday church service, and they are set in this seven-day rhythm, so as to move from the one Sunday to the next Sunday. Youths are not set in such kind of rhythm. As they are still growing spiritually, they regard a seven-day rhythm as just too long. One participant said: "So, if the church can offer more options in the week for involvement, it will have much higher impact than only one hour on a Sunday." (1:021)

This lack of youth activities is a matter of concern to many parents, and they are very vocal about this omission. "And if he doesn't attend on Sundays, there is nothing else in the week. We have tried some youth activities during the week, but it all died out." (2:045) "The church must show interest in the week. They need to be more involved than only on Sundays." (1:019). "I would ask for more support for the youth. Like doing youth camps. I mean, they do women's' conferences, and men's' conferences, why not something similar for the youth?" (1:184)

Part of the frustration shown by parents can be traced back to the fact that many parents grew up with these kinds of youth activities. “We had SKJA (Structured church youth activity during the week) and Kinderkrans (Structured activity aimed at primary school learners). Those structures are now non-existent. We had Sunday school camp-outs. That is where you got to know your fellow church buddies.” (1:057) These parents know the value that accrued from those former youth activities. Apart from opportunities for forming friendship with other Christian young people and the sense of belonging to the tribe of faith, they enhanced their understanding of the Bible and developed the formation of faith habits which ultimately contributed to instill the long-term lived faith that they now hold so dearly. They wish that their children could have the same experiences and be exposed to similar faith formation processes. They came to the dance but their toes were firmly pinned to the floor so that they were unable to participate as they would have loved to.

5.2.6 Pillar no 4. Family faith formation

One of the traditional values inherent in a traditional model, is a strong reliance on faith formation at home. This is confirmed by the pastor: “But there are some, you can see, the parents are doing home devotions. So, there is definitely some depth here.” (3:45) The expectation is still strong that the role of the parents should be fulfilled in terms of teaching the meaning of the faith to their offspring, and putting their faith into practice at home. It appears from the interviews that this pillar of faith formation has manifested as the strongest influential factor. Parents shared many stories and incidences concerning the way in which they devote time and energy towards this endeavour. These include reflecting on Sunday’s service whilst at home, reading from the Bible and praying together and reflecting about the events which occurred during the day in the light of our faith. The interviewees used emotionally charged language when explaining their reasons and philosophies underlying these activities.

The pastor of congregation A related a moving story regarding a ten-year-old boy who wanted to partake of the communion. His father however, was adamant that his son could not be allowed to do so at that stage of his young life. Then the mother had an in-depth discussion with her son concerning his motives and understanding

of the communion, which would be necessary to allow him to partake of this precious sacrament. (3:25) The pastor related this story to demonstrate faith formation in the family context. He advised that it should be done immediately. As soon as the question arises it should be dealt with. There are boundaries however, which in this case were clearly set by the father. There should be a prior discussion and conversation pertaining to the meaning and understanding of the communion. All of this should be happening within the loving framework of the strong relationship which the parents are expected to have with their children. The end result should be that they prepare him relative to this holy sacrament, and ensure that when he eventually participates, he does so with full understanding of what it entails.

This expectation however, extends even further than actual faith habits, as it also extends to faithful daily living. This includes family members spending time together, and parents supporting their children in their endeavours to achieve their goals. As the pastor states: “Parents are taking responsibility. I often see this, for instance on a Saturday at the school’s rugby event: the parents who are there supporting their children, those are the parents of this congregation. They are with their children.” (3:24). In his longitudinal study spanning four generations, exceeding more than 40 years, Bengtson found that it is of significant importance to note that parental behaviour does affect their children’s religious development. He calls it “role modelling”— embracing those things what parents do in setting examples for religious practice and belief, including attending church services regularly, participating in church activities, and fostering faith development at home through prayers, scripture reading, and religious story-telling. These are the actions that churches and religious leaders endeavour to teach parents to do. “Moreover, it is important, as seen from our interviews, that parents show consistency between belief and practice: ‘walking the walk and not just talking the talk,’” (Bengtson, 2013: e-source). It becomes clear, therefore, that parental behaviour is one of the key factors relative to role modelling and consistency.

Several of the parents included in this study, voiced similar opinions: “And your parents play an import role in all of this. I mean, my parents kept me on the right track, and I want to do the same for my children.” (1:009) “So the biggest building blocks now are mom and dad at home. That is the foundation. That is my personal

experience that is what we aim to do at home.” (1:015) This reveals a clear understanding of what must be done and how to go about to accomplish it.

But we also heard from the parents who participated in the study, that the above-mentioned views might not be held in all households connected with this congregation. One of the interviewees expressed his concern this way: “Seldom do you find parents who know how to coach their young, and the church didn’t equip us to do that. The church didn’t equip parents to teach their children how to live in this busy, modern world.” (1:089) Here is a clearly stated expectation that the dance partner (the congregation) should take the lead and guide its fellow dance partner (the parents) how to participate in this divine perichoresis. Several parents were outspoken: “But I know I need guidance with the other child”. (2:121) As this is rated as a very high priority for parents, the majority of the interviewees responded positively to the question whether they would be willing to attend scheduled events at church where they could be taught the skills of forming lived faith in their children.

Finally, family faith formation also features in the pastor’s vision for the future of his congregation. He mentions the name of a person who “has a farm just outside our town, and I would like to take families there, for bike riding, and fishing and eating and spending time together. This is my idea of family ministry.” (3:45) In some instances this is already happening, for instance at the church fête, they involved families to work together and provide help as a unit. (3:45). Another example is when some of the younger families worked together in laying out a garden in front of the church building. That was such a joyful occasion that the congregation actually held their Easter service right there where the families laid out this garden. (3:24) In this way faith formation is facilitated by the parents who spend time with their children either at church executing regular service projects, or during the normal course of life, where their example of actions and words might be instruments of teaching the faith to others.

One parent viewed the different roles of the congregation and the home in this way: The church should provide formal teaching on the Biblical and doctrinal issues, while “we do the more practical stuff at home, like reading the Bible and praying together, and practicing what the Bible teaches. Our example, how we interact with people, how we conduct yourselves, that is very important.” (2:029) This member of the congregation understands and knows his role in the dance. He has taken

action and understands the necessary steps to make the dance work. He is actually begging from his congregation: please lead me gracefully to join this dance. Please don't step on my toes by your unreadiness for playing your part.

5.2.7 Some Closing Comments on Faith Formation in Congregation A

Congregation A typifies the majority of Dutch Reformed mainstream congregations in South Africa, when it comes to faith formation. These pillars mentioned above have been built through the ages as the traditional way of developing faith in a younger generation. It can honestly be said that the pastor as well as most parents interviewed have a solid understanding of their theological and denominational heritage, and they remain true to their understanding thereof.

While congregation A may score high in following the tradition of faith formation developed over decades, it seems that the issue that needs to be addressed should be the question concerning relevance. "The task of practical theology as an original science demands a theological analysis of the particular present situation in which the church is to carry out this special self-realization appropriate to it at any given moment" (Rahner, 1972: 3). The terms "this present situation" and "any given moment" ask for relevance. But Rahner also calls for a theological analysis, thus the question needs to be answered: Is congregation A successful in seeking theological significance for the faith formation of their young? The answer is not a straight forward "yes" or "no". Our analysis shows that the pastor and many members have a Christ-centered intention, where the *kyrugma* (preaching of the Word on Sunday morning) stands at the center of this faith community. This study also revealed a glaring lack of discernment how to package the essential gospel for younger age groups during the 1) Sunday service, 2) Sunday school or 3) Youth activities during the week.

When we adapt the second lens of significance, namely practical significance, we asked the question to parents: What is the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation, and what are the emanating results? (SRQ1). Since practical theology is "an activity of faith practiced by believers" (Miller-McLemore, 2011: 4), it stands to reason that a priestly listening to their perceptions may help

us to understand where the congregation needs to develop its relevance. This study revealed that these parents rated the significance of the current faith formation model to be low.

The third lens through which to examine faith formation in congregation, is the lens of contextual significance. If we can formulate this into a question, it might sound like this: “How can faith formation in congregation A impact the community in which it is placed?” When we look at the interviews from this perspective, we see mixed results. There are families in this congregation where faith is shaping the way their children will behave as responsible citizens of this country (1:107). We encountered families who live their faith in public places for instance sports venues (3:024). We have also seen that outsiders may come to visit this congregation because of specific needs (1: 04). When we take this into account, it is obvious that this congregation has a role to play in its context, and they are rising up to meet the expectation. It is equally true that much needs to be done for this congregation to fulfil its contextual relevance. While the composition of the population of this suburb has changed over the years, the composition of the population of this congregation has not changed: they still remain a predominantly white Afrikaner faith community. Where the ministry model utilizes a communal and relational focus, the possible negative outcome is an insider-outsider mind-set, where the term “we” is used for the insiders who are part of the congregation (3:020), and the term “them” is reserved for people who do not share the same mind-set as us (3:004). Lastly, the language of the congregation was the language of a fixed institution, where they have fixed programmes and events for instance Sunday service, Sunday school, etc. We did not encounter missional language in our interviews. Seldom did we hear people talking about their mission, or calling. In this respect we perceive the contextual significance to be low.

5.3 Congregation B

5.3.1 An overview of the Congregation

The second congregation is a vibrant congregation situated in a residential neighbourhood of a large city. While other neighbouring congregations have been closing its doors permanently, this congregation has experienced steady growth

over a number of years. At the time this study was conducted, it was almost in the process of merging with another congregation and relocating to new premises. This congregation has approximately 2063 adult members and 763 young members, which is quite significant when considering the average age of their membership and the attributes of persons who are attracted to this congregation. There is a rather large staff comprising twelve persons, and a pastoral team which is responsible for the conducting of numerous congregational activities and programmes.

The functional model of this congregation shows that it has a more external, utilitarian, and practical focus than other conventional congregations. Some would call this a ministry-centered church, where the emphasis is placed on doing rather than being. There is obviously some merit to this model as it can be attractive to people who are un-churched and somewhat timid about the church scene. The relational model would scare them off because they don't want to expose their personal lives to anyone that they do not know. This model is therefore somewhat charismatic since it depends strongly on the charismatic leadership skills of the senior pastor. He, in turn, regards ministry as being latently effective in five areas: Preaching, Counselling, Children, Teens and Worship. The pastor explained the setup as follows: "I think there are 5 key jobs, three of those are outsourced to additional team members: children, teens, and worship. If any of those are not properly in place, your congregation will fail. Through the years we have worked hard to keep those three strong." (6:37). This ministry model is therefore quite clear. There are five areas of ministry which are highlighted, and for each a strong, charismatic and talented staff member is appointed to make that part of ministry work efficiently. This is in keeping with the reformed faith tradition as expounded in the *Confessio Belgica*. Van der Borgh states: "The ecclesiology of this confession of faith is in keeping with the article about the unique mediating role of Christ." (Borgh, 2007: 120) This ministry attaches a high status to places and meetings where ministry is practiced. Therefore, this is the focus of this congregation's energy, efforts and budget. As the *Confessio Belgica* states: "All ought to join it in order to safeguard the unity within the church, by subjecting themselves to its doctrine and discipline, by bending their neck under the yoke of Christ, and by serving their brothers with the gifts that come from God. (ibid: 121) In this congregation these gifts from God are the right people in the right places, doing the

right ministry in the right way. “You need to have a champion,” explains the pastor of congregation B, “who keeps the others mindful of families, and who creates programs. In this manner we appointed someone for children’s ministry, and someone for teen’s ministry, and someone as worship leader.” (6:33)

This model of ministry may certainly be described as an attractional model. Churches that understand this functional model of ministry can do well in drawing folks to their assemblies. One participant in the study put it this way: “They (children) must have the willingness to come. Develop church so that the children will want to come.” (4:031). A congregation that works with this assumption, makes the bar low and casts the net wide by having ministries that reach people in practical ways. Success is measured by attendance. The pastor reports: “I had to jump in and do the confirmation class. But I think it is going well. Have you ever heard of a confirmation class that is growing? (6:05) In an urban context, with many churches and denominations located all around them, this congregation found its niche, and is working hard towards providing ministry that is unique, powerful and relevant every week. Thus, they have a regular Sunday morning service, with a children’s church running concurrently. This children’s church also functions as Sunday school for the younger children. At the very same time, in a separate venue, they have a teen’s service as the mainstay for the teenager’s faith formation. There are also activities throughout the week where children are involved. Let’s take a closer look at these ministries provided by congregation B.

5.3.2 Age-appropriate ministry.

A deeply entrenched undercurrent of the philosophy and practice of faith formation at congregation B, is the segmentation of youth activities according to age group. The pastor explains: “On Sundays we have a baby room, for 0 – 2-year-olds. There is no ministry there, just baby care. We also have a toddler class for ages 3 – 5. This happens during the Sunday service, and they have a basic lesson and then playtime.” (6:09) Each age group is allocated a specific venue where age-appropriate ministry is provided.

The principle underpinning this segmentation, is explained by the pastor as follows: “In our congregation we place high value on ministry to children. We are not just entertaining them. We are intentional with faith formation.” (6:49) This is

not a case of separating the children from the Sunday service in order to secure an undisturbed meeting for adults. It is rather a case of providing the best possible spiritual formation to the children that can be delivered to their particular age group. Thus “you have your children’s ministry, and then you have your teen ministry, and then you have your twenty somethings, and sometimes they are really very independent. Because each guy is operating on his own.” (6:20) When this congregation structured their faith formation, it was clearly seen as modular: each age-group has a module that has to be put in place.

Although the strategy for faith formation is based according to age-appropriate modules, the specific content of each module has not as yet been clarified. Regarding the structured interview: when the pastor was asked what system they have in place for helping a child reach mature faith, the answer was: “But if you ask me whether we have a systematic plan in place, no, we don’t. We hope to develop it one day.” (6:16) In a certain sense this systematic plan might not have consciously been formulated and set out on paper, but it does exist intuitively in the leadership: “Maybe it’s a little thumb suck, but we hope our activities will lead to that point.” (6:16) This is the positive side of having charismatic, gifted leadership as these persons are people with the right spiritual talents, knowing instinctively how to engage in ministry in a positive way. There is however, also a flipside to having charismatic, gifted leadership as the hard work of studying and working out a system of faith formation for the youth of the congregation, is often ignored or neglected leaving room for blind spots and uncertainty to ensue, and affect the members and parents of the congregation adversely.

While endeavouring to answer the research sub-question on what the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation entails, and what the emanating results are, we will consider the two main age-appropriate ministries – or pillars - developed by congregation B, for forming the back-bone of the spiritual development of its young.

5.3.3 Pillar no 1. Ministry to children.

In congregation B ministry to children include primary school learners from grade 1 up to grade 6. The pastor explains: “We have also found that the grade 7’s are too small for the older kids, and too old to fit with the smaller kids. So, we have this

symbolic action, were we walk them over to join the high school kids, and then they know this is where they belong now. So, we have a paid person working with the grade 1 – 6 group in the mornings. We use the template of Willow Creek's Promiseland. First, they have a large group Bible lesson, and then they split up into smaller groups, each with a young leader. We had a camp for them, this past weekend. Many of them are still too small to sleep over, so they come on Friday evening, and then some sleep over, and then we continue on the Saturday. And once a month on a Friday afternoon we have what we used to know as 'Kinderkrans'. She calls it V-kids. Then they do action learning. That is what we do with our primary school pupils." (6:10)

From the above quotation, we wish to highlight the following: youth work pertaining to this segment of their congregation occurs intentionally. A system has been put into place to develop faith formation in their young, and much effort and budgeting goes into this enterprise. Ministry to children in this congregation is occurring at different venues and settings; for instance, camps are mentioned, and also V-kids, the once a month get-together on a Friday afternoon, and of course the Sunday children's church that occurs concurrently with the main church service on Sundays. These different activities at different times of the week have the advantage that they are able to connect much more often with their young in the congregation. Faith formation is intensified in this way as the number of available hours that the congregation has at its disposal to invest in faith formation is almost doubled in this way. Not only does it create intensity but it also provides for diversity. Not all kids excel at classroom learning. Some kids need action learning, where they learn by playing meaningful games. The congregation even established active involvement in outreaches with the children and subsequent de-briefing opportunities. By developing their children's ministry in this particular way, congregation B has opened up opportunities for better faith formation in favour of a larger cross-section of the youth.

The main focus of its children's ministry, is the children's church on Sunday mornings. Here, the ministry focusses on laying a solid foundation of Bible knowledge. In this regard the pastor explains: "We have seen with the smaller children, that they have little knowledge of the Bible stories. So, we aim to develop some Bible knowledge, and also that they would learn some key verses from the heart. They have this motivational system where you earn 'paddaponde'. If you

know your Bible verse for the week, you receive some 'paddaponde' and at the end of the quarter, they can come and spend it on sweets and stuff. It motivates children to come, and to get to know their Bible better. I see this in my youngest child. She often comes home and talk about things that I myself or my wife did not talk about earlier. Then I realize: she must have learned this at church. So, they focus on typical stuff like how to pray, how to have a quiet time, memorizing Scripture, get to know the Bible stories." (6:16) Thus, in a variety of ways, Bible knowledge is regarded as the gateway to spiritual formation, and therefore is imparted to their young ones from an early age. It is also important to note that motivation is a key factor here. Therefore, the congregation has created a system that keeps the kids highly motivated, and when motivation is at a high, learning would follow suit and become equally high. One of the mothers involved in the study explains: "Yes, and the children's church is awesome! The lady who manages it is simply wonderful. The children want to go to children's church on Sundays. If they cannot be there, they will just cry." (4:017)

How do parents perceive the activities happening at church with their young? Throughout the interviews it was clear that this ministry is highly valued. "We have a ten-year-old in the house, and she has children's church with Zelna. She makes children's church interesting and lots of fun. There really is never a dull moment. The lessons are creative and you always take something home with you. I'm helping every third weekend, so I kind of know what is happening there, so I think when your children are at children's church, they are on the right track." (5:043) Another interviewee advised that: "I would like to add to that: get your kids involved with the kids' activities at church. There is a lot happening, like the V-kids. We had a kid's camp here at the church and they loved it. I think it helps their spiritual growth." (5:119) Another opinion arising from the interviews states: "We see it when our children want to be involved. Obviously either we, or the church, or both are doing something right when they enjoy coming to church (4:055) And they talk about what they experience, and you hear everything is o.k." (4:057)

As the research in this congregation was progressing, it became clear that these parents are very happy with what they experience in their congregation. They have found a partner in the development of faith in their children. They were aware that their children's spiritual lives appeared to be equally important to the congregation as it was to themselves. These parents are able to follow the progress of their

children by examining the hand-outs, and indulge in deep spiritual conversations with their children on their way home. They know that their children are being taught the perichoresis (joining the dance of the Triune God) by faithful witnesses at church, and they are excited as they engage in the dance of faith.

“I may sound somewhat complacent here,” concludes the pastor of congregation B, “but we are very happy the way things are. The lady doing our children’s ministry started here working with the toddlers. That was her calling. She taught our children from early on in the children’s church and through all the youth activities. I wouldn’t want to change any of that. Maybe there are some things we could learn and add to what we have, but thinking back I’m quite happy with how they we formed spiritually.” (6:41)

5.3.4 Pillar no 2. Youth ministry

Youth ministry in congregation B, is structured in much the same way as their children’s ministry. It has a dedicated staff member – a charismatic, gifted person – who is put in charge of this ministry, and he/she is permitted to develop the details as he/she sees fit. This entails a variety of activities, ranging from youth camps to Friday-evening meetings and outreaches. The core of the ministry however, occurs on Sunday mornings at youth church.

The pastor furthermore explains: “Until two years ago we had a brilliant youth worker, and he handled confirmation, and those kids did not go astray. He had good relationships with all of them. Even now many of them are still involved in the church. He has built a lot of spirituality into them. He was very effective with the teenagers. In his time here, they did not drop off. And he involved them, they helped manage his youth camps, and they served in a practical way. Yes, there were those who left to go study elsewhere, but of the kids that stayed, few dropped out of the ministry. The key to this was relationships.” (6:05) He adds to that: “We also do a lot of camps. We used to be part of a group who did Sea camps. We also used to have a winter camp, in the Free State, next to a river in June! And the kids loved it. There is also the confirmation class week-end. So, the children’s church is running well. Our ministry to our teens, that is in shambles at the moment, but we are picking it up.” (6:12)

At the time when this study was in progress, the then youth worker had just left the congregation. Throughout our interviews it became evident that he was very successful in his ministry to the teenagers. He has developed good relationships with many of those teenagers in the congregation, and the activities and teachings he presented were well accepted. For the duration of his tenure as youth worker, this ministry was perceived as doing well. Parents were very happy with the ministry and what it offered their young. Unfortunately, a charismatic ministry model also has an Achilles heel whereas the youths become attached to a person in lieu of the ministry. In this case, the person left this congregation and started a new ministry in the same area, and attracted to himself many of the youths from this congregation. Nel alludes to this type of situation when he writes: Even where the corporate character of this (youth) ministry is understood, it often leads to yet another form of individualism - denominationalism. Youth ministry often lacks a real ecumenical perspective and respect for the larger corpus. The basic theory maintained here is that the children of the people of the covenant, people who live in a relationship with God and with one another, are an integral part of the community of faith, of the congregation in its many "Gestalts". Faith is basically understood as a relationship that grows in direct proportion to the measure in which believers share in relationships with others. (Nel, 2000: 10)

The pastor of Congregation B continues to explain the situation as follows: "With secondary school pupils, we are not in a good place at the moment. We have a youth ministry on Friday evenings, but it is not going well. That excellent youth worker we used to have, started with his own meetings on Friday evenings, and he is pulling our youngsters." (6:11) This occurrence is exposing the vulnerable underbelly of the attractional model when the youth tend to come for the sheer enjoyment to a great show, but they will be quick to move on to the next great show wherever it is available. We heard this from some of the parents participating in the study: "Our child is in Noordheuwel school, and his friends are in other churches where it is much "nicer" than ours. So, he wants to be where they are. Our congregation needs to create an environment where it will keep our teens from going elsewhere." (4:025) Yet another parent laments: "I'll want them to jack up the youth ministry. Make it nice for our kids. We have heard what B13 said: her daughter goes to another congregation now. Our oldest also attends youth at another church. I don't know what they do, but I'm sure we can do the same here." (5:153)

Quite obviously this dance has gone wrong. The parents feel let down, the youths prefer to go elsewhere and the congregation suffers. What went wrong? How can a vibrant ministry degenerate so quickly? Several elements of this phenomenon need to be scrutinized, and toes need to be stepped on in order to figure out this dance.

a. In the first place, the charismatic model centered around a single, gifted leader. There were no teams, no sub-committees, no volunteers and no parents involved in the ministry. If that had been the case, the congregation could have carried the ministry forward in spite of not having the services of the talented leader at its disposal. One of the parents stated the following during an interview: "But I do think that our congregation needs something more dynamic to keep our teenagers. I do know that they are working on it. So, I don't think they will walk away from the Lord, but it's debatable if they will stay with our congregation, if things don't change." (4:005) These are the sentiments of a disenfranchised parent who has no official responsibility and hence feels no commitment for solving this issue. It is clear that a typical 'us-them' mind-set is thriving here. This parent suggested that their teens must be ministered to by the congregation itself. This therefore suggests that a congregation which is charismatically modelled might very well lead to a consumer mind-set. And parents with a consumer mind-set, are usually loyal to the product they are consuming. In this regard one of the parents states: "We have a daughter of 16 and a son of 12. On Sunday evenings she attends another congregation because we had too much change with our youth. She started attending with her friends and she enjoys it there." (5:013) If "enjoyment" is the product, people will pursue using that product, and that leads to another blind spot relative to the attractional model.

b. The second blind spot of the attractional model, is that attendance is regarded as the yardstick of spiritual health. This is implicit in the words of one member of the congregation: "I would like to add: good youth leaders are important. You can't measure the value of a good youth leader. With the smaller children, they are easy. But the teen-agers, they are much influenced by a youth leader. He is like a magnet. If they like him and his ministry, they will come to church!" (5:035) Thus, when the former youth worker was still active in the congregation and the numbers in attendance increased noticeably, everybody believed the ministry to be very healthy, which later clearly appeared not to be the case, given the outcome of events within a single year. This model, akin to all models operative in a sinful world, has

a blind side. It can be too externally focused, while missing the more important matters of the heart altogether. Getting various things done and filling positions can very well become the highest priority and result in people becoming too busy to be relational, and pragmatism tends to supplant discipleship. Building relationally is consequently not a spontaneous priority as there is little available time or accountability for that purpose, particularly in the realm of refined sins such as gossip, frustration, un-forgiveness, bitterness, and disunity. Whilst the “numbers-yardstick” might indicate a very healthy attendance rate, some very unhealthy tendencies might lurk beneath the surface.

c. Thirdly, this ministry has developed within its own silo; almost severed from the rest of the congregation. One of the interviewees phrased it as follows: “But I as a parent need to know what the youth worker is doing. Which isn’t happening at present. But if you do, you’ll know how you can join forces.” (4:097) Even the pastor admits the unsatisfactory state of affairs: “Yes, we do experience the silo-effect, and it has a negative impact, because it lessens the cohesion. Quite often things happen here that the others are clueless about.” (6:20) When this happens, the different ministries in the congregation are not focused anymore on the one single mission of the congregation. Each ministry appears to have its own focus and mission, often growing apart and pursuing a different path in an endeavour to accomplish its mission. Instead of nurturing a uniting vision, these ministries develop diverging paths that might lead to a similar painful situation which congregation B has experienced regarding its previous youth worker. In his book *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry*, Doug Fields defines this type of ministry as follows: “they focus on the team’s best player and falsely assume that the team’s success is due to that great player” (Fields, 1998: 15), whilst in practice “a healthy youth ministry is a purpose-driven youth ministry” (ibid: 17), specifically aligning this stated purpose with the “purposes that were commanded by Jesus and manifested in the early church.” (ibid: 17).

5.3.5 Some Closing Comments on Faith Formation in Congregation B

The parents of congregation B, understand that they have a very important role to play in the spiritual formation of their children. As one parent verbalized it:

“Another building block is what we do at home, by reading and praying together. We try to do it every evening. That is our time together. I think it is important to fix it as a habit, because that is what you need to get you through the day.” (4:019) This sentiment was echoed at different times during the course of the interviews: “The example that we set,” (4:041) and also: “And doing devotions daily, together. This is important.” (4:043) Parents do know that the building blocks of faith formation include the example that they display in having discussions concerning the faith, spending time together as a family and practicing habits which reflect their faith.

Looking through the lens of seeking theological significance, we find Osmer’s normative task well established. Osmer explains in clear terms that “though the normative is the heart of the specifically theological motion in practical theology, theology has already been present prior to the operation of this task”. (Osmer, 2008: e-source) The normative task – the third movement - utilizes theological concepts and texts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, simultaneously constructing ethical norms so as to guide our responses and ability to learn from sound practice. Through solid Bible teaching these members have been trained how to develop faith in their children at home. Throughout the interviews it is clear that the norm is well established.

The disconnection, however, is manifested when the parents do not feel adequately equipped by their congregation for this task. One participant featuring in this research said: “Individually we get good messages in the teaching. Each week you get useful tools for life. But I have not really gotten anything to help me as a parent.” (4:085) Even the pastor admits of this shortcoming that: “I don’t think it is happening. With our children’s church we often send out a letter to the parents saying today’s lesson was about, say healing, and this is how you can continue the conversation. But intentional family ministry is not happening.” (6:24)

To add to this apparent lack of engagement by the parents, this congregation does not use a curriculum that comprises printed materials, books or other hardcopy materials to work from. When asked about this matter by the interviewer, one parent involved in this study exclaimed: “No, we don’t, and to me that is a pity,” (4:099) to which another participant added: “They give hand-outs weekly. A print-out, but don’t ask me what the topic was last Sunday!” (4: 103) This state of affairs places parents at the disadvantage as they have no idea what the ministry is currently teaching their kids. They cannot prepare their kids during the week for

the ensuing lesson that will be delivered on coming Sunday, nor can parents reflect on the lesson of the previous Sunday because they do not know what it entailed. Thus, while the theological significance rates high, the practical significance falls short, as the congregation has invested the minimum effort to develop these habits in the lives of their members. The relationship between theological theory and ecclesiastical praxis is still much strained.

There is yet another shortcoming pertaining to this kind of modular approach as the topics, themes and even theology of the main church service, and those of both the children's ministry and youth ministry on a Sunday are not synchronized and aligned. One of the parents states: "No, these two services do not connect." (5:167) Another parent even wished for some kind of merging between the silos: "We talked about this just the other day. Maybe there should be a Sunday service once a month where we all go to church together. Because, as you say, they are there at the back doing fun activities. Sooner or later they must learn that it isn't always about the fun, but you also have to come and sit still and focus for half an hour." (4:065) Quite obviously, the current philosophy of faith formation has not taken the parents into account much, and the parents are sensing this void.

The pastor however, is very conscious of this unfortunate neglect as he correctly states: "I believe that is the ideal to work towards, that the home does the spiritual formation, and that the congregation supports them. At the moment we have the other model: everything happens here, at church. I think we can make more of this if we could spend some time on this subject, and had some materials, and could empower some members to become active in this respect. At present our model has all the weight at the church-end of the scale." (6:45) He acknowledges that there needs to be a paradigm shift, but he also acknowledges that this paradigm shift should start at the current leadership: "If I myself and the other leaders don't immerse ourselves into family ministry, the others will not follow. So, it starts with the leadership." (6:49)

Some of this "paradigm shift" that the pastor mentions, also includes aligning their ministries to children and teens with the mission statement of the congregation. As stated on their official website, congregation B exists to a) tell the good news, b) helping people to develop their faith, c) thus renewing their lives, d) so that lives can be transformed. (West, 2015). Concerning contextual significance, they are working very hard to develop a culture of outreach. Ministries are seen as tools that

may enable members to attract non-members. Children are being involved in outreach-ministries from an early age (4:079)

This pastor has a dream for the future of youth ministry in congregation B, and says: "That saying is true: children will not do what you say, they will do what you do. So, I would start by stressing the example of the parents and of the way they live in their homes. Also, I would accentuate that age old ritual of spending time around a table together." (6:53) There is an honest openness towards acknowledging the congregational shortcomings – where it has been stepping on toes - and a willingness to involve the parents in this dance of faith that will absorb children so as to actively partake of the joyful formation of their spirituality. This congregation has offered us much to ponder on, such as good moves as well as wrong steps. We will be well-advised to learn from both of these.

5.4 Congregation C

5.4.1 An overview of the congregation

The third congregation that forms part of this study, is a relatively young, suburban congregation that we will call Congregation C. This is not a typical mainstream congregation although it is affiliated with the Dutch Reformed Church. Congregation C comprises a new fellowship of believers which came into existence owing to the missional activities of its mother-church. As such, it comprises a relatively a small group of believers. In round figures it has ninety (90) members supplemented by an additional hundred (100) persons who associate and visit from time to time (8:31). Most of these members represent diverse backgrounds. A number of these members are derived from a Catholic background (7:114), and others are derived from different faiths, as for instance even Hinduism (7:013). This is a multi-cultural congregation comprising persons of different races and nationalities of which Tanzania is but one of them (7:124). These characteristics induced this congregation to establish a unique setting, having unique needs relative to faith formation, parenting, and the vesting of a community of believers. Being a small congregation, the numbers of children and teenagers in this congregation are low, and attendance of services is not regular. On any given Sunday there might be two to three toddlers, and perhaps five to seven children and

a number of teens attending the church service together with their parents. Let us proceed to examine the data obtained in the interviews in order to discern the philosophy of this congregation for faith formation in these children, and how effective the parents perceive this philosophy to be.

If congregation A can be typified as a traditional, relational model, then congregation C would probably be described best as an incarnational, missional congregation. “Mission is an extension and amplification of God’s very being. Missional theology builds on an understanding that God is Trinity and missional”, explains Niemandt (2012: 2). In this respect ‘congregation’ is a mission with a congregation, and not a congregation with a mission. As the focus is directed towards the non-members in the community and how to impact them with the faith, not much of the traditional support structures in terms of young ministry has yet been put into place. As Niemandt explains: “The basis of the argument is that ecclesiology follows mission – the church does what it is and then organizes what it does.” (ibid: 3) Being incarnational is to have an understanding that the church is not entrenched into a building at a certain address. The church is involved in the world, in people’s homes and in the context where it has been placed. Thus, we can describe the pillars on which the formation of faith of children rest in this congregation, as follows:

5.4.2 Pillar no 1. The Role of the Parent

Although the majority of members of congregation C are new to the faith, they all have a thorough understanding of the basic principle that the parental home is the major place for faith formation. This was a subject that often surfaced during the interviews: One parent explained: “Reading the Bible, praying together and making them aware of the faith – you know – just talking about stuff. Showing them how the Lord is involved in our everyday lives, that is important.” (7:033) Another parent echoed the same sentiment: “They often say: Ah, is that what a Christian is supposed to do? So, these past six years I have been very conscious of this: how do I help other people, or speak about other people.” (7:037) Another parent summed it up as follows: “Kids learn by example.” (9:041)

When people come to faith late in life, however, their experience of the faith is much different from those who have grown up in Christian homes throughout their

lives, and were exposed to the faith from the earliest age that they are able to remember. New believers do not have the same frame of reference. They are unable to revert to the example set by their parents. This lack of example gives rise to an uncertainty regarding faith formation in their offspring. These parents are apprehensive about propagating religious doctrine overly strong as they are fearful that their children might repeat the pattern followed by themselves, namely to rear children who abscond from the faith of their parents, as one mother testifies: "I went from Hinduism, to Islam, to finding Jesus. This was a ten-year journey. And I wonder, will our own people follow us? Jesus' family didn't follow Him." (7:013)

Secondly, new believers themselves are still in a learning curve. They still consider themselves to be infants in the faith. They appear to be doubtful of their own ability to answer complex questions relating to the faith, and for deciding which materials would be best suited for the development of their children's faith (7:76). They would often experience an urge to communicate Biblical truths to their children, whilst what is really called for, is merely to be a living example of the faith. (7:114)

One interviewee laments: "But I'm just as confused about stuff in the Bible, and I can't answer all his questions." (7:027) This feeling of insufficient knowledge is a theme that other parents share as well: "The background that we are coming from, is not a Christian background. I don't know how to instill certain things in my child. I don't know what will just go over their heads. I don't want to become a preaching Mom, either." (7:075) Although they would like to share the full impact that the Gospel had on them-selves with their kids, they are very careful as not to overwhelm them with the faith, and thus to scare them off.

A third reality operative in homes where there are new believers, is that one of the spouses might or might not as yet have experienced the same change of heart. Consequently, a situation arises where one of the parents has to introduce new habits such as saying grace prior to mealtimes, or conducting home devotions in the evenings. Under such circumstances no support would be forthcoming from the other spouse. Therefore, it appears that the fulfilment of the parental role by parents who are new believers, is a fairly strenuous obligation since they are new to these habits themselves. (7:130) One mother, who was part of the research, said: "And my husband is also still searching. So, if I say I don't want to rise early on a Sunday to go to church, nothing will happen. But I realized I must show the example. I must lead, to say, let's go to church." (7:027) Another person involved in the study,

explained this unnatural role of spiritual leadership that she has to fulfil in these circumstances: “I know I need to set the example. If I don’t say we are going to church on Sunday, nobody else will take the lead. So, as the Christian mother of the house, I need to be the one taking the lead.” (7:092)

5.4.3 Content for Faith Formation

A recurring theme relates to believers not being certain of which materials to trust. They wish for their children to have access to age-related video-materials, books and other aids, but they also do need relevant guidance from their congregation (7:75). As one participant of the study exclaimed: “But to get a sense of direction from the congregation, will really help me a lot. It will never work when the church is doing it, because I need to do this at home.” (7:075)

Parents who are new to the faith, do not have at their disposal that innate compass that believers possess when they have been molded in the faith since childhood. Thus, one of the roles of a congregation dealing with new believers, is to render assistance to them in discerning what would be theologically sound, age-appropriate and useful for forming faith in their children at home. This is stated explicit in these words by one of the persons in the study: “I call myself a young Christian, and I would love for the church to lead the way, to show me how to build faith in my child.” (7:017) These young believers are crying out for assistance, as they feel at a loss without it. If a congregation fails to realize this and do not endeavour to render assistance and support, these parents will not succeed in the task of faith formation at home.

This assistance could take several forms. One particular option mentioned by an interviewee was: “Even a knowledgeable speaker who comes, maybe once a year and just gives advice that you can take home and use some of it.” (9:148)

5.4.4 Pillar no 2. A new Family, our Spiritual Family

When someone decides to sever ties with his/her former religion, for instance Hinduism, he/she is usually compelled to sever ties with his/her family as well. That person knows very well that he/she has to reveal his/her beliefs and that the cost would probably be high as quite often family members would reject him/her outright, and he/she might even lose his/her social standing within the community.

Under these circumstances, their newly acquired fellow congregation members become part of their new family. In a small congregation, especially in a congregation that accommodates many new believers, this new family is a source of important value. The role of the congregation is to be accommodating, to enable people to connect (8:51), and to purposefully break down the barriers of culture and race (8:31). The pastor explains: “We also have a coffee and tea session after every service, and that is where people connect to each other. And there they can see: we are an integrated spiritual society: multi-language and multi-cultural.” (8:09)

He extends his explanation: “We try to accommodate all ages. We realize that a lot of families are broken, and that is one reason why people often will not bring their children. But people experience this inclusiveness. We have done some work to create a youth friendly environment. We have put out play-mats in the mothers’ room, and teddy bears. And when people come, the young one will just automatically go and play and feel at home. And because we have this inclusive approach, people are relaxed when we have children running around and being there. Children don’t feel excluded, there is a family-feel.” (8:20) Additional to this congregation’s understanding of faith formation, is being present before, during and after the main Sunday service. Albeit that the Sunday service is regarded as an essential tool in faith formation, it must be understood in the context of the community that people experience before and after the service. Members experience love and care, enter into conversations relative to sharing and testifying and serve each other. All of these actions form part of their faith formation.

The pastor explains the above-mentioned philosophy as follows: “So, we don’t do separate ministry to children, we are still doing youth ministry in the family-arena. So, what I see, is that families get together. There is a network happening. I often hear family A went to visit family B, and the “children had such a nice time”. Our members are coming from such diverse backgrounds, that the first hurdle to overcome, is just to get into the social action at church. So, I think orange in our context, is relationship building, and this is getting over the cultural barrier. White people, black people, Indian people visiting each other at their homes and beginning a friendship.” (8:31) This philosophy for faith formation seems to be received by parents with appreciation: “So, how wonderful will it be, when I was in a community of Christians and everywhere they (my children) went, they were surrounded by

Christians. I would breathe easier.” (7:13) Another mother was saying:” Ah, great. I think that is exactly what we are talking about, when we go out to different families, going to their houses and visiting with them. The difference would be, to join families on purpose to connect in a social way.” (8:51) This is summarized nicely by yet another participant: “This is my spiritual family. I want my children to be part of that.” (7:048)

If community and relationships are the vehicles for faith formation, this is experienced in practical ways such as these: “If any new person comes in and feels that love, it changes them. If they take the time to ask how you are, and then wait for the answer. That is precious.” (7:120) Yet another member of the congregation has this experience to share: “And the dad told me, he came back to this congregation, because whoever greeted him that first Sunday at the door, greeted him like a real friend. And that meant the world to him.” (7:126) There are, of course, also lurking dangers to be avoided: “And with the church, there needs to be a sense of you are not judged, you are welcome. Someone who is poor, or someone who has problems, must not feel judged. We need to exude friendliness.” (9:057)

It is however, essential also for the children as a group to be regarded as an integral part of the faith community. One of the parents spoke his mind: “I also think that the kids coming to church, they are not just kids running around here, they must be viewed as part of this faith community. I remember when I was young we had to go to church and then to Sunday school and that was such a long time. Now, I don’t want that for my kids. But if they can come to church and have a good worship experience, it’s like church and Sunday school is combined. So, I think church must encourage parents to bring their kids, that they are welcome that the kids will also enjoy the service. It is for them as well,” (9:071) Another parent added: “And the kids need to sense that too. If they know they are loved and welcomed, they will want to come.” (9:077)

Parents are understandably very sensitive to how their children are received, included or excluded with regard to activities in the congregation. Therefore, they rejoice when they see that their children do feel part of this new family of faith. One interviewee aired her views on this topic: “I always wanted to be part of one of the families where I can sit next to my mother in church. I would make sure that we do it together.” (7:134) Another participant voiced it this way: “They must develop the rhythm. This is what we do on Sundays. This is where we are safe. Our spiritual

home.” (7:136) In this respect children are given roles so as to serve the church in a similar way as adults do. One of the members offered this thought: “You know, when you come to church as a family, to take some kind of responsibility as a family. For instance, to put out the chairs, or prepare the coffee and tea. Not that it becomes a chore, but this is your role. Just take on one task as a family. It not only gives the people you help a warm feeling, but it gives you a warm feeling. And I think your kids will relate good to this: we have a purpose for being at church. They need us. And they get to meet the other people, and they socialize with the others.” (7:096)

Although this congregation focuses on what is happening in and around the main Sunday church service, they have also created special venues for specific needs in terms of the faith formation of their children. There is a separate children’s church that runs concurrently with the Sunday church service. This arrangement provides a helpful tool for parents with energetic primary school-age kids, as this member testifies: “During the main service, we do have children’s church. We have one couple from Tanzania, they brought their kid, and he was so enthusiastic about this group that he actually runs to church in the mornings. Since he’s been there, he is very happy to go to church on a Sunday.” (8:15) The pastor explains the place of this children’s church in this context: “So we see parents coming with their children. Some leave, but some stay. There is more people who come and look and go, maybe because of the children’s feed-back. If they don’t like it here, they will certainly tell their parents. If the child is happy, everyone is happy.” (8:09) One of the participants in the study had this to share: “I said to him, there is a children’s church, would you like to take your son to experience it, and if he likes it, he can stay. And he has never looked back. He absolutely loves it. Every Sunday that child comes running, straight to children’s church.” (7:124)

Another space that this congregation created, for a specific need, is to accommodate parents with toddlers. The pastor explains: “One thing that I see, that works wonderful, is that we have round tables at the back, and mothers will often go sit there with their young. And other mothers will join them. So, they are still part of the service, but not in the mother’s room. The mothers group together.” (8:16) This is a balancing act as these mothers are part of the spiritual family during worship, whilst caring for their young in an age-appropriate setting.

5.4.5 Pillar no 3. Inclusive Youth Ministry, During the Week

During the interview, the question was raised: “If the colour of the home is yellow, and the colour of the church is red, where do you see orange – that place where ministry purposefully impacts the home?” One of the participants, C1, answered as follows: “Orange is in both locations. It’s not only the church reaching out to the families, but it is also the families being involved at church. Long ago these colours didn’t mix well: you had red and you had yellow, and they were quite separated. You went to church on a Sunday. Then it is done. But now, it is really mixed. Church is part of life, your friends, we sent each other pictures inspiring faith. I think orange is happening all the time.” (7:068) This summarizes the philosophy of faith formation in congregation C quite well where spiritual formation is neither the exclusive domain of the church, nor that of the parents. It is happening in both locations as a symbiotic partnership.

Congregation C does not show a critical mass when it comes to youth and numbers, as perhaps only ten of the families do have children. Consequently, congregation C is unable to implement Sunday school and/or other youth activities such as are prevalent at other and larger congregations. Clearly, this congregation does not expect to be offered the same facilities and activities as the members of a large congregation would. What we noticed in our study of congregation C, is that the young members of this congregation appear to be easily drawn into the regular activities of the congregation. As such, parents with young children are engaged in cell groups (8:30), which bring about a support structure, and a network of fellow believers having the same or similar needs. This implies that ministry to the homes occurs at homes so as to necessarily benefit homes.

The pastor has the following to say on this subject: “Our approach is to involve the children in all the programs that we do have for the parents. The adults who attend, are also still growing in their faith, so we have some programs in place for the parents, and the children just slot in with them, so they both grow together.” (8:24) Since this is a congregation comprising new believers of which a considerable number of adults attend confirmation class, it appears to be feasible to include the teenagers in the same class. Thus, they have an inclusive confirmation class, comprising three generations of the same family in attendance (8:26).

An alternative method for establishing synergy between the congregation and the home, is undoubtedly effected as the pastor is placed in a position to do home visitation more frequently owing to the fact that this congregation is relatively small. This method creates a situation in which children meet the pastor personally and in their own space at home, and therefore are more inclined to be spontaneous in the pastor's space while attending church service (8:26).

As this congregation has established its *raison d'être* (reason for being) as fulfilling its missional purpose, its actions are focused to proclaim the gospel, to be witnesses of the work of Christ. Consequently, they apply different yardsticks to measure faith formation, one of which being the language used by the members (old and young). The pastor referred to this matter when he quoted one of the young who affirmed that "we are all sent people" (8:36). He was implying that the congregation understands its missional purpose, similarly to what is described in the book of Acts.

5.4.6 Some Closing Comments on Faith Formation in Congregation C

As we studied congregation C and examined the way in which they approach faith formation, we found much that should be applauded. These church members are mostly believers who are new to the faith and who are still learning how to dance the perichoresis, but they are not excluding their children. They are modelling the dance and they are drawing their kids into the community where the dance of faith takes place.

One participant in the study explained: "Those people with the son who tried to commit suicide, they need the support of a congregation of people who care. I mean, they struggle. Or a mother who has got cancer. People need to visit, and talk and pray for other people. I think church is the only place where we can create such a community: where people are not being taken for a ride or abused." (9:063) Faith formation in this context has less to do with formal training, and more with experiencing the love of God through His human interface on earth, namely the church. Dave Anderson has put it this way: "Faith is caught, more than it is taught". (Anderson, 2009: 24) Seen through this lens, this congregation scores high on

contextual relevance. They take the South African context very seriously, and work purposefully towards integrating all demographics into one faith community.

There are, however, always doubtful voices in the mix, including parents who wonder whether this was the best that their congregation could do. One particular mother in the study said: “I can see that some youngsters are excited about the faith, but I’m fearful if we don’t feed it, that excitement may just fade”. (7:070) Another parent echoed the following concern: “They are still expecting from the congregation to play a role in the faith formation of their young. They still ask for opportunities to engage their young in faith experiences, and for solid Biblical foundations to be laid.” (7:124) A mother of a toddler added to this: “I would actually like something more inter-active. You know, something where we bring our children with, and there are young families from different backgrounds, and we learn together. Because I also need to learn at the same time.” (7:047). These stories imply that the congregation can still grow a lot in practical significance when it comes to faith formation of their younger members.

From the above-mentioned suggestions it is clear that several of the parents in the congregation are urging the leading partner in this dance to lead them more firmly. These parents might not as yet be stepping on each other’s toes, but they do expect the dance to increase its tempo and to improve its rhythm in order to keep up with the demands of life, and the growth of their own faith and that of their children.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we endeavoured to describe what the current practices for faith formation in the three congregations entail. We closely scrutinized the interviews to come to grips with what is happening, but more importantly, why this is happening in the different congregations. Actions flow from structure, and structure is built on the philosophy of faith formation. The more we asked questions concerning how spiritual leaders perceived faith to be formed, the more we got the impression that very few congregations spend time to study faith formation, or to plan for it according to their available knowledge. More often than not they are merely perpetuating what happened in the past. Some of these past actions are still relevant, but others are completely outdated, outmoded and obsolete.

It seems that each of these three congregations who are part of this study, are working hard to be of significance in their context, but that the focus of relevance is different for each one. Van Gelder states that “Congregations have addresses and are, for that reason, not abstract entities. They have been called by the Holy Trinity and put in a specific place; therefore it concerns text and context” (2007: 104). Congregation C is a prime example of a missional ministry model. They are focused on their context and are working hard towards crossing the barriers that divide society. The children and youth of this congregation are being involved from an early age. Congregation A puts far less emphasis on contextual relevance. This is a maintenance model that seeks to invest in its members. Congregation B is somewhere between C and A. They are conscious of their impact in their society, and by means of an attractional model they would like to be relevant to their surroundings, but this missional integrity needs to be developed more.

Looking through the lens of theological significance, we see three congregations striving to become what they already are in Christ. As Nel states: “This reformative calling motivates and informs the process. It is, however, also a process which questions why and where reformation is required.” (Nel & Schoeman, 2015: 87) We see this process at work in each congregation. Pastors and believers, paid church personnel and volunteers all strive to minister and serve as they understand the Biblical guidelines to be. A possible root cause might be that *Sola Scriptura* is such a high value in the Dutch Reformed Church.

The third lens to apply in seeking relevance, is the lens of practical significance. This relates to the question: Is what we are doing currently in line with what we believe ought to be happening in our congregation? Applying this lens helped us to understand the struggles of the modern congregation. There are many realities and structures that demands time, money and effort. Often the urgent issues replace the important issues. Both in congregation A and B the pastors lamented the fact that they would like to invest more in family ministry, but time and budget constraints prevent them from doing so. This question as to the practical relevance of each congregation, lies at the heart of this study. As Schoeman writes: “By striving for significance, congregational studies could contribute to the transformation of people and communities and thus remain relevant.” (Schoeman, 2015: 5)

The emanating results also speak for themselves, whereas some parents show great joy and appreciation for what their congregations are achieving, and others are disappointed as their toes have been stepped on and their trust broken.

As we endeavour to explore the formation of lived faith in children, we propose to analyze the data in our next chapter, in order to seek answers to the undermentioned four Secondary Research Questions:

- SRQ2: What constitutes a lived faith in children?
- SRQ3: What is the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children?
- SRQ4: What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children?
- SRQ5: What constitutes a partnership between congregations and the home in the formation of lived faith in children?

6. NOTICING, COLLECTING AND THINKING ABOUT THINGS

6.1 Introduction

Hitherto, this study has examined the theoretical data. It has perused the available literature, and inevitably has taken note of what others have to comment on the subject of lived faith, faith formation, and the roles of the church and of the parents in this process. It touched on the preparations needed for conducting the research, and ensuring that proper scientific standards are met. The opportunity is now here for commencing the dance by means of the real data.

As stated in a previous chapter (see 4.7), we are using ATLAS.TI software for analyzing the information which we collected from the Focus Group Interviews. Subsequent to the conducting of the interviews, succeeded by the transcriptions thereof, these documents were read into ATLAS.TI. We commence right from the very beginning. The initial coding process, being inductive of nature, comprises primarily the interview data and ultimately the emerging concepts. Should the codes be decided upon beforehand, and the interview trawled for those specific codes, that would be regarded as data-making. This is what Steward calls content-analysis, being a more deductive method according to which data-making occurs subsequently to the observations. (Steward, 2007:125)

During the open or initial coding, one remains open to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities could be discerned from the data. This phase comprising open coding enables one to advance towards a subsequent stage when conceptual categories are defined. (Pieterse, 2010: 121)

6.2 The Friese Model

We will apply the NCT model developed by Friese who demonstrates a clean and logic approach to new data. The N in NCT signifies “Noticing,” which refers to the process of discovering interesting facts in the data when perusing transcripts. In order to capture these facts, the researcher might make written notes, mark the segments, or allocate preliminary codes. (Friese, 2014:12)

“We construct our Grounded Theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices Any theoretical rendering offers an interpretative portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it,” says Charmaz (2006:10) In this way we begin to build, from the ground level, a theory based on actions we perceived.

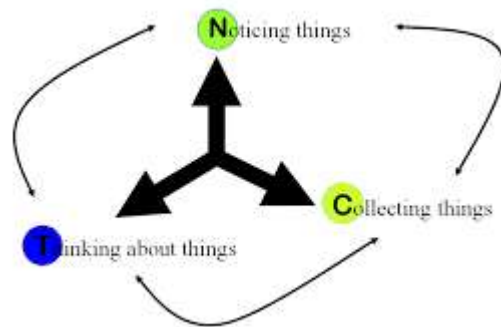


FIGURE 6 - 1: NCT

The researcher is now commencing with C in the NCT model, namely “Collecting things.” As Friese says: “Reading further, you will likely notice a few things that are similar to some you may have noticed before. They may even fit under the same code name. “(Friese, 2014:13). The researcher is proceeding to collect similarities, and linking them together.

Although thinking constitutes a prevailing component of the overall process, there comes a time when you realize how many things you have collected. You have compiled a substantial list of code names, some of which you already might have bundled together in a crude form. Having advanced to this stage, you need to start “Thinking about things,” especially when discovering patterns and relationships in the data. This is the T in the NCT model.

6.3 Engaging the Data

The initial reading produced 50 codes. The list can be found in Appendix E. A second reading followed this, where the codes were slightly altered, and super-codes were added. In the second reading, the researcher becomes much more aware of the value of each code and questions whether the coding was correctly executed, or not. Often, as the first reading was progressing, one more often than not, developed new codes that were applied to the document as from such time onwards, but these new codes were not applied to the first part of the document. In the second reading, the researcher checks for missed quotes, which should, when located, be coded.

Another important purpose for a second and third reading is to note co-codes. A particular quote, such as, "I also think children's church on Sunday is very helpful. We don't just want to entertain the children; we are teaching the Bible. They don't just come for the fun and games." This quote can be coded by the code: 'Service_children's church' so as to indicate it as being a statement relative to actions occurring on a Sunday when members of the congregation attend church service. In this particular case, those members who are involved in the children's church, are referred to. However, I added an additional code, namely 'Role of church' so as to denote the fact that this embraces an event organized and managed by the local congregation. It is the congregation's role to put it in place and manage it in such a way that it adds value to people's lives. One could, if feasible, add the code 'Bible knowledge lacking' so as to indicate that what is happening at children's church, could ultimately improve the children's knowledge of the Bible. I have concluded that co-coding promotes the relationships between key concepts.

Subsequently, through a second and third reading the reader might notice patterns and concepts becoming manifest. Certain themes might continually recur; they accumulate, and soon develop into a critical mass. However, some codes do not have such propensity. At the very outset, one anticipates that these themes will be recognized as major themes, for instance, 'Confirmation drop-off'. However, the respondents remain unexpectedly silent on that topic, and one soon realizes that this was actually not of any importance to the conversation. By means of the second and third readings, the relationships between codes appear to become more

evident. Therefore, the researcher created code families. This new list of codes and code families appear in Appendix F.

The reader will observe the number following each code, signifying the number of times that it was encountered in the text and referred to as the groundedness thereof. This is a significant aspect, as it indicates the extent of its gravity. This highlights the weight carried by the argument, and shows what the researcher ought to inquire into.

6.4 Examining the Codes

6.4.1 Signs of lived Faith – what are we aiming for?

The title of this research project, and the Primary Research Question (PRQ1), center round this pivotal point: lived faith in children. Lived faith as used here, is embedded or connected to lived religion – the everyday things that have religious significance. As, C. S. Lewis wrote, our faith is not a matter of our hearing what Christ said long ago and “trying to carry it out.” Rather, “The real Son of God is at your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself. He is beginning, so to speak, to ‘inject’ His kind of life and thought, His Zoe [life], into you; beginning to turn the tin soldier into a live man. The part of you that does not like it is the part that is still tin.” (Lewis, 1956: 178). That is what we wish to achieve. All the youth activities occurring at church, all the financing of catechism textbooks and salaries of youth workers, youth camps and amenities, point in the same direction: to form lived faith in children.

The goal for youth ministry is the shalom Jahwe within society, writes Nel, and refers to Fowler's emphasis (1991) on the "public church" that fits in with the emphasis on the shalom of the Kingdom. The shalom Jahwe is no private matter, and in youth ministry children and adolescents should be helped again to attain to a new sense of personal and public religion. The goal of youth ministry is always about preparing people who are entirely part of the local church to understand their personal and public responsibility, and about guiding them into accepting this responsibility. (Nel, 2000: 40)

At various times during the interviews, parents have aired their views on what constitutes lived faith in children. We can list these notions as follows (The full texts

of the FGI's are included on a CD as an addendum, together with the paragraph numbering, so that the reader is enabled to follow up, and be informed where exactly the quote is derived from. In each case, when reference is made to a quote, it will occur in the format indicated as e.g. (2:34), which should be interpreted as Primary Document number 2, and the 34th paragraph of the interview):

- Lived faith is noticeable in behaviour (1:43)
- Negative/adverse behaviour such as bullying, foul-mouthedness, lack of regard for other persons, are indicative of the absence of lived faith. (1:43)
- Consistent faithful behaviour of children away from home, at parties and/or sport tours, indicates strong lived faith (1:45). This consistency is evidenced by a life of devotion on all of the seven days of the week, and by the evidence that lived faith is maintained under all circumstances and in all settings apart from only church or home, and in all company comprising parents, friends whether good and bad, or strangers (2:109). One of the conspicuous fruits of this mode of living, appears to be decision-making that is consistent with one's faith. (5:59)
- Living in the right manner inclusive of good ethical standards being maintained. (1:61)
- Praying, being a component of an ongoing and active relationship with the Lord, whether done audibly or privately in silence. (4:79)
- Developing a religious language. A number of respondents referred to it in connection with the content and the language their young used for prayer (4:79), and others referred to faith talk during discussions concerning the faith, where they heard the rich language of faith being used by their children. (9:91)
- Showing kindness, as elucidated in Jesus' synopsis of the law: love your neighbour as yourself. The showing of kindness goes beyond merely experiencing emotions of kindness, or expressing kindness through your words to others. Kindness needs to be demonstrated in action which actually render relief to someone in distress or need. (1:105)
- To make the right choices, in accordance with what you believe. (1:107)
- To love the Lord, and show this in your actions (1:65) (2:139)
- Lived faith is manifested in an orientation towards the Bible. People with a lived faith know the Bible stories well (1:109), because they contain the raw ingredients which teach people how to live with a right relationship with God. They

read the Bible regularly, and solutions to the problems of life are sought there.

(4:75) A Biblical worldview is fundamental to lived faith.

- A positive attitude towards God, His Word, His People, and His church. Lived faith leans towards the things of God. Persons possessing lived faith like to talk about the things of God, and they are drawn towards spiritual disciplines such as regular devotions and Sunday church services. (4:55)

- This chosen way of living has to be motivated from within. The child needs to own his or her faith. Especially when children are growing into the teen-age years, parents will often say: "They are now at the stage where they have to do their own thing" (4:27), concerning devotional material, Bible reading and quiet times.

- Perhaps lived faith is best summarized by the following quote by one of the parents participating in the study: "They need to walk with the Lord wherever they go." (2:109) This implies true faith as it embraces relevant actions such as perceiving the unseen, consciously engaging in a relationship with a Person that you cannot see physically, and maintaining that relationship which impacts upon the way you live and actions while daily performing your normal routine.

The exploration of these signs of lived faith embodied in the participants' quotes, proved to have been a very enriching experience. At reading these quotes, one is struck by the accurate, practical, powerful way in which the lives of the followers of Jesus Christ are portrayed. Lived faith is not an abstract, theoretical concept. It does not comprise an immeasurable "pie-in-the-sky", or something exclusively occurring in your heart and mind. Lived faith becomes visible and is a quantifiable entity.

If faith is equated to a dance, mature believers are dancing to their heart's content. They indulge in a divine embrace, and they practice daily in order to remain in step with the divine dance partner who has taken the lead. While enjoying the dance, they keep one eye on their children who are watching from the fringes of the dance floor. They long for their children to join in. They rejoice when they see signs of interest in the young ones who enter unto the dancefloor. These parents know what to look for. They can discern a dance when it happens, and there is much joy when their children join the dance.

Miller-Maclemore stated that practical theology is (a) a discipline practiced by scholars, yet it is also (b) an activity of faith practiced by believers. However, she does not stop here, explaining that practical theology can also be defined as (c) a

method used for studying theology in practice (chap 3), of which the undertaking of this particular study serves as a manifestation of her words converted to action. Practical Theology is indeed an activity practiced by believers. (Miller-McLemore, 2012:4) The above-mentioned list was drawn up from the lips of regular believers. Parents, being members of congregations, who were subjected to no formal training in the science of Theology, know exactly (individually and collectively) what lived faith comprises, how to recognize it, and how to form it in their children. I, in my capacity of scholar (a), who am studying theology in practice (c), and who have perused all the available scientific findings, can neither add to nor subtract from their collective wisdom.

Should this be what parents are aiming for, and if the outcomes of all our parenting, youth ministry, and ministry to families keep this list in mind, then we are on the right track. Our target is fixed. We know what we would like to aim for throughout our efforts to develop lived faith in our children.

Van den Berg explains the meaning of “theologia” as a form of Theology “not abstracted from its concrete setting, but understood as personal knowledge of God’s ‘direct cognitive vision’, concerned with and developing within ‘the believer’s ways of existing in the world before God’. This links in with lived faith borne out of knowledge of God, acted out in the presence of God.” (Van den Berg, 2011:3) Practical theology then becomes the science of theological, critical, and hermeneutical reflection regarding the intention and meaning of human action (habitus) as expressed ... in the art of faithful daily living. This constitutes a valid answer to the third Research Question (SRQ2), namely: What constitutes a lived faith in children?

Firet sums it up as follows: “To be truly human, according to the Old Testament, is to be implicated in the story of the covenant, to live in the fear of the Lord, to walk in the way of the Lord amid the complexities of the life of every day, at work and in social activities. (Firet, 1986: 58). Nel adds to this that learning was not only aimed at understanding, but also at attaining a certain way of life, governed by the making of decisions about amending practice in everyday life. (Nel, 2009: 102) Society urgently needs believers who can make a difference to the brokenness within ourselves and in the world. This difference is not made by believers because they are good. The difference is that they know who God is, they know him, love and trust him. And this no-one can do of his or her own accord. To be God’s very own people,

and in that sense being different from the other (our holiness), is a status bestowed on believers. This is part of the identity of the local church. (Nel, 2000: 42)

In order to help us form a vision of all the processes involved in forming lived faith in children I have developed a flowchart of which the tri-angle pointing to the right-hand side, represents the symbol for lived faith. This symbol in the shape of an arrow, indicates to us the direction which should be followed. The code for 'Signs of lived faith' certainly fits perfectly into this tri-angle.

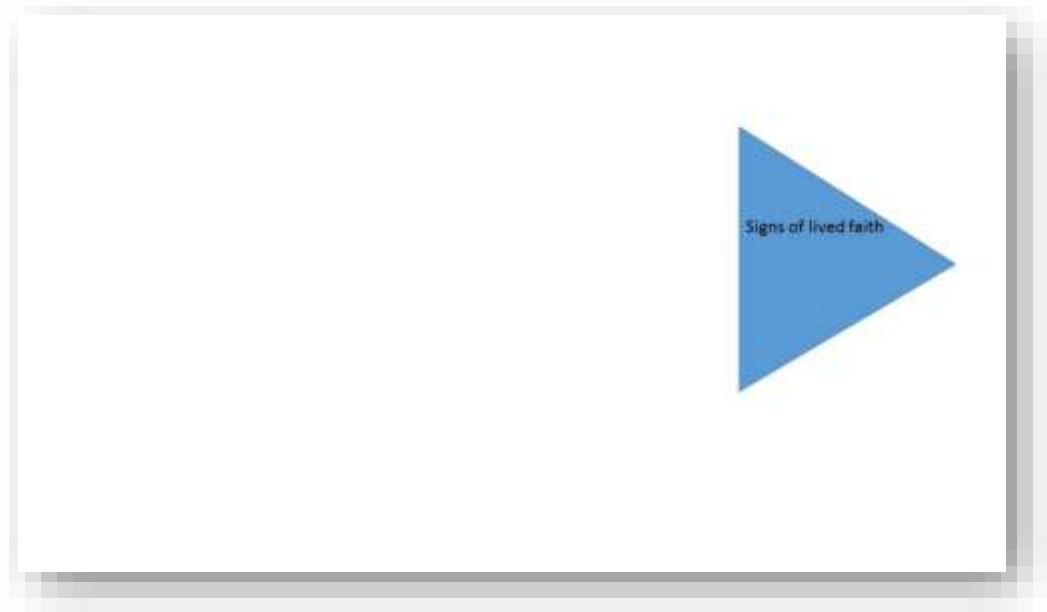


Figure 6 - 2: The goal - lived faith.

6.4.2 Faith Habits

The next code which we propose to examine, is the code labelled "Faith habits". What data were collected by the researcher by means of this code? We were looking at habitual practices of the faith, occurring in parental homes, in the lives of parents and children. As Dykstra and Bass put it: "Indeed, we believe, that it is precisely by participating in Christian practices that we truly come to know God and the world, including ourselves." (Bass, 2008:24) This may be interpreted as being part of the answer to Secondary Research Question number two (SRQ2) concerning that which constitutes lived faith in children.

The question asked was "Tell me about faith practices that occur regularly in your home." The answers to this question, and codes throughout all the interviews rendered the following data:

- To pray regularly. By their example parents teach their children to pray as well as how to pray (1:149). Praying regularly, at specific times and intervals, is part of developing spiritual habits. Although prayer may occur verbally aloud by means of verbalizing one's thoughts, it appears that certain families specifically practice the habit of praying out loud in order to that the children would develop sufficient confidence in the usage of spiritual language, and not be intimidated, hesitant or fearful whenever they are called upon to pray in public (2:69).
- To pray for divine protection before you embark on a long journey. (1:35)
- To say grace prior to taking a meal in order to give thanks for and to ask for a blessing on the food. (1:101)
- To pray for the well-being of one's family members. Intercessory prayer where the person praying focusses not on himself/herself, but on the others and their needs (2:35). This may be preceded by asking questions such as: How was your day? What can I pray for you? What are your needs today?
- Evening devotions. They differ substantially from one home to the next, but basic activities comprise the taking of time each evening for getting together as family, to read from the Scriptures, pray subsequently, and also partake of some faith talk (2:71).
- Conducting regular home devotions. Emphasis was placed on the requirement that this should be a discipline rather than some sporadic event occurring in the house (2:83).
- In one particular home, the habit of singing spiritual songs as a substitute for lullabies is practiced. This habit has many benefits, as it helps the family members to learn the words by heart, to find comfort in these hymns, and to develop the practice of singing their faith out loudly (2:79).
- Devotions conducted by the head of the home, who usually is the father (1:109). Although this might be compromised by a variety of factors, such as a dad working remote from home, it is nevertheless the dad who sets the spiritual pace of the household. As Bengtson's studies show us, children would rather follow the father's lead when spiritual matters are concerned, than that of the mother. (Bengtson, 2013: e-source)
- Debriefing the day. This refers to a basic method of enquiring from family members about their experiences during the day. This technique is obviously not as thorough as Ignatius's daily examine, but it can be seen as a considerably less

intensive version of the same inquiry during which one engages in caring, inquiring about grace and mercy experienced during the day. This is an opportunity for parents to initiate the conversation pertaining to where and how God has been involved in their children's lives during that day (2:77).

- Whenever life presents some challenges, to commence one's response by posing the question: "What would Jesus do?" This standard response has become a habit of faith in one particular household included in this study (1:107).

- Restricting television viewing time (4:157). As the television acts as a third parent in the home (Sigman, 2009:115) it has its own set of values which it continually endeavours to disseminate to a large viewing public. Those values are innate to a secular worldview. Restricting television time, and/or replacing it with spiritual content appears to be a meaningful spiritual strategy.

- Closely linked up to the above-mentioned factor, is the phenomenon of disengaging with one's technology (4:158). The theme of children/teenagers spending an inordinate amount of time on their phones and tablets, often comes to the surface (5:85). We encountered several households which were coming to grips with this in a spiritual manner, especially parents showing leadership in this regard (4:155). Moreover, if a spiritually motivated habit is fixed with regard to technology, it would be a lifelong guide to their offspring.

- Setting aside time together with family members for bonding, talking and discussing the issues of life. (1:145). In this regard, we are talking about quality time, perceived by parent and child as extremely positive. Bengtson's studies indicated that whenever children perceive the relationship with their parents as warm and close, it acts as a huge boost for the transfer of faith between generations. (Bengtson, 2013: e-source) This quality time for faith talk could occur in a variety of places. Such localities as reported by the interviewees, include: in the car, kitchen, bedroom and around the dinner table. One of the subject families chooses one evening per month for being together without the interference by electronics (computers, televisions, radios or cell phones). In 1970, the Mormon Church mandated Monday nights as family home evenings, forbidding Monday evening temple and ward activities and instead, created curricula for nuclear families to assemble for devotions, religious instruction, and wholesome activities. A weekly home-based evening is a spiritual habit that the Church of Christ for Latter-day Saints has already identified as a key building block for families. (Dean, 2010:56)

- Reading spiritual books and devotional literature (1:135). Having this kind of regular input, acts as a spiritual mentor owing to one's faith is continually being developed, prodded and challenged. When children behold their parents engaged in this spiritual discipline, they are likely to be inspired into developing the same habit.
- One family included in this study developed a habit of writing down the main points of each Sunday's service (2:61). The family members utilize this for discussing the sermon at home, and helping the younger members of their family to fully understand what was said. Later during the course of the week, they will again peruse these notes for reminding themselves of what had been preached.
- The habit of a weekly commitment for attending church services is deeply embedded in many Christian households (2:39). Parents repeatedly state that this is what they do, and even when they see some slack in this commitment in their offspring, they will invest much effort to rectify such behaviour.

The above-mentioned elements are included in the 76 quotes which make up this code dealing with Faith Habits. When one reads them, it will be realized that these are the core values that we believe Christians ought to have, and should cultivate. Faith practices are actually the means of receiving grace. As such, faith practices provide the believer "a way of life," which in theological language, in essence implies discipleship.

Nel gives us a word of caution here: The Holy Spirit makes discipleship possible. He calls us into a relationship with the Father and the Son, by maintaining the constant and permanent relationship with the Lord whom we follow. Only through the Spirit and under his guidance is true discipleship of Christ possible. It is he who helps the disciples to remain 'in the words' of the Lord. Such an emphasis shows that discipleship is about obedience to the Lord's Word and will. His words teach his disciples perpetually to improve their understanding and conduct under the guidance of the Spirit, and in communion with other disciples. (Nel, 2009: 106) The motivation behind faith habits is of the essence: the better the relationship with the Lord Jesus is in view, the stronger the habit will be in developing lived faith in a person.

Followers of Jesus Christ have habits which help them to remain on course. As such, it seems prudent to take a moment for considering whether these habits comprise a means to an end. Are they regarded as mere stepping-stones, which,

provided they are used often and well, will guide one towards one's actual goal? Are spiritual habits already part of the achievement of the goal? In other words, people who practice spiritual habits are already showing a form of lived faith. As Root puts it: "It appears that divine action itself comes through embodied practices of people." (Root, 2014: e-source) In the light of the above, we can then add the code for Faith habits to the code for Signs of lived faith in the triangle. This is what we are aiming for. Any spiritual formation will keep in mind to establish these habits and signs in the lives of the new adherents of our faith.

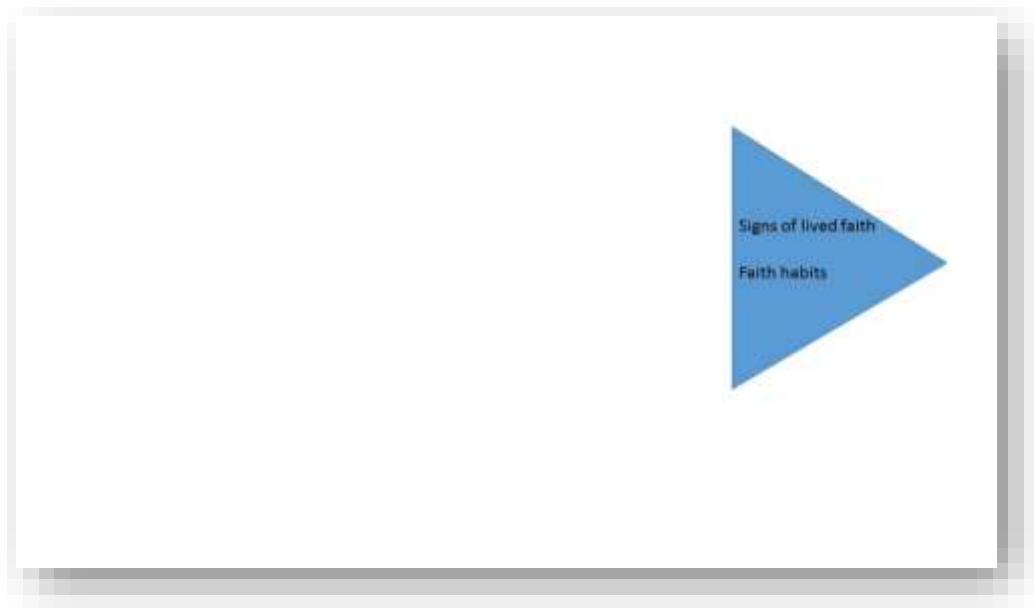


Figure 6 - 3: The goal - lived faith & faith habits.

6.4.3 Bible Knowledge

The next code we are turning our attention to, is the one dealing with knowledge of the Bible. This was also a recurring theme encountered in the interviews. As the Bible is the handbook of our faith, a complete lack of knowledge of the Bible appears to signify a few perilous trends owing to the phenomenon that people do not read it, do not care to read it, and that they further the development of a secular worldview rather than a Biblical worldview. The tenants of our faith, as elucidated in the Bible, are not part of their spiritual make-up. In fact, as we have seen in chapter 3, this is the kind of faith that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism subscribes to. (Dean, 2010:7)

Knowledge of the Bible seems to be very important to the parents participating in this study. They reported the following convictions:

- Exposure to the Bible is important (1:27)
- Concern is expressed that some young families might not even possess a Bible in the home anymore. (1:27)
- Several children have no idea who some of the main characters of the Bible are, as for instance Adam and Eve, Samson, David and Goliath, etc. (1:27)
- There is a direct link between parents reading the Bible to their young, and the children understanding what the Bible teaches. (1:33)
- A major obligation of Sunday school is to teach the Bible, and to clarify the contents for the benefit of a younger generation. (1:53)
- Knowledge of the Bible should promote the attainment of the previous two codes, namely signs of lived faith and Faith Habits. (4:139)
- Knowledge of Biblical content provides the necessary motivation for correct behaviour which is based on Scripture rather than on moralistic considerations. (5:83)

In order to understand the importance of what was reported, I would be inclined to place Bible knowledge directly next to Signs of lived faith and Faith Habits. Occasionally Bible knowledge appears to be intertwined with the other two codes to such an extent that they basically coincide so as to portray the same identity. When we discussed Signs of lived faith, we learnt that one of its indicators was that people lean toward the Bible, and they have an interest to read Scripture. This obviously assumes knowledge of the Bible. The same reasoning applies to the code of Faith Habits. One of the habits of the faithful is the practicing of regular devotions which usually include reading from the Bible. Thus Bible knowledge, as a code, is closely related to the aforementioned two codes.

However, it is important to note that Bible knowledge can be divorced from lived faith. When Jesus dwelt on earth, the majority of His reasoning and arguments were aimed at the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law. They had much knowledge of the Bible; yet they were in opposition to Christ. Knowledge of the Bible does not imply a 'de facto' faith. The apostle Paul stated it explicitly in 2 Tim 3:15 *"and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"* (NIV) It appears that one might know the theory of dancing, without actually being able to dance. One might

be able to recognize the rhythm of a waltz, and know to lead off with the left foot and you might know the half-right turn, but merely knowing these skills and actually performing the while dancing, are two very different things. However, once one knows how to execute the steps, it would become much easier to dance the waltz with confidence and flair.

On dogmatic level, a distinction is made between ‘fides quae creditur’ and ‘fides qua creditur’. ‘Fides quae creditur’ signifies objective facts and statements of belief. These represent the Biblical truths found in God’s revelation. ‘Fides qua creditur’ denotes faith in those statements of belief. This is an acceptance and trust based on the knowledge of God’s revelation. Faith formation, when we trace back the word to the original Greek – *didaskhein* – then signifies an emerging process where the teacher guides the pupil towards trust in the principles of belief. (Venter, 2011: 3)

In this respect, Mulholland adds: “Every action taken, every response made, every dynamic of relationship, every thought held, every emotion allowed; these are the minuscule arenas where, bit by bit...we are shaped into some kind of being...life is, by its very nature, spiritual formation.” (Mulholland, 1985: 28)

Therefore, we see that Bible knowledge also acts as a gateway to the aforesaid two codes. The reason why many faith practices eventually disappear, is that faith becomes shallow when people do not read the Bible and consequently have only little knowledge of Biblical teachings. For instance, why would you love your neighbour when you do not know that it was commanded by the Lord Jesus Himself? How would you still your soul by means of meditative prayer if you are not conversant with the Lord’s Prayer, or Psalm 23, or any other Biblical verses that might enable you to focus on the Lord Almighty? In a sense, Bible knowledge is the bedrock on which the aforesaid two codes are based, and from which they develop. Similarly, you can only attain a Biblical world-view when you have acquired a basic understanding of the contents of the Bible. In this respect, one of the interviewees referred to children who have changed their point of reference from “mom or dad said” to “the Bible says” (9:91). This denotes a shift in authority reflecting a true Biblical world-view. With this in mind, I am inclined to place Bible knowledge right in front of the triangle comprising Signs of lived faith and Faith Habits, as illustrated diagrammatically below. As a group, these three codes help us to comprehend the answer to Research Question three (SRQ2), namely: “What constitutes a lived faith in children?”

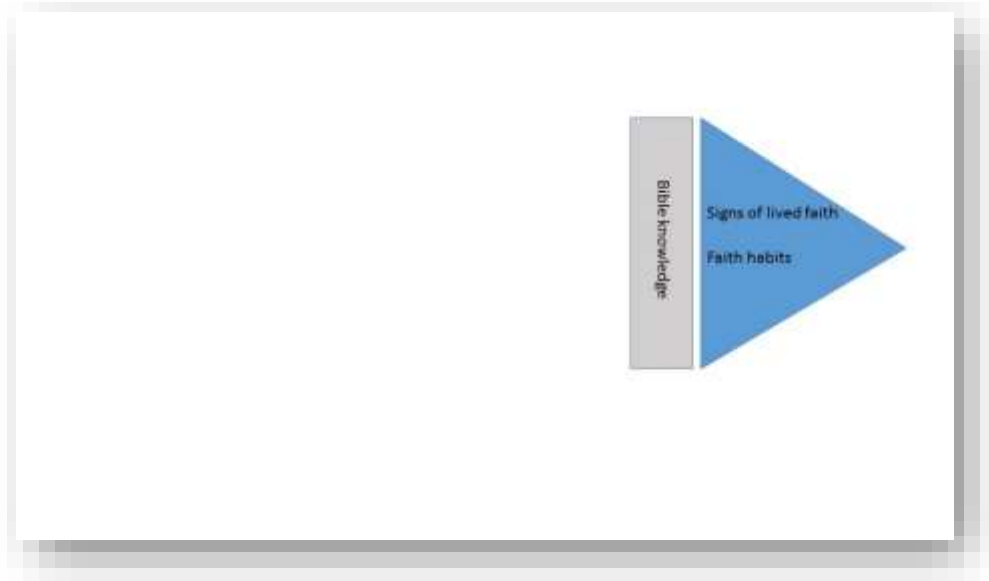


Figure 6 - 4: The gateway to the goal: Bible knowledge

6.4.4 Role of the Congregation, the Parents and the School

When we examine the list of codes recorded in Appendix F, it is evident that two of the codes are exceedingly well-grounded, compared to the remaining codes. These two prominent codes are, 'Role of the congregation' (66 times) and 'Role of the parents' (69 times). This thesis is primarily concerned with the partnership between these two agents: the congregation and the parental home. The research questions were developed to inquire about the relationship between these two agents. The interview questions aptly were based on the two streams of thought: what is the role that the congregation plays in the formation of the faith of children, and what is the stated and/or unstated role that is expected of parents in the formation of faith in their young?

Subsequent to the coding of all the identified instances where either of these parties has been mentioned, and their roles as faith formers have been identified, it becomes evident that there are distinct and specific expectations by either side. The congregation knows what should happen in the home, and is expecting and trusting parents for acting in a certain way. However, these specific actions quite often are hardly ever made known aloud. Although these expectations are not propagated or taught, they nevertheless remain. As with any dance, there are two partners involved, and they have certain expectations of each other, including competent

fulfilling of mutual roles, careful treatment, cautious execution of the dance, and a desire for making the occasion enjoyable for everyone involved.

Similarly, the parental home has certain expectations of the congregation. As we advance further, we will explore these expectations. It is obvious from the research that when these expectations are not met, members become frustrated, and in course of time, they will relinquish their association and leave in search of a congregation that might meet those unfulfilled expectations. One would only dance a limited number of times with a bearish oaf who continually steps on one's toes.

The 'Role of the congregation'. What does this code signify? Every time that utterances such as "the church must..." or "the church can..." or "I want the church to..." are heard, they indicate a particular action required from the congregation by certain persons. In their minds and frames of reference, this expected compliance with their wishes should be a role that the congregation should play. These represent silent, un verbalized expectations which one would hardly ever find in writing as they comprise the unwritten assumptions of the partnership between the congregation and the home. This presumption apparently is a reciprocal phenomenon. If there is one task that this research aspires to accomplish, it would be to bring these hidden expectations to the fore. We would endeavour to show these hidden expectations explicitly in order to persuade people and church leaders to acknowledge their existence, and to commence the management of these issues.

In order to represent the expectations on the flow-diagram, I have drawn a line from the 'church' icon, and another line from the 'home' icon. These two lines indicate the roles played by these two actors. The line connecting the 'home' to 'Bible knowledge' is the shorter one which implies closer proximity and therefore higher impact. The research that we have dealt with Chapter 3 has made this very clear that the greatest impact on the faith lives of children, emanates from home. Thus, cause and effect which are linked more closely, are indicated by a shorter line.

The line connecting the 'church' to the 'Bible knowledge' appears to be a longer line as the church obviously has less time and therefore less impact on the formation of faith than the parents do. However, there still is a significant role to be played by the church, as we will learn in due course.

It is important to note a third line, curvilinear in shape, which is emanating from the 'home' and connecting up with 'Bible knowledge'. This seemingly longer curvilinear line, represents the code: 'Role of the school'. The reader will notice that

the groundedness of this code appears to be rather insignificant, comprising eight instances. Three of these instances are statements concerning the fact that faith has disappeared from public schools. In the past (approximately until the year 1995) there was substantial religious support, instituted teaching from the Bible and inputs by parents concerning faith matters at school, all of which having gone in our present day post-modern era. All the parents participating in the research, have grown up during the time when the 'Role of school' in faith formation was at a high. They currently experience a totally different situation. Nevertheless, a situation where the parents are seeking schools where faith still matters, appears to have become rife. Several of these parents either have to drive long distances to deliver their children at schools where faith formation still enjoys attention, or they are paying exceptionally high school fees for registering their children with private Christian schools. The line for the code 'Role of the school' thus starts at the parental home. Parents decide where their children should attend school, and often they will make this decision being mindful of the spiritual influence which the school would exert on their children.

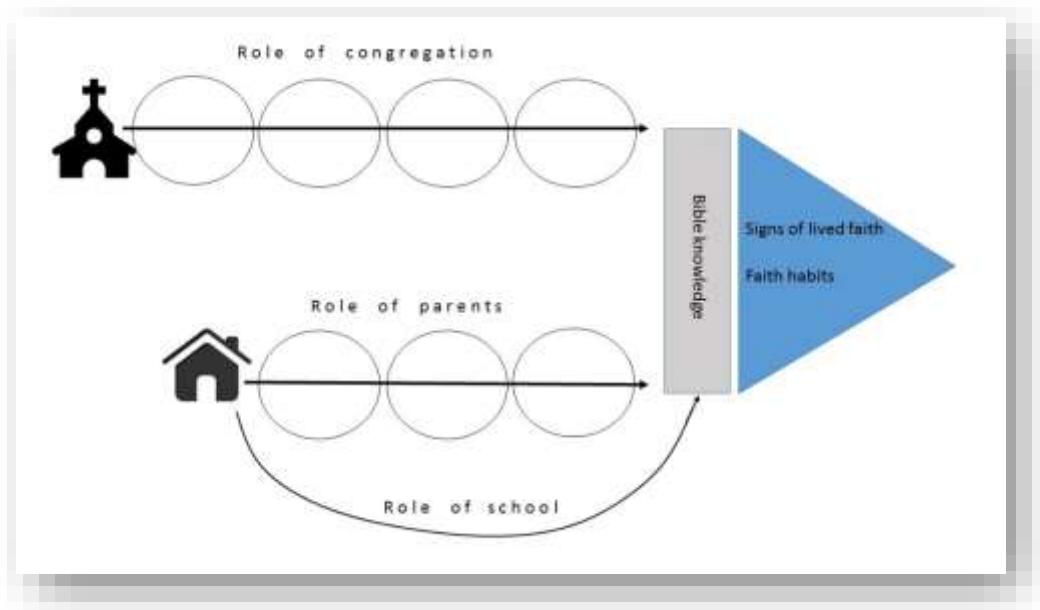


Figure 6 - 5: The roles of the congregation, the parents and the school

6.4.5 Role of the Congregation

In the following section we propose to probe the role that the congregation actually plays, needs to play, and is expected to play in the forming of faith in

children. This proposes to provide an answer to the Secondary Research Question number four (SRQ4), namely: What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children? This role is defined by the interviewees who are members of congregations, parents who take their children to church on a regular basis, and who are deeply engaged and invested in their church. Below are the needs these parents wish their congregations to take care of. In terms of the unwritten contract that exists between the congregation and its members, these are the salient expectations that parents are insisting on:

6.4.5.1 Sunday service

A total of six (6) different codes of the family of codes named 'Sunday service', explain the parents' expectations for that one-hour of worship on a Sunday. The first of these codes, arranged in descending order of the number of occurrences, is the code: 'Sunday service_accommodating all ages'. Repeatedly, we hear of parents who wish that they could attend church as a family. Parents do not attend church purely owing to an individualistic pursuit of spiritual growth, but rather would prefer their whole family to experience this spiritual enrichment. It appears to be an important matter for parents whether their children's spiritual growth is nourished by the Sunday service, or not. When parents sense that their children do not feel welcomed by the congregation, they would decide to rather stay away. Mothers with small babies would quite often declare that "we don't want to inconvenience the others, we would rather stay at home and take turns to come to church" (1:200). In retrospect, they appear to regret those decisions (2:81).

Parents are inclined to conclude that their children are not taken into consideration when the level of the sermon is far beyond their children's understanding (1:89). They sit through the church service but do not understand what is said from the pulpit, and then they start to fiddle and become restless to the frustration of the parents who are compelled to divide their attention between the sermon and keeping their children in check. Parents expect the sermons to be conducted in a child-friendly way (4:31), inclusive of activities performed during the service which make for interesting proceedings. A change of activities could contribute to a positive outcome, for instance, when a choir comes to sing (2:55), or the offering is taken in a different way, or reading of the Bible is performed by a

child, or an artist recites a poem or presentation (3:37). Such diversity in the service communicates to parents the message that they are welcome to attend church as a family, that the church wishes to speak to all the members of families, their children included. The church is expected to state categorically that the faith of all its members is important to its existence.

The aforementioned situation shows in the way the worship is conducted. If no attempt is made to include all the different age groups in the worship, the message is communicated to members that the church only caters for a selected segment, and that the needs of the remaining persons are ignored, or satisfied partially in terms of a 'take it, or leave it' fashion. Parents are extremely sensitive to this issue.

A number of congregations deal with a diversity of worshippers by establishing a separate children's church. The data assembled from the interviews indicates that children's church could readily be viewed negatively, especially when parents "dump" their children so that they themselves can temporarily be relieved of their parental responsibility and be entitled to relax in the church (3:20). In the event of children's church occurring under the control of persons who merely act as 'babysitters', it implies that both Biblical teaching and consequential faith formation have not been forthcoming as children's church has been degraded to the level of a child's play den. However, on the other hand, children's church could also play a very positive role, especially when parents care to talk with their children afterwards, by means of which these parents have the opportunity to evaluate what their children did learn (5:43). Furthermore, children are positively affected by parent's conduct to such an extent that they become inclined to participate in the adult's service, for instance by singing a song, or blessing the people (1:71). No less than ten times did the respondents mention that their younger children were not able to listen to the pastor for the duration of a whole hour (See quotations for code: "S Service_children don't listen"). In this respect, children's church can play an important role in facilitating family needs for faith formation through worship on Sundays.

The expectation that the congregation will accommodate all age groups during the course of a service, should not be understated. One of the respondents suggested that: "Sunday service must be one big family event" (1:73). A pastor participating in the study, verbalized it as follows: "I myself believe that we need to be together in one Sunday service. My point is it is like a Christmas tree: we all sit

around one Christmas tree: grandpa and grandma, mom and dad and all the children. We are one family.” (3:20) When parents know that they and their children are welcome at church and that all of them will experience faith growth, they would feel satisfied that the congregation fulfills its role well. Moreover, certain parents are actually inclined to take risks in this respect. Where they still have a child aged twenty years and more in the home, they will almost inevitably pressurize those young adults to accompany in them in attending church on Sunday (2:33). Those parents risk forfeiting their standing when exerting too much pressure, yet there is that big expectation pertaining to a need for a service that would accommodate the needs of the entire family.

In their report to the Synod of 1966, the Youth Study Commission made it clear that this is one of the responsibilities of a congregation toward children: The Sunday service is to be conducted in such a way as to accommodate all ages. All members of a household should be able to listen to God’s Word and understand it clearly. Special attention should be given to the sacraments, so that the young who are present will understand that they are recipients of Gods kingdom and his covenant. (Youth Study Commission, 1966: 67)

When this requirement has been met, parents will be loyal, and they will keep coming. Parents regard this as an avenue for their children to be initiated into the tribe of believers, the achievement of which results in Bible knowledge, and ultimately in lived faith and solid faith habits.

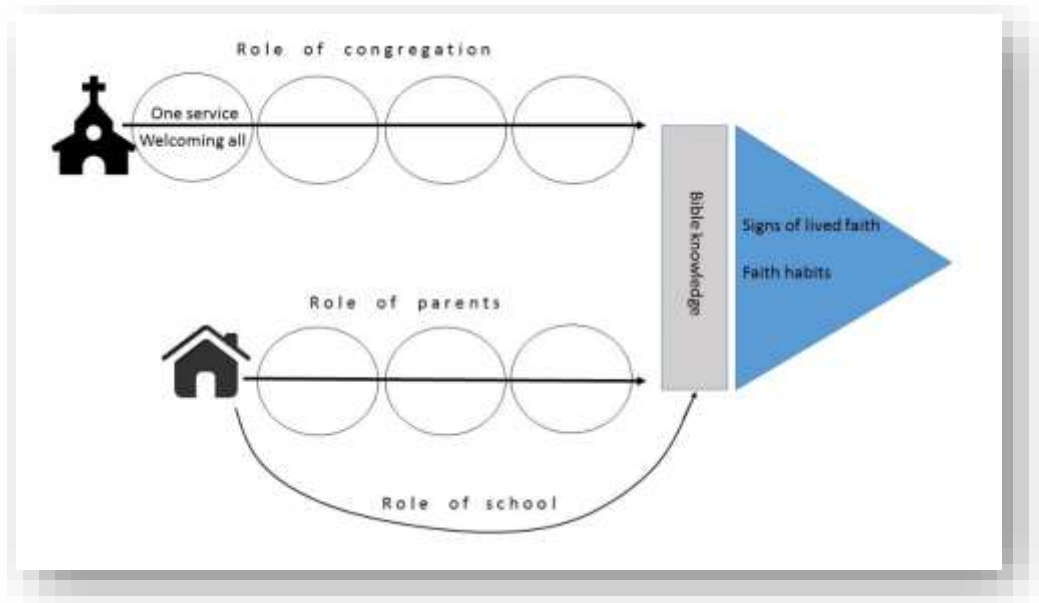


Figure 6 - 6: The role of the congregation - a welcoming Sunday service for all.

6.4.5.2 Sunday School

The second expectation that parents have of the role that the congregation plays in faith formation, is that the congregation should put in place an effective, exciting, and dynamic Sunday school for their young. This is an expectation that has its roots in the Synod of the NG Kerk in 1966 already. The Commission charged to study how the Church should conduct youth-activities made it clear that catechism classes are of utmost importance in developing faith. The aim is stated as being to guide children to repentance, and then to develop spiritual maturity in them. The pastor should show these children the example of his own spiritual life and the genuineness of his interest in their spiritual development. They stated that if this is done wrong, it's a loss that may never be rectified, thus this is a very high calling. (Youth Study Commission, 1966: 68)

Quite clearly, this was not the case regarding Congregation A for a very long period of time. Even the pastor commented that children only irregularly attended Sunday school, or simply stayed away if they felt so inclined. (3:16) No evidence of structure was encountered at that congregation, and no systematic approach to the building of knowledge on existing knowledge. Out of the sixteen (16) instances referred to when parents aired their views on improvements to the structuring of the Sunday school, a total of eight (8) made reference to the past years of their

upbringing when, according to them, there used to be more structure. The materials which they had access to, were very helpful. They acquired prescribed handbooks, and were given homework for completion. When they became slack in executing those assignments, their parents would intervene of their own accord and assist their youngsters as much as deemed feasible (2:63). Children were expected to memorize Scripture (1:25). Furthermore, there were organized outings and other relevant events (1:25) such as Bible quizzes (1:53). It is almost obvious that concerned parents would be very upset by a new concept of Sunday school where there are no proper materials available, and where there apparently is a lack of a systematic approach to the spiritual teaching of their young.

As will be indicated below, time is at a premium for most people. The allocation of approximately one hour on a Sunday purely for faith formation, additionally to the service, implies that this remains very important to parents. They are willingly committed to continually doing this, as many parents are still experiencing some kind of a duality in their minds. One of the parents stated that: "The Bible teaching at church is a huge building block to me. We do the more practical stuff at home" (2:29). The expectation is therefore that the congregation should teach children the more formal knowledge of the faith comprising the core Bible teachings, and provide the answers to the difficult questions. When parents become aware that their expectations are not being met, frustration ensues and result in one of two outcomes: some of the parents would become apathic, and then do not actually care that much whether their children partake of religious activities, or not at all. (1:25). The second outcome appears to be that parents wish to be involved themselves and do their share in order to improve the current situation. (3:16)

Anslinger has this to offer when talking about Sunday school: "Maybe we should shift our focus from religious education to faith formation. The process of being formed and transformed by Christ throughout the span of one's life is the endeavour to which we commonly refer as faith formation." (Anslinger, 2003: 36). In most cases, the Sunday school curriculum is not thought through. There seems to be no systematic plan for specific outcomes. Some materials are covered, but the goal was never stated, and the roadmap towards that goal was never drawn (6:16).

In an extensive international comparative study of protestant confirmation work involving more than 28000 confirmands in Europe, Schweitzer found that the existence of fixed curricula in non-formal education settings like confirmation work

enhances the uniformity of the programs and reduces the proportion of variance accounted for on the group level. (Ilg & Schweitzer, 2010: 159) This is a clear indication that structure in Sunday school gives security and confidence to not only the pupils, but also to the parents of these pupils.

If the congregation is still offered this opportunity, and if parents still feel the need for the church to educate their young, should they not grab the initiative and decide on a plan of action for making the most of those few hours per week they have to teach the younger members of the congregation our beliefs?

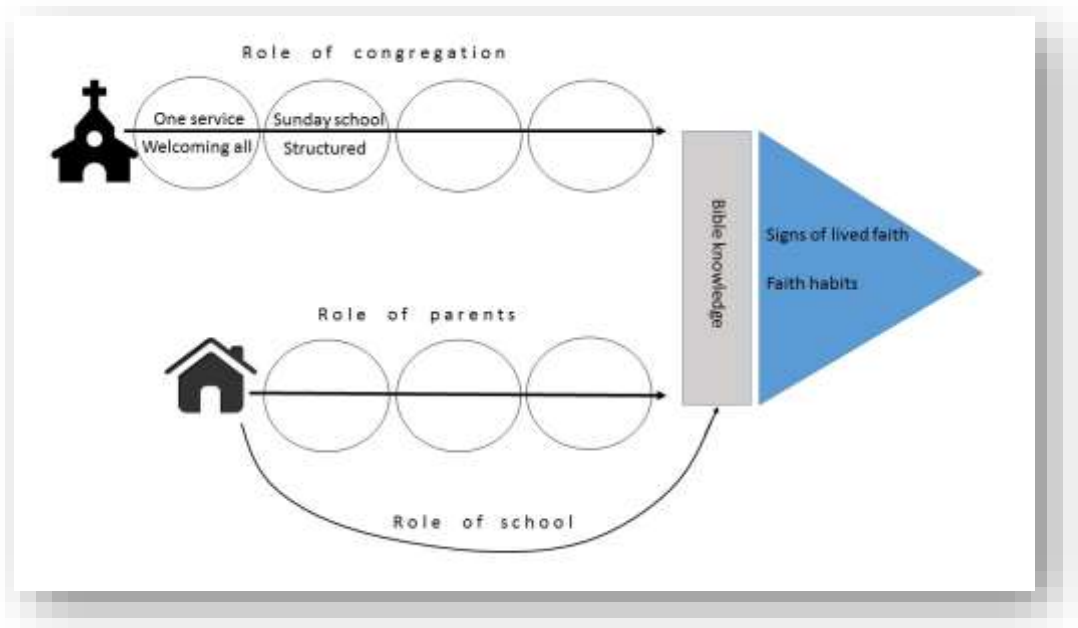


Figure 6 - 7: The role of the congregation – effective Sunday school.

6.4.5.3 Youth Activities

The next family of codes that we will take under review is the one labelled 'Youth activities'. Bundled into this family are three codes, one dealing with statements of parents telling stories of how it used to be in the past, one where they share their expectation of wanting more such activities for their children, and one where they dream about how this might happen in the near future.

What do parents want from their congregation? When we investigate the data, it becomes evident that parents have definite expectations. Parents wish their congregation to provide opportunities outside of Sunday's events where their children could go to and enjoy an uplifting experience that will help them in the

formation of lived faith. The majority of these parents grew up amidst such opportunities, as these were part of their faith formation. Many years later, however, these parents experience the lack thereof for the benefit their offspring. (3:41)

The language used is noteworthy: One of the respondents claimed that she could sense that this lack of activities for the youth would determine whether they would remain with the congregation, or rather drop their membership in order to find another in its stead (1:11). The absence of suitable activities for the benefit of the youth, is equated to a lack of interest shown by the congregation in its young people (1:19). The availability of youth activities is interpreted as 'support' by the congregation (1:89), and that it enhances the impact of Sunday's teaching (1:21), and creates a place where children feel at home (1:79). This last statement is worth of pondering over. Parents sense instinctively that their children will not remain in church or belong to a specific congregation if they have not been integrated into the social structure of that faith community.

The researched data bear this out. Subject B13 reports that their congregation lost the services of a valuable youth worker who had left, and as a result her 16 year-old is now attending another congregation where they have an active youth group going (5:13). The response of one of the mothers were: "I tell you: children are desperately seeking for that – where a church has activities where they feel at home." (1:79) This is a two-edged sword as it might very well be wonderful to have a charismatic youth worker who acts as a magnet for attracting young people to the ministry (5:35). However, when he leaves – God forbids – and starts a new ministry outside of the congregation, young people would probably also leave this congregation in order to follow. In this way the ministry of this particular faith community is jeopardized (6:11).

This model, of having a captain youth worker with an enticing youth ministry, values hype, not health. (Fields, 1998: 29) Karen-Marie Yust detected the same phenomenon in the congregations that she studied, whereat children's ministries appeared to have been heavily dependent on the vision, energy, and creativity of one or two persons in the congregation, usually – but not always – the Director of Christian Education or an associate pastor. If this person were to leave, the innovative ministries they are trying to create would revert to more traditional models or would cease to exist. This creates a significant barrier to the

development of a congregational theology of ministry with children or the communal implementation of the vision held by the person on whom that ministry depends. When the primary person seeks to empower others by delegating authority or tasks, the theological and methodological import of her or his vision rarely transfers with the task. (Yust, 2002: 6)

The youth activities parents want the congregation to establish, also underpin the purpose of helping youngsters to socialize with other believers. This development adds other faithful persons to their circle of friends. The literature is rife in references pertaining to this matter. Earl Palmer uncovered one constant factor among resilient teens, namely that all of them experienced the non-exploitive interest, care and support of at least one adult during their childhood years, which may include a parent or grandparent, uncle or aunt, older brother or sister, coach or teacher, pastor or youth leader; an adult with no hidden agenda or exploitive design on the youngster. (Palmer, 1992: 4) Nel states the God takes pleasure in the wonder of the unity of his people. Their unity is a witness to his glory. In this way the restoration to wholeness attains its peak. God restores to relatedness. The covenant leads to covenantal (relational) commitment - to God and the others in the covenant. In youth ministry this principle is conclusive, and it provides the ministry with integrity. Youth ministry is often threatened by individualism - or, put in another way, by a lack of insight into the corporate purpose and dealings of God. Maintaining this theological starting point in youth ministry is not always easy. The degeneration of some congregations into the sum total of individuals makes this principle difficult to maintain. (Nel, 2000: 9) In this respect the church has a huge advantage as there is an inexhaustible source of adult and peer group role models, providing examples of life practices shaped by religious moral orders that could constructively influence the lives of youth. Here youth can observe, learn, and practice valuable community life skills and leadership skills.

When parents are contemplating various possibilities, they can draw from a rich pool of knowledge. Parents seek a regularly repetitive activity or activities (1:97). They visualize such activities to be a safe place where children can share their feelings and know that it is acceptable to do so. (1:91). These activities might be gender-specific or age group specific (1:192), and they might possibly get speakers to address them on selected topics, or they would simply watch Christian movies (1:89). Finally, this can also take the form of an activity geared for the entire

family or only for dads and their sons, or for mothers and their daughters, etc. (3:45).

The numerous instances of relevant activities referred to during discussions, and the way in which people shared their views on this particular code, confirmed that this was what they wished for. The congregation was definitely expected to provide suitable activities for its children. A number of parents appear to be willing to render assistance in this regard (1:192), provided that they are offered guidance and leadership for the sustainment of these activities (2:45).

In this regard, Benson indicated that: "Changes in contexts change young people, and we can intentionally change young people's context(s) to enhance their developmental success. One example is that young people were more likely to volunteer if they were in networks in which their parents and friends rendered services, and if they were connected to youth organizations and religious institutions. That is, service was less an individual and spontaneous act and more the result of a web of positive relationships and norms that together elevated service to a shared social expectation." (Benson et al, 2006: 117)

In their study using a diverse sample of adolescents from nine California and Wisconsin high schools, Search Institute reported protection against delinquency and substance abuse among adolescents who experienced warm relations with parents, came from relatively well-organized households, valued academic achievement, and were engaged at school, felt close to teachers, and performed well in school. In other words: Increasing the number of developmental nutrients across settings is what matters most, not increasing specific strengths or combinations of strengths in any single setting. (ibid: 119) To host a regular social activity at church where we add additional faithful persons to the lives of young people would definitely increase developmental nutrients.

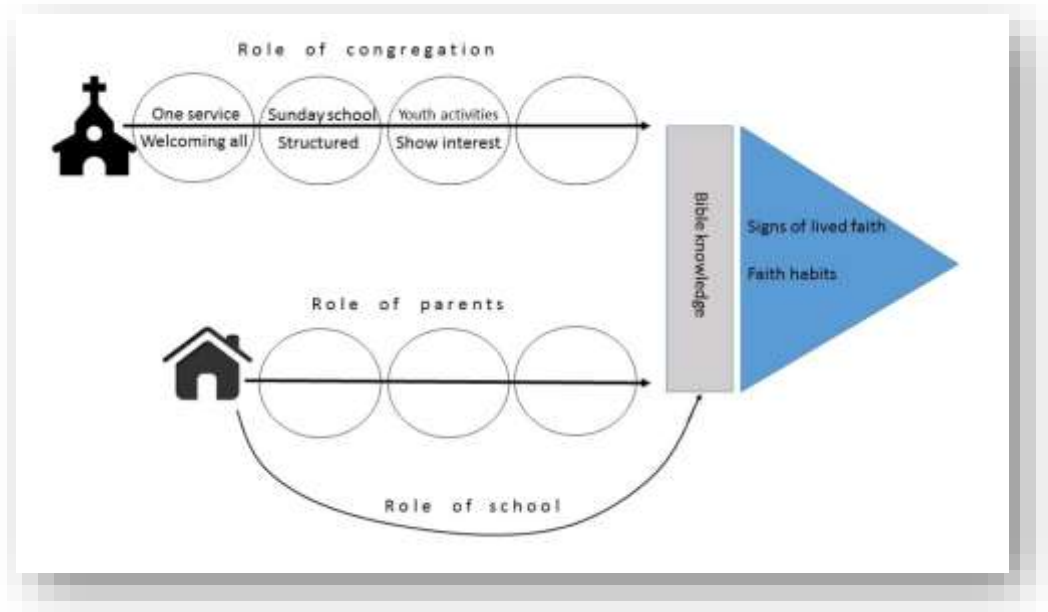


Figure 6 - 8: The role of the congregation – engage in youth activities

6.4.5.4 Assisting Parents

The fourth expectation that parents foster concerning the role of the congregation, is found in the next family of codes, called: “Assisting parents.” Four codes are included in this family. These are: Assisting parents_rated low, Assisting parents_modelling, Assisting parents_content, and Assisting parents_activities. Let us examine them one at a time and ascertain what the parents expect from their congregation.

One of the respondents states that: “I don’t see people from the church coming to homes and helping anybody.” (2:45). This implies a need for the church to come to the aid of families whenever they are struggling with problems. Of more importance is the expectation of parents that this aid should be coming from a trusted source. Those parents experience the need to ‘look up’ to the pastor, and to follow his example as a role model for their children. (1:51)

What type of assistance would people prefer? What would the content be of that what they need? Some persons are in need of assistance or guidance to teach their children the right stuff (1:25), equipping them to rear godly children in a secular world (1:91), to apply Biblical principles pertaining to discipline (4:189) and fulfilling the vow made at the baptism of their children (1:208). Some parents are more specific, and would require support with their difficult child (1:165), or when their child is experiencing a phase of doubt and/or anger, (2:111).

During the course of the interviews, the participants commenced the brainstorming of possibilities. A number of suggestions brought forward included a structured course at church for coaching the parents (1:161), or an evening during which parents share their own successes and failures so that others might learn therefrom (1:169). One of the interviewees suggested that at such meetings the parents should split up into gender-specific groups, so as to enable the mothers to discuss parenthood while the fathers convene at a separate venue in their own time where they can air their views, ask and receive relevant advice. (2:119)

Underlying these discussions, is an undercurrent of longing for community. Some of the interviewees explained how they joined a group of parents who supported each other during the difficult parenting times (2:125), and that such support was clearly one of the unstated benefits of having regular get-togethers at church where other parents could assist them in their roles as parents. (1:163).

This particular theme surfaced when people commenced to share their experiences at cell group meetings. The fellowship that they experienced in a small group enabled them to break their own perceived isolation. Here they can freely communicate about the challenges of parenthood and raising godly children (4:87). The cell group allows for the discussion of practical matters, seemingly trivial of nature, such as persuading a child to eat its greens (4:91). An additional benefit accrued as the children were engaged in this small group faith community where they had peers to associate with concerning faith and the issues of life. This was regarded as exerting a “positive influence” on their children. (5:117) Cell groups are most definitely regarded as a very supportive tool in aiding parents. Congregations would do well to take note of this.

One of the most important ways for strengthening the faith formation of children and young people, and enhancing child, youth, and family ministries, appears to be by engaging and supporting parents or primary caregivers, says Bunge (2008:10). Research undertaken by the Search Institute indicates that parents want to connect with other parents in meaningful ways but have few opportunities to do so – 77% admit that talking with other parents about parenting issues would help somewhat or very much. Their suggestion to congregations is to create an environment where help-seeking and mutual support are honoured, and members are taught that such mutual support is a sign of strength, not of weakness or inadequacy. (Benson, 1990: 213)

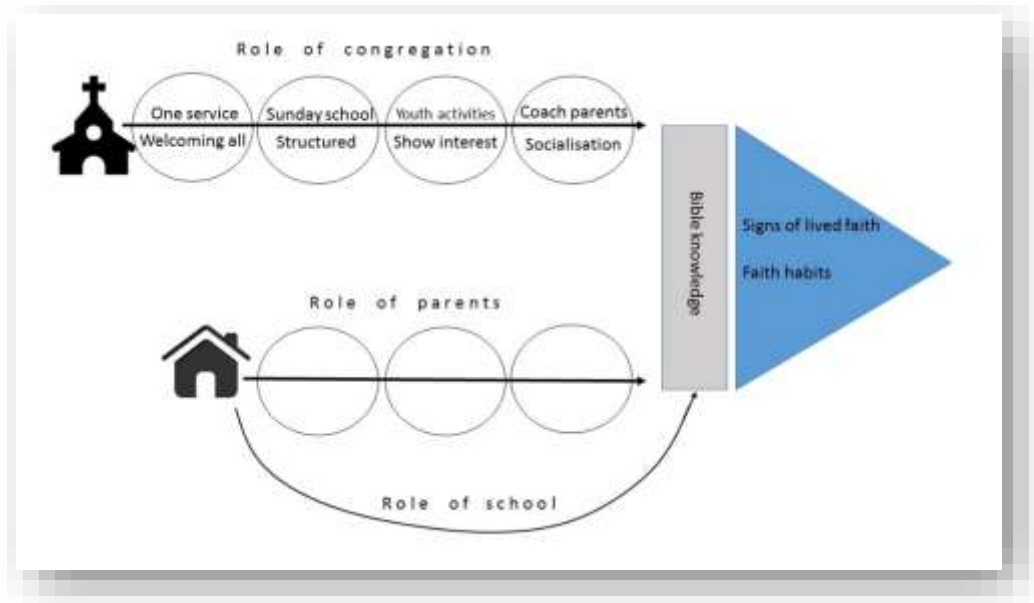


Figure 6 - 9: The role of the congregation – Assisting parents

In summary then, what are parents asking from their congregation? What are their expectations? Which part of the partnership represents the roles and responsibilities of the congregation? (The answer to SRQ4) These problematic questions could be addressed in the following suggested way:

- a. Provide us with a worthwhile Sunday service worship experience where the whole family feels welcomed and catered for.
- b. I will bring my children to Sunday school provided that you take the time to teach them the faith clearly and effectively.
- c. Invest in our young by organizing activities during the week that will bond them to their church and to other believers, and
- d. Be my partner in assisting me to become a better parent. Teach me, guide me, tutor me and connect me with other parents to this end.

6.4.6 Role of the Parent

Subsequently we turn our attention to the sixty-nine (69) quotes which dealt with the 'Role of the parent' in faith formation. In this sub-section we are addressing the Secondary Research Question number three (SRQ3), namely: What is the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children? It is important to note that most of these quotes are derived from parents and members of the

congregation themselves. This implies that they probably have a good understanding of their own share in the partnership as are the actions and activities that they subscribe to. As noted before, this line in the diagram is somewhat shorter in length, denoting the notion that parents are closer to faith formation of children than anybody else. Parents have a more direct impact on their children's spiritual formation, they spend more time with them and own the Biblical mandate to use this God-given situation to form lived faith in the next generation. (Deut. 6:7-9) Brueggemann clearly states: "It is clear that in the world of Biblical faith, the family is the primary unit of meaning, which shapes and defines reality." (Brueggemann, 1977: 18)

When we scrutinize co-coding, we notice no fewer than thirteen (13) other codes occurring in association with the code identified as 'Role of the parents', of which five (5) codes indicate a high level of correlation. Hence, these five codes denote the actual elements revealed by the research, which are part of the 'Role of the parents'. We will examine them in turn below.

6.4.6.1 Spending Time as Family

Almost everyone knows that time is a precious commodity. Each person has at its disposal the exact same amount of time daily, and many things in life are continually vying for your time. Therefore, the things you do, places where you do them and persons whom you decide to spend time with, largely reveal what your priorities and values are. The modern world has brought along a host of technological advancements, and has made our lives easier in many ways. However, simultaneously people are attempting to increasingly fit more things into their daily lives, yet the majority of people are incessantly thinly stretched for time.

This theme is often mentioned during the interviews. Thirty-three (33) quotations deal with the code: 'Time issues'. One of the parents participating in the study stated that: "We are so part of the rat race that quite often we don't find the time to talk to our children." (1:39). It seems that the older your children are the less time you have to spend with them owing to increased commitments at school. (1:147). Several of the words and expressions used by interviewees regarding time as a phenomenon, include: to "find time" (1:39), "make time" (1:145), "I have decided and will commit to my decisions." (1:178). A number of interviewees

mentioned with regret that they omitted to spend sufficient time with their kids while they were growing up (5:179).

So, how do people find time for parenting in this busy age? In what ways do they comply with this expectation of being there for your children? The data reveal the following:

- Sitting around a table while taking dinner (1:121)
- Drive time in the motor-car (1:121)
- Spending weekends away with your children (1:125), including camping together (4:151)
- Preparing food in the kitchen (1:127)
- Planning a family evening at home, no electronics allowed (1:145)
- Parents attending their children's sport events (3:24)
- The last five (5) minutes of the day at bed-time (2:77)

Most of these activities call for some planning, some extra effort, and a well-considered decision to invest time in the relationship with your child. More often than not this investment will render great returns. Bengtson shows that where children report a loving, close relationship, faith will transfer from one generation to another more easily. (Bengtson, 2013: e-source)

Don Browning postulates that when fathers are too busy, or their jobs take them away from the home, children (especially young boys) living away from their biological fathers on average have more difficulties in life: they go to jail more often, do more poorly in school, have more babies out of wedlock, suffer mental and physical abuse more frequently, have more difficulties getting jobs, and have more problems successfully forming stable families in adulthood. (Browning, 1999: 1)

One recurring theme on the topic of 'Spending time as family' is the code 'Eating together'. It seems that you can spend time as family together without eating together, but you cannot eat together and not spend time together as family. Thus, eating together is a powerful way of accomplishing 'Spending time as a family'.

A study undertaken at Columbia University reports that having at least one parent who regularly takes dinner together with its child, was found to have prevented depression, anxiety and substance abuse in children who also achieve higher grades in school, compared to those children who dine on their own. (Sigman, 2009: 125) He continues by stating that "eating together is actually a form of intensive parenting, merely operating under the guise of eating." (ibid: 127)

If eating together is to contribute to this bonding effect, it should occur under the following circumstances:

- Sitting around a table, but not in front of the television (2:63)
- Switched-off electronics (2:67)
- Working together, sharing tasks (2:67)
- Indulging in talking, sharing and undivided attention (2:67)
- Spiritual formation habits, including praying (2:69)

In summary, the first expectation which parents are to comply with, would be to make time for investing in their children. A number of parents often use their available time more prudently than others. They advise that as all persons have to eat and/or drive to places, the time taken therefor should be utilized as time spent together. Taking meals together most certainly comprises one of the more fun filled opportunities for spending time together. Several of the interviewees reported that they experienced much joy from complying with their commitment of sitting around the dinner table every evening (2:69). One of these interviewees actually explained that: “I would say: make effort to eat around a table every day. That brought the greatest change to our house.” (1:141).

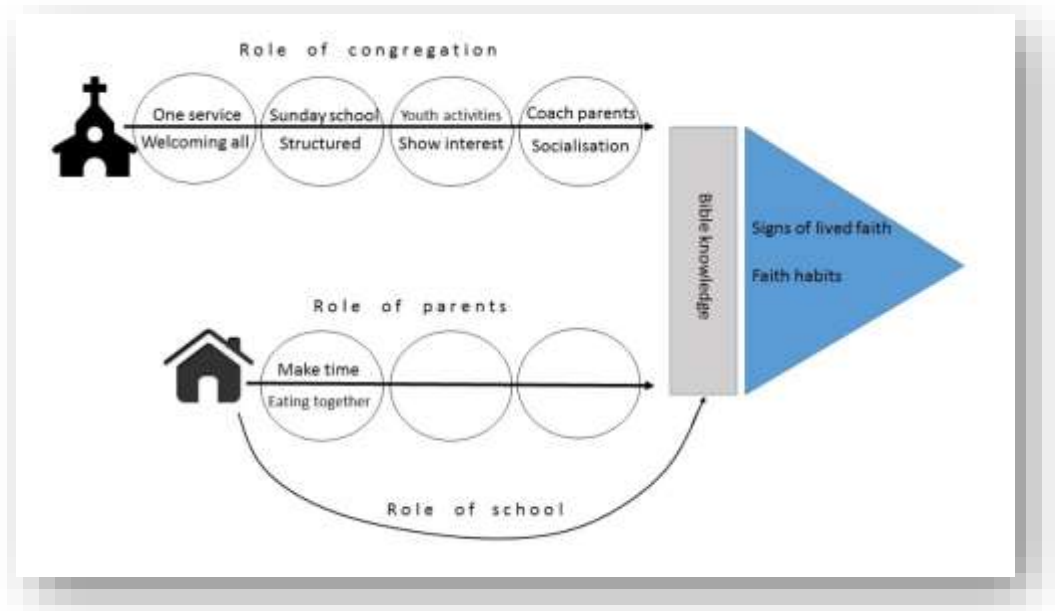


Figure 6 - 10: The role of the parents – Making time for family

6.4.6.2 Faith Talk

The code 'Faith talk' shows a groundedness of forty-nine (49) occurrences, which implies a sizable gravity. This code is important to parents, and it is regarded as an essential part of faith formation. In the gospel of John, Jesus is depicted as the "*Word of God*" (Joh 1:1) – the primary Tool for our faith formation. Words are powerful as they convey ideas, change lives and create possibilities. In the toolbox available to parents for using in their children's spiritual development, the first tool that we scrutinized, was time. The second tool is "words."

Now, words are neutral as they apparently have no distinctive characteristics that might cause them to have a positive or negative influence by themselves. Words are merely tools for use. Some might use them in a positive way, while others might use them to hurt, or to convey anger or disappointment. For this reason, I deliberately labelled this code 'Faith talk'. This indicates instances where parents use words to convey spiritual content. When words are used for discussing faith-related issues, lives become aligned according to God's will by means of using words. We have to tread carefully here, because it is difficult to distinguish between secular and spiritual. It could very well be that everything is deemed spiritual. When you are a follower of Jesus Christ, your faith will certainly show in whatever you do (Col 3:17: "*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*" – NIV). This is definitely true as far as faith talk is concerned.

Faith talk shows itself when parents debrief their children at the end of the day. (1:103). Talking about friends, events, pleasures and pains helps parents to assist their children in integrating faith into real life events. An example, relative to this point, is beautifully described in (1:107): "Sometimes we would talk about children at school: one child hurting another. And I would ask him how that makes him feel, and how he would respond if someone did it to him? And he would reply: I don't know, what should I do? And we would go to the Bible and search for appropriate guidelines and what Jesus would do." (1:107) This quote highlights the fact that life bombards us with all kinds of stimuli. These stimuli evoke certain emotions, causing us to wonder, to fear, or to become sad. We often do not understand why people act the way they do. This is why parents should adopt the leading role in order to soothe, to comfort, to help their children with making sense of what is

happening. Furthermore, Christian parents will share convictions from a Biblical worldview. That above-mentioned child whose verbatim words were reflected previously (1:107), most certainly went to sleep that night with a smile on his face. His questions have been answered, and his confusion has been allayed. His emotions were appeased and his faith was reinforced. His future actions are planned and organized. Consequently, he can now lay down his head and sleep peacefully. All of these positives were made possible owing to faith talk. "So, everything in everyday has a lesson to it. Teachable moments," says B10 (5:81).

David Anderson includes "caring conversations" in his four keys for developing faith in the home. (Anderson, 2009: 49) At the core of caring conversations is the Biblical mandate of love. Taking time for talking to someone else concerning his or her day and his or her issues, is an indicator of love. Debriefing your child's day, indicates love. In this way, we are fulfilling Christ's commandment, but more than that, parents are modelling behaviour that could be repeated from the one generation to the next.

Faith talk is often mentioned in connection with the Sunday church service. Some parents report that they take notes during the service and talk about them later at home. (2:61). When children are younger, they find it hard to concentrate for the duration of the whole sermon, and parents often have to recapitulate the main points of the sermon, or even explain the sermon in a more child-friendly way (1:204). This kind of faith talk is often linked to the habit of home devotions. We will return to the theme of home devotions, but for the present we would only highlight the fact that parents ought to talk to their children in order to explain certain parts of the Bible to them. There are many parts of the Bible that children find confusing, or simply do not understand. This could result in a situation where they would avoid reading the Bible, which would be a matter of sadness. Therefore, parents who take the formation of faith in their children seriously, sense the obligation to take the time for explaining the Bible in ways so that children would be enabled to grasp it more clearly. (2:77)

Finally, I would like to comment on a particular quote recorded in one of the interviews. A10 reported that when she was young, they used to have Sunday school handbooks which contained pages for every day. On Mondays, they had to complete a short section. On Tuesdays, they had to write out a verse. On Wednesdays they had to perform something similar, et cetera. She stated that she

was assisted by her mother regarding all of these assignments (2:63). This might be a wonderful way for the two streams, home and church, to join hands in faith formation. In this manner, what is taught at church can echo at home for the whole week long. There is no better methodology for the education of children as it involves repetition, action, enhancement and fixation of the message. This is where the partnership shows its strength.

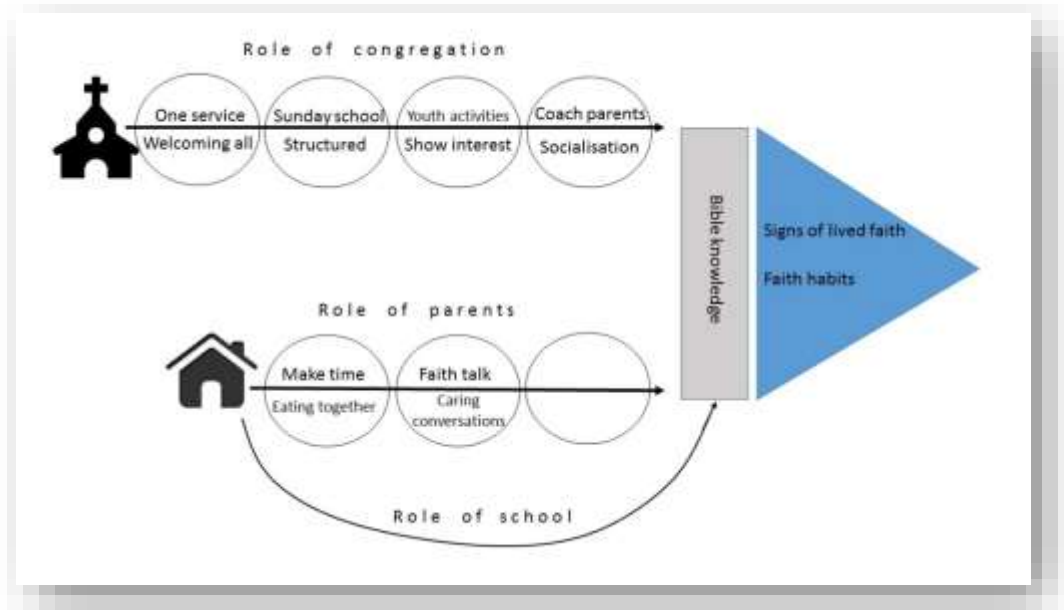


Figure 6 - 11: The role of the parents – Faith talk

6.4.6.3 Example

As we are examining the role of the parents in the formation of lived faith in their young, we have already looked at two very important actions that would facilitate faith formation. The first of these actions is 'Spending time together', which is enhanced by purposefully taking meals together. The second action we dealt with was 'Faith talk' relating to parents who are deliberately engaging in conversations where they discuss life and how it affects us as believers. Next we turn our attention to 'Example', which comprises one of the co-codes that clearly shows up in association with the code labelled 'Role of the parents'.

'Example' denotes the way of life of the parents, which they model to their children by means of their actions in their everyday life relating to other people and the way of faith which they demonstrate throughout the day. Nowhere is it stated

more clearly than in the following quote: “My child needs to see my faith as I live it out in a practical way. My example. If they cannot see how faith operates in real life, where will they learn?” (2:21)

The quotes that come with the code ‘Example’ relate to mature faith operating. The language used are words such as “to walk with the Lord wherever you go” (2:109), and “church is what you do wherever you go” (2:107). This is the language of discipleship. Parents who are consciously living out their relationship with their Lord, are aware of the fact that they are being watched and that they need to model the desired behaviour to their children. “When you watch a movie or you’re driving, you need to live with faith in mind. That is what I would like to teach my children: to live their faith 24 hours a day. It is not just that thing we do on Sundays. It is a prayer before you go into a difficult class.” (2:105)

The code ‘Example’ also includes statements of faith habits that parents engage in with the purpose of developing faith in their children. As indicated in [Figure 6-3: The goal – lived faith and Faith Habits](#) (p. 173), we placed ‘Faith habits’ together with ‘Signs of lived faith’ as components of the outcome labelled faith formation. That is what we wish to accomplish. Viewed in that perspective, it appears that ‘Faith habits’ is an end in itself as it relates to people who are engaging in the regular practices of the faith, therefore already living out their faith.

Here we wish to examine ‘Faith habits’ as a means to an end. Those things that parents do, and the way they engage in faith habits, represents a role model. Such a role model is a means of showing children how to live their faith in a practical manner. By engaging in the rhythms of faith, devotions at fixed times, prayers at set times or instinctively on the spur of the moment, and weekly rhythms of worship, they develop a way of life in their children that will hopefully continue long after they have left home. A number of those ‘Faith habits’ co-coded with ‘Example’, include:

- Praying together on specific occasions, including bedtime, dinner-time, departing on a journey (1:149)
- Daily home devotions (1:149)
- Attending Sunday service (2:5)
- Involvement in service at church (4:47)
- Daily choosing the way of faith (5:81)

It is noteworthy in this respect to refer to a code relative to a few quotes, which is regarded as important. This code labelled 'Generation to generation' contains sixteen (16) quotes, of which all are related to the abovementioned example of parents and good faith habits that parents learned from their parents. It becomes evident that a certain pattern has resurfaced here where a previous generation lived its faith, and where several signs pertaining to that faith were evident in the repeated actions of spiritual habits. Their children were reared in an environment where mom and dad lived their faith, showed the example, and committed themselves to the actions of their faith. In the interim, those children have become grown-ups who have their own families and still treasure that faith in which they were brought up. They still follow the actions and habits of the faith that they have learned as kids. Now they are passing that on to the next generation. Several of these actions and habits are practiced quite unconsciously, although some of these parents have a clear wide-angle lens view of what is taking place. These parents see the bigger picture; therefore they know that they are passing on the most valuable family heirloom. Interviewee A3 puts it as follows: "I think when you are a good role model to your children. My mom and dad brought me to where I am today. If one day I can be to my children what they were to me, I would say that I was successful. My actions and example must be such that they would like to follow in my footsteps. Then I was successful." (1:47). This proves that many members of the congregation understand what is expected of them. Parents know they have a legacy, and that knowledge to a large extent becomes part of their roles as parents. Three thousand years later parents are still echoing the words of Asaph in Psalm 78:3-4: "*things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.*" (NIV)

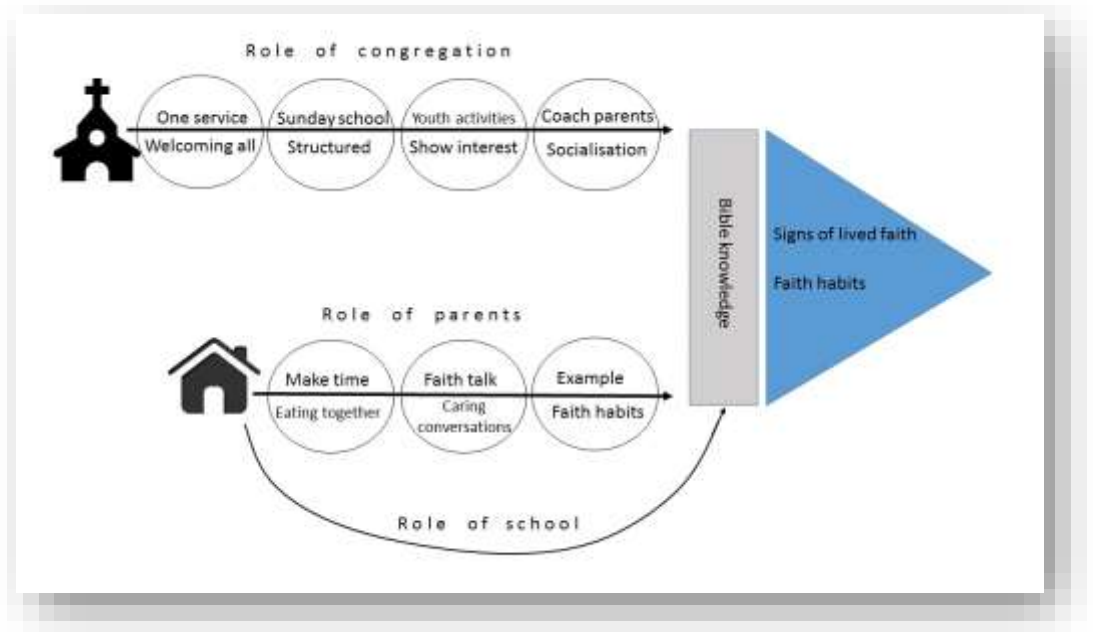


Figure 6 - 12: The role of the parents – a living example

To summarize, the ‘Role of the parent’ line leads to developing Bible knowledge in children and ultimately to lived faith as shown in the faith habits of their young. There are three distinct ways in which Christian parents can accomplish this undertaking in fulfilling their roles as part of the partnership. The three actions that parents can be expected to do in order to develop faith in their children, are:

a) Spend time with your children, merely to be there for them. This strengthens the relationship and open up avenues for faith talk, faith habits, as examples, to take effect. A powerful method to utilize this time together is by eating together.

b) Talk with your children about the faith. According to Dean, Conversational Christianity, like conversational French, requires “immersion in a culture where the language is spoken, as well as first-hand practice using the language with native speakers.” (Dean, 2010: 144). Teenagers who have trouble articulating what they believe about God, also seem to have trouble forging a significant connection to God, and youth who do not have a language for Christ, are unlikely to imagine an identity in Christ. Religious language is an essential tool for developing a Biblical worldview in a child.

c) Set an example as parent. This is how you translate theory into action, and demonstrate how faith looks like when it is lived. One of the ways in which ‘Example’ is best demonstrated, is by engaging in regular rhythms of faith including

attending the service on Sundays, giving thanks at mealtimes and reading from the Bible prior to bedtime. These habits become vehicles that carry the faith forward from generation to generation.

This, then, forms the core of our answer to the third of the Secondary Research Questions (SRQ3) concerning the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children. The most persuasive moral teaching technique that we as adults exert, occurs by example, such as the evidence of faith operating in our lives, our ways of interaction with others in terms of the way in which we speak and associate with them. All of these actions are witnessed slowly but surely and cumulatively by our sons, daughters and students. (Coles, 1998: 44)

To all of this, Schwartz adds that “intentional modelling of religious beliefs and engagement in religious activity resulted in increased desire on adolescents’ parts to share in their parents’ beliefs. Thus, there appears to be support for the notion that, above and beyond the consistent individual contributions of parents and peers (via transmission and transaction) to adolescent religious faith, parents may intentionally move their adolescent children toward peer groups and friendships that may ultimately match or even succeed their own faith influence.” (Schwartz, 2006: 7)

6.4.7 Symbioses.

The code ‘Symbioses’ weighs lightly with only ten (10) quotes allocated to it, but even so, it is a crucial component of the conversation. It slots in under Research Question number five (SRQ5): “What constitutes a partnership between congregation and the home in the formation of lived faith in children?” Therefore, I would like to expand somewhat on its meaning and place. When we inspect the diagram, we notice the outcome of faith formation on the right hand side comprising ‘Signs of lived faith’ and ‘Faith habits’. That is what we would like to accomplish in the next generation. We notice that ‘Bible knowledge’ is placed next to ‘Signs of lived faith’ and ‘Faith habits’, acting as a gateway towards that desired outcome. We also notice three lines feeding into the code labelled ‘Bible knowledge’. The curvilinear line indicated the ‘role of the school’ which plays a lesser role. For the purpose of this study, we will put this line aside for now. Then there is the ‘Role of the parents’, represented by the shortest of the three lines, albeit closest to the

action, which has the greatest impact. Thirdly, we notice the line representing the 'Role of the congregation', also aimed at promoting 'Bible knowledge' and forming of lived faith and faith habits in children.

The two main players in this process of faith formation are the congregation and the parental home. This study concerns itself with the partnership between these two shareholders. Thus, the code 'Symbioses' explores where the two players meet, and how such meeting is made possible. The concept of 'Symbioses' is complicated by the fact that the congregation does not really constitute an entity on its own as it consists of people of whom the majority for all probability comprises of parents. The church is us. People would often express a sentiment such as "I want my church to..." This begs the question: to whom exactly are they referring? Do they refer to all the people whose names appear on the register, all the people attending church service on a given Sunday, all the persons in leadership, or the actual pastor? Similarly, when the pastor expresses a sentiment: "I want my church to...", we should ask the same question: to whom exactly is the pastor referring? Does he refer to all the congregants, to the people attending church service, or to those in positions of leadership surrounding him? It appears that the congregation comprises members who collectively constitute the church while simultaneously retaining their individuality at home, being parents to their children and living ordinary, normal lives.

Apparently 'Symbioses' therefore implies the actions of parents including the investment of time in their children, having discussions concerning the faith, showing faith in action through their example, and engagement in practices which enhance their faith, benefiting the congregation in no small way. By means of such actions active members are produced, people who are prepared to volunteer some of their time and energy (1:95). Results of this nature adds to the number of active participants, and these members often invite others to join the ranks of the congregation (3:29).

Similarly, those things that the congregation does for the benefit of family, for parents and their children, are of very real value. At a number of occasions during the interviews, parents commented that they communicate a message repeatedly to their children. However, they need their congregation to add its voice to their own parental teaching. (2:109) Parents will become empowered when the congregation complies with its expectations by creating a welcoming Sunday

service, providing for quality Sunday school, adding youth activities during the week, and coach parenting skills. The congregation motivates parents to take their children to church and to become involved in Sunday school. Parents will undoubtedly devote time, and go the proverbial extra mile when they experience that the congregation is showing interest in their wellness.

This research bears out the fact that an active symbiosis exists when the partnership between the congregation and the home is functioning well. Thus, for the partnership to function well, the congregation needs to focus on the 'Role of the congregation', and parents need to focus on the 'Role of the parents'.

This is where the dance takes place. It really takes two to tango; therefore, both these partners need to be versed in their roles. The more they understand what is expected of them, the better they would glide across the dance floor of life. Someone once said: "Dancing is like dreaming with your feet!" (Anon) Creative imaginations develop when these partners move together. Then the dance takes on a life of its own: a beautiful creation, worthwhile to enjoy.

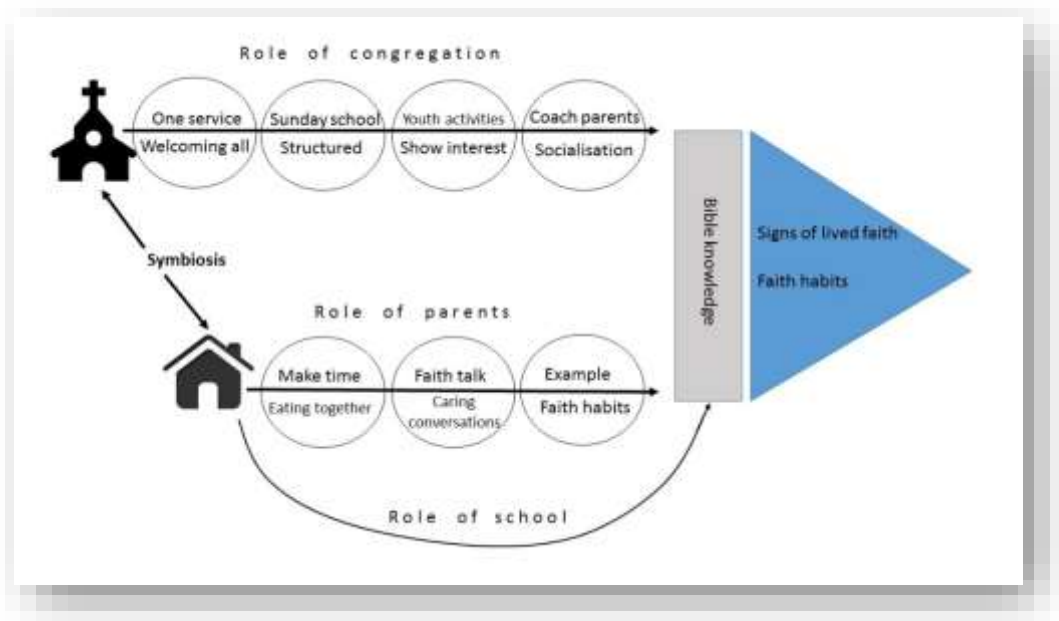


Figure 6 - 13: Symbiosis

6.4.8 Young adult phase: Exploring

A theme that recurs throughout the interviews, is that young adults leave the congregation to explore life and other options of the faith for a period after leaving

school. No less than eighteen (18) times did respondents report that they also went that way of leaving the known congregation, to explore other options (1:007), or to merely put a hold visiting church (2:13).

The majority of the comments pertaining to this phase have a bearing on young persons aged 20 to 25 years, although a number of comments allege that persons up to the age of 30 years, are equally inclined (1:93). This is often linked to a situation where the young adult has left home and is studying remote from home (1:005) or studying at an educational institution while still living at home with the parents (2:33).

The language used by parents when they talk about this phase of exploration regarding their children, is quite interesting. They do not use language that exhibits emotions of fear, sadness or loss. Most parents are comfortable with what is happening, and treat it as a phase of immaturity which their children will soon outgrow (2:13). A number of the interviewees clearly stated that they themselves acted the same way, and also ventured to go on an exploration phase, but fortunately returned when they were more mature (1:007). Their own experiences would explain their lack of uneasiness regarding this topic.

Closely connected to the abovementioned topic, is 'Confirmation class' and the drop-off of children after confirmation. Once again was this acknowledged as a reality, but the parents involved in the interviews were not overly concerned about this phenomenon. A reason for the dropping out of young members subsequent to confirmation, was attributed to the fact that many parents still want their children to undergo confirmation as they still regard it as very important. However, these parents regard confirmation is an end in itself; they don't regard it as part of a lifelong journey of forming lived faith. For this reason, these children simply sever their ties and disappear from the scene subsequently to confirmation (3:04). Another reason given, is that the Dutch Reformed Church is regarded as outmoded, and parents concede that their children's decision to move on to a more youthful, energetic denomination or congregation hopefully would address their children's spiritual needs more effectively (2:007).

This induces us to assume that dropping off will occur when one of the two streams of faith formation is not well fixed. When the 'Role of the congregation' is not properly fulfilled, children and their parents could feel that this partnership is not satisfactory, and then decide to go elsewhere to another congregation where they

find the partnership intact so that they can obtain what they expect from their new congregation.

Bredenkamp has studied these exits from congregations, and established that the most crucial reasons cited by respondents for changing their congregations, include “problems with sermons, minister, worship service, and congregation” (cited in 35 of the 50 questionnaires). Moreover, “a need to feel more at home” is cited in 25 of the 50 questionnaires. (Bredenkamp & Schoeman, 2015: 137) It is not difficult to perceive that these members experienced the negligence by the congregation to fulfil its role, and were induced to seek what they were looking for elsewhere.

The problem, however, may also be operative on the other side of the partnership, namely the ‘Role of the parent’. When parents omit to invest in time, faith talk or by example, and when they are not showing commitment to regular faith habits, these children’s faith has never developed to the point of becoming a lived faith. Consequently, children would simply stop attending church, and eventually drop out altogether.

Avenant studied the crisis in the church, and specifically in the Dutch Reformed Church, The Reeds, concerning the lack of faith identity as well as the lack of assimilation with the faith community after confirmation. (Avenant, 2011: 157) The hypothesis chosen for his study, which also determined the opening argument, was that parental mentorship and involvement of parents in faith development assist in the development, understanding and living of children’s faith identity as well as their assimilation with the faith community after confirmation. The opposite of this was also made clear – a lack of parental mentorship and involvement of parents in faith development is the cause of the absence of faith identity and assimilation with the faith community after confirmation. His study concludes that this hypothesis definitely holds ground. The role of the involvement or absence of parents in children’s faith identity and faith development is proven by this research. Another meaningful finding is that there has been a shift in the past few decades (regarding where the responsibility for the development of children’s faith lie) from parents to the faith community. Parents were gradually shifted out of youth ministry, which caused the drop-off culture that currently exists. (ibid: 152)

Thus it could be argued that a firm symbiosis between the congregation and the home, will work against drop-off from taking place. However, a symbiosis of the abovementioned type would for all probability result in an improved outcome: the

development of lived faith as evidenced in the daily habits and spiritual practices of the young. Therefore, sections 6.4.7 and 6.4.8 helps us to generate an answer to SRQ5.

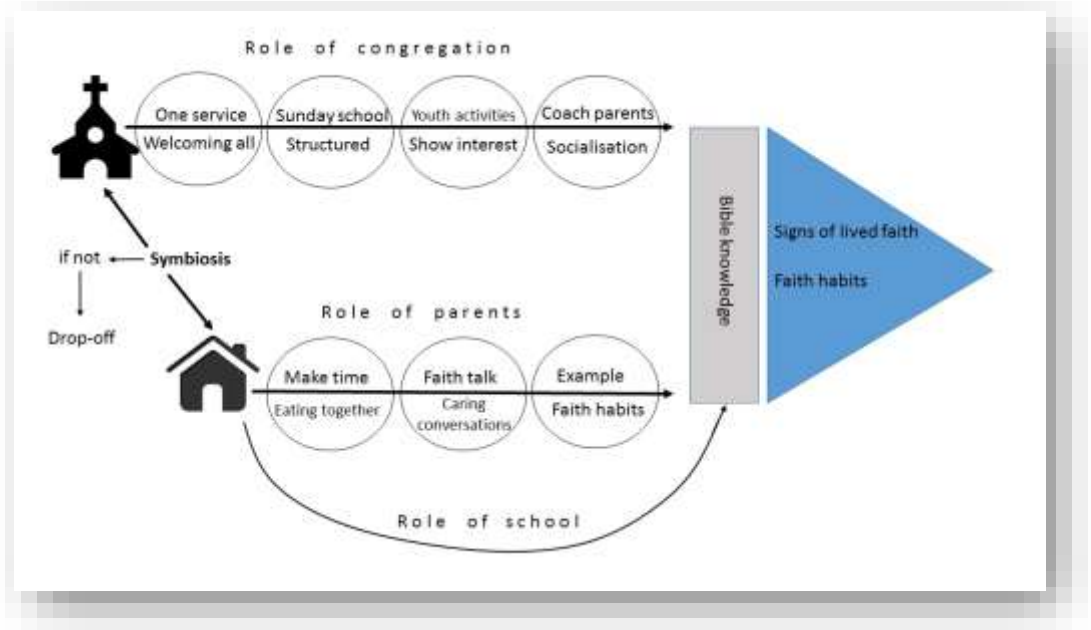


Figure 6 - 14: Exploration and drop-off

6.5 Conclusion

This completes the analysis of the codes identified from conducting the interviews. We have established that there were fifty (50) codes, and five (5) code families in total. These codes stand in relation to each other and help us to understand their meaning and significance. This study has presented them in certain positions in terms of the diagram demonstrating their relationships graphically. As shown in the diagram, “Signs of lived faith” an “Faith Habits” are what we are aiming at, validating the quote by Anslinger that: “Maybe we should shift our focus from religious education to faith formation. The process of being formed and transformed by Christ throughout the span of one’s life is the endeavour to which we commonly refer as faith formation.” (Anslinger, 2003: 36). Although Bible knowledge stands close to the first two outcomes, this study has argued that it is not an end in itself, but rather a gateway to the first two outcomes. The diagram

shows three avenues leading to the formation of the first two outcomes, and each has its own tasks to accomplish its mission of faith formation in our young. In the end, the strongest possible outcome is found in a symbiosis where home and congregation complement each other. If this symbiosis is not attained, quite often drop-off occurs that may frustrate the first two outcomes. In the following chapter, we will endeavour to draw conclusions as to the implications of all of this for the church in South Africa and abroad, in order to derive an answer to our Primary Research Question (PRQ1): How can a partnership between the home and the congregation assist us in developing lived faith in children?

7. AND THOSE WHO WERE SEEN DANCING, WERE THOUGHT TO BE INSANE BY THOSE WHO COULD NOT HEAR THE MUSIC.

7.1 Introduction

Pope John Paul II once said, “The way a community treats children signifies the ultimate test of its values.” (Csinos, 2010: 118) As this study progressed, we perceived that some communities ignore children altogether. Other communities relegate children to some kind of backroom status. Other communities keep children occupied with much ado about nothing, but we hardly ever bother to investigate the actual situation. However, children are our future, and a gift to families and the church. Indeed, the ways in which we treat children, constitute the ultimate test of our values. Disciplining youth, along with inviting and initiating them into a life of discipleship, is about finding purpose in life, in terms of something that is worth both living and dying for: The seeking out of the Kingdom of God and the trusting in our loving Father for all our needs of tomorrow. (Nel, 2009: 107)

We have arrived at the end of this study. For this reason, we wish to reflect on the proposed objective of this study, being the exploring of our success regarding the formation of lived faith in children. Subsequently to all the analysis having been done, we need to establish how all the various parts of the puzzle fit together. How do we integrate all the various aspects of the findings in order to develop a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon studied?

Jansen states that “most of the research produced through theses, dissertations, journal articles and books make very little difference in the world of scholarship for one common reason: the lack of significance.” (Jansen, 2011: 139) Therefore, we need to pause for a moment and consider the impact of this study. How do we improve the future of Christian religion in the historically inherited, socio-cultural,

and societal circumstances in which people currently live? According to Hermans & Schoeman (2015: 9), this is the core question of practical theology as a discipline.

The knowledge created in practice-orientated research contributes directly to the professional practice or development of congregations. It is not knowledge for theory development (expanding scientific knowledge), but generic (scientific) knowledge about interventions that aim to transform an actual situation into a desired outcome. (Hermans & Schoeman, 2015: 38) Practice-orientated research stands here in the service of designing interventions. We believe that this project has ultimate value so as to connect people to God in a firmer and better way, and to promote the Kingdom of our Lord, and to honour the Creator by forming lived faith in the youngest of His creations.

7.2 Reviewing the Work

It appears that within the family of Christian churches there are differences in opinion regarding the meaning of the term “family ministry”. Some of the churches have used the term as a “catch-all” category of programmes that work in some way with families. A number of churches have primarily understood family ministry as being those efforts made by the church to address and prevent family dysfunction. Several churches have understood family ministry as the provision of social activities for families. Garland states that family ministry is “not only the programs and services congregations target to family needs but, more broadly, the ways our entire congregational life shapes and strengthens family relationships” (Garland, 1999: 10) It includes ‘everything a church and its representatives do that has an impact on the founding, development and ministry of families’.

As “domestic units” of the church, families participate in the calling, mission, and purposes of the church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The family has a fundamental role as an agent of ministry in Christian formation and service parallel to the role of the parish and in partnership with it. To perform this mission and service is in itself a ministry of the church. (Foley, 1995: 25)

Subsequent to reviewing the available literature and examining the state of scholarship, my conclusion is that the church has to realize that it is not dancing on its own in isolation – especially if she wishes to remain relevant in today’s world

and be effective in faith formation. The church is called to involve itself in the lives of families and young people in the world wherever they might live. The church comprises ordinary, real people, inclusive of families, old and young. It should become increasingly more connected with the concrete reality of the context in which it is situated. Clark (2001:80), a proponent of missional youth ministry, stated it in so many words: “The church really has no choice, then, but to reach out and take hands with parents to partner in the formation of faith of their young.

We commenced this study by stating that faith formation is at peril. We have seen this in the answer to SRQ1. We encountered ample evidence in the literature (see 3.2 above) affirming that the transfer of faith from one generation to the next has plateaued around 60%. The main calling of the church is embedded in the Great Commission in terms of Mat 28:19, but, ironically enough, this has become the church’s great omission of late (Anderson, 2009: 5). This research affirms that one of the domains available to the church for making its biggest impact, happens to be the one place where she invests the least amount of energy, thought or resources.

The literature showed us that this is a global phenomenon. Congregations everywhere are struggling with forming lived faith in their youths (see 3.2 & 3.3.2 above). It is quite understandable since we are faced by a number of factors working against us, amongst which feature family issues, modern lifestyle issues, obsolete perceptions of church, secularization of society at large, and the various media.

However, it becomes clear from studying the literature that some young believers are actually thriving (see 3.5 above). The answers to SRQ2 lead us to better come to grips with lived faith in youth. The NYSR showed us that the 8% of young believers featuring at the top, the spiritually dedicated, are different as they have hope and show love in their interactions with other persons. They are committed in a way that outshines the rest. This is the good news. It is evident, therefore, that the gospel still changes lives, and that the youth are able to develop mature faith.

How is this accomplished? The relevant literature (see 3.6 – 3.9 above) provided us several pertinent indicators which are brilliantly summarized by Barna: “To become mature Christians we usually found a symbiotic partnership between their parents and their church.” (Barna, 2007: 133).

This comprises the void, the blind spot prevalent in congregational life, namely the method in which congregations develop such symbiotic partnership in families. Repeatedly pastors and parents interviewed in this study exclaimed that “I don’t think it is happening” (4:24) (see also 6.4.7 above). While searching for answers to SRQ5, concerning a partnership between the home and the congregation, we have discovered that if the colour of the home is a warm yellow, and the colour of the congregation brilliant red relative to the gospel, then we see very little orange occurring. It appears that parents are, as a rule, not included in the plans and activities that congregations launch for their young. Children are quite often not included in most of the Sunday service, the worship, or the preparations for ministry. Unfortunately, youth ministries often happen haphazardly, and insufficient consideration is given to Sunday school processes or curricula. Nel poses this question: Why has it become so critical to rethink our invitation to, and our way of initiation into, following the way of the Lord? It is because we have lost the art of being, due to our very God-given nature. We have lost track of how to be disciples who seek the Kingdom and of how, as we walk and talk, to make disciples of our own children, as well as those of ‘the nations’. (Nel, 2009: 104)

Our investigation into the prevalent reality of actual congregations (see chapter 5), confirmed the abovementioned allegation that no strategic plans for youth ministry are in place. It appears that no-one in particular makes a concerted attempt to consider the process, building blocks, or ideal outcomes of our ministry to our children. The pastors concede that no plans to that end are in place, and that no means of measuring success exists. Notwithstanding the fact that they are the theologians who are employed in the full-time service of the Great Commission, they inform us that nobody devises ways and means regarding what children should be taught, and how we are to develop mature faith in our young.

As clergy, we hope and we trust that our actions will ultimately produce the desired results. Similarly, parents are hopeful that their church would assist them in achieving their goals. Moreover, church leaders can only hope that certain practices and habits are being modelled in the homes of their members. Our interviews show that more often than not people are tacitly hopeful that these results would occur. Pastors experience isolation relative to their work with children. Parents experience a sense of isolation in their endeavours to form the

faith of their young. Even youth workers feel isolated in trying to create spaces where kids could flourish.

We took our time when interviewing parents, in order to listen to their personal stories, and to contemplate the substance thereof which concerns faith formation in their young. Parents stated that they were able to recognize the presence of lived faith in their young children as they are able to discern the signs thereof. They see it in their actions, their habits, and practices. Simultaneously, parents acknowledge that lived faith is dependent on a solid knowledge of the Bible. They feel the need for the local congregation to assist them in forming this faith in their young. At the same time, parents know that they have a leading role to play. (The answers pertaining to SRQ3) They have an obligation to spend time with their young, including talking to them concerning matters of the faith. Parents have the responsibility to reflect lived faith in their daily conduct, and to anchor certain faith habits in their homes so as to transfer the faith from one generation to the next. Parents are subjected to many challenges, and usually they do not enjoy the strong support by a school which would possibly be prepared to render assistance in the formation of faith of their young. Time is always of the essence, being a scarce commodity which is easily lost in our modern world owing to our lifestyles involving technology that can steal young hearts away from a Biblical worldview.

The only other partner remaining to parents, is the church – as our study discerned on SRQ4 concerning the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children. Consequently, parents expect the church to render assistance, to create room for our youth, well-established Sunday school, and a Sunday service that boosts the faith of us all. Ample creative imagination awaits being unlocked should parents and their congregation re-establish their symbiotic relationship. Whenever the congregation and the home dance toe-to-toe and commence their rhythmic movements to the music, the dance can develop into an exciting experience during which energy will be unleashed, and culminate in the unlocking of endless possibilities.

7.3 Conclusions

This study commenced with the following Primary Research Question:

- PRQ1: How can a partnership between the home and the congregation assist us in developing lived faith in children?

Secondary Research Questions to the above-mentioned prime question, are:

- SRQ1: What is the current philosophy and practice for faith formation in the congregation, and what are the emanating results?
- SRQ2: What constitutes a lived faith in children?
- SRQ3: What is the role of the parents in developing lived faith in children?
- SRQ4: What is the role of the congregation in developing lived faith in children?
- SRQ5: What constitutes a partnership between congregation and the home in the formation of lived faith in children?

Through the Focus Group Interviews, we established the prevailing philosophies and practices for faith formation in these congregations (SRQ1). We discovered the presence of a partnership structured on insubstantial grounds in operation between the home and the congregation. The problem, however, is that this voluntary partnership has developed at random owing to a need, without plan, forethought or structure. At all of the three congregations involved, uncertainty exists among parents of what to expect from their congregation. Frustration is often encountered because of the prevailing philosophy relative to faith formation not being planned, or left in abeyance until someone would volunteer of its own accord. At least, that was the situation encountered in congregation A.

Congregation B has a philosophy of hiring captain youth worker to come and do his magic. This provided for wonderful results, until he left. It was then that the congregation realized that they had no plan B. They had no depth regarding their ministry to youth, and obviously also no blueprint to follow. Parents were taught that all that is expected of them is to drive the kids to youth activities, and now they are doing exactly that: driving them elsewhere, to attend youth activities in other congregations.

Congregation C has postponed the task of figuring out what faith formation in their young entails as it, at the time the interviews were conducted, did not have an abundance of families involved. The interviews revealed, however, that parents were desperately seeking some form of family ministry, and were in need of a partner regarding faith formation, who would step forward and take the lead herein.

When we examine all the data, it becomes clear that most of the participants are aware of these shortcomings. Although they love their separate congregations, their pastors and the Lord, they have an awareness of something lacking. Obviously, if and when you do not hear the music, you will not dance. The music of family ministry has hitherto not started in any of these congregations. The parents mostly perform the work of faith formation in their young by themselves. They graciously accept what the congregation has to offer, but they are nevertheless conscious of several matters which are lacking and which they expect the congregation to provide. We have heard the yearning emanating from parents who lament this omission.

The implied assumption imbedded in this study, is that these parents are true believers of the faith. As the research sought answers to SRQ3 – the role of the parents in the formation of lived faith- we found that these parents know their Bibles and they possess the Spirit of the living God. They have unencumbered access to the normative guidance of the Word to lead them, and they are able to discern what ought to be happening. Moreover, they are committed to the body of believers, and not only would they want the best for their own households, but they want the best for all households involved in their congregations. Thus, God's creative imagination is slumbering within the hearts of the members who make up these congregations. Given an opportunity, this potential will flare up so as to engage in this passionate dance between home and congregation, which will form lived faith in the next generation.

Hermans posed the same question regarding a possible way for churches to connect anew with people's spiritual needs. He postulates that churches focus on two concerns of which the first is the moral and spiritual growth of persons, and the second which pertains to social forms of life in which moral and spiritual identity find their purpose and meaning. (Hermans, 2012: 237)

His solution for the above-mentioned question is that organizations such as churches, need to deal with this complex, continually changing new reality by decision-making based on an emerging future. This orientation towards the future, shifts the core questions confronting the churches from 'what' and 'how' we are, to 'who' we are. Therefore, certain questions arise: Who are we as church leaders? Who are we as individual believers? Who are we as a community of believers? In

order to find answers to these questions, we should rather look to the future, not the past. That is the theological challenge to the Church to perform a “U-turn”. How can leaders of organizations, more specifically churches, be prepared for the emerging future? It is clear that churches have to apply their capacity to serve their members, in order to make the future possible.

The Church exists in order to be the proverbial “leaven” that enables society to create better social life forms in which people can flourish and hopefully achieve moral and spiritual fullness. The church can be seen as a community in which people, individually and collectively, learn to grow morally and spiritually. It is not a goal in itself. Its mission in the world is to establish social life forms in which people can flourish and attain both moral and spiritual fullness together with others in a just and sustainable society.

Secondly, we should acknowledge the prevalence of accelerating globalization as a problem for which we have no solutions as yet. Moreover, in South Africa we are obliged to relate this issue contextually to the post-apartheid era which even now is affecting South African society profoundly. This aggravates the complexity of the problems facing social life forms in South Africa as compared with other, notably Western, countries. We would be well advised to rethink the future of our social life forms and to find new ways to arranging our way of life in order to realize the promise of liberated, autonomous modernity.

According to Michelangelo (1475 – 1564), the sculptor “releases the hand from the marble that holds it prisoner.” At the heart of theory U, lies the process of unlocking the future that is waiting to emerge. The future resembles the prisoner latent in marble awaiting the sculptor’s hand to set it free. The image suggests that it is not the sculptor who imposes a form on the marble. The form is already there in the marble, but we do not see it. It also suggests that there are creative ways of seeing and experiencing that can bring the future (i.e. the prisoner) into existence. At the same time, it suggests that we do not know exactly what happens in this moment of creation.

We begin to see ourselves differently if we look from the perspective of the possible instead of the past and the present. We see that a new future is a possibility for the church, including congregations, by drawing on the inner source enabling us, the collective leadership, to think and act.

The questions that we ask ourselves, include: Do we see what is really at stake, or do we see our judgment of reality? Are we open to a new understanding of moral/spiritual fullness in social life forms, or do we perceive only our fixed and firm beliefs and practices? Hermans (2012: 261) warns us to be on our guard against two inner voices, being the Voice of Cynicism and the Voice of Fear. The First-mentioned includes all types of emotional distancing. Are we moved emotionally by what we perceive when it touches our hearts, or do a lack of emotional feelings impede our experience? The Voice of Fear prevents our will from being susceptible to new possibilities.

7.4 Recommendations

This study has generated new knowledge. We now know that parents have very specific needs that the congregation is expected to provide. We know that parents have their own predicaments and challenges to address if we hope to see lived faith develop in our young. Throughout this study, we have seen the void, the absence in the conversations concerning family ministry, the strategies for faith formation and the commitment to an active partnership. When the music is not playing, no one wants to dance. The question is how do we proceed from here? This is also where the limitations of this study lie. As stated in 4.5 above, the goal of this study was to create knowledge for the improvement of professional practice. We delved deep into the KNOWLEDGE STREAM (Andriessen, 2014). We also moved over to the PRACTICE STREAM to do DIAGNOSING through implementing Focus Group Interviews. The limitations of this study are found here: the next steps in the PRACTICE STREAM, namely: ACTION PLANNING, ACTION TAKING, EVALUATING and SPECIFYING LEARNING are not part of this study.

The pragmatic question, then, is “What should be done?” What strategies and actions can move the church forward from where we are presently standing? This research project proposes the following recommendations:

7.4.1 New knowledge

Schoeman defines this exploration of congregations as a search for significance. (Schoeman, 2015: 1) As noted above (in section 5.1) this search for significance includes three distinct lenses, the first lens being theological significance. When we look through this lens at a congregation we engage in “discernment as the activity of seeking God’s guidance amid the circumstances, events and decisions of life” (Osmer, 2008: 137).

As we looked through this lens at these three congregations, we saw a serious lack of theological thinking when it comes to the faith formation of their young. The focus is either on “what has traditionally been done” or on “what works” or even on “what are the needs we have to address?” In none of the congregations included in this study did we find a focus on developing lived faith in children, or a conscious plan to develop disciples of Jesus Christ. This focused attention on discipleship is glaringly absent in the practices of youth-ministry at present. This lens of theological significance also revealed that the category of “Family ministry” is much overlooked in all the congregations included in this study. The one place where the church can have the most impact to develop faithful followers of Christ, is the one place where the church invests the least amount of energy, thought and resources.

The second lens to apply in our analytical process, is seeking practical significance. The new knowledge revealed by this study includes the reality that parents feel left out in the congregation’s activities with their young. Parents aren’t informed as to the process of Sunday school and catechism. They have little knowledge of what materials are used and what outcomes are strived for. This study actually made it clear that such planning is lacking in most congregations. Add to this the fact that parents are challenged by busy lifestyles and they are crying out for the church to assist them with knowledge concerning parenthood and faith formation at home. Most of these parents are part of the Sunday service, but still feel disconnected from the faith community.

Concerning the practical relevance of this study to the field of faith formation in youth, the piece of new knowledge that surfaced the clearest of all, was that there exists an unwritten partnership between parents and their local congregation in most mainstream congregations in South Africa today. Parents feel a certain need that their congregations ought to attend to, and congregations have specific

expectations from the primary caregivers. Breach of this unspoken contract is quite often the biggest reason why people leave a certain congregation to go elsewhere.

The third lens entails looking at the contextual significance. “A development in practical theology is that it wants to be transformational, not only to people, but also to the understanding and situation of the current context and world.” (Reader, 2008: 7) As we found in the literature, the 'typical child' in South Africa is raised by a mother in a single-parent household, or by unemployed parents or adults. The HIV pandemic and violence are some of the contributing factors towards the high counts of child-headed households in South Africa. (Cloete, 2016: 3) The biggest need concerning parents who can be agents in transferring faith to a next generation, is glaringly omitted in the church's plans and activities. Congregations have the opportunity and obligation to seek ways in which to partner with households, to teach parents the necessary skills and to add surrogate parents where such is needed.

7.4.2 Recommendations to congregations:

Our dive into the literature with the accompanying interviews in congregations, helped us to formulate an answer to SRQ4 – What is the role of the congregation in the formation of lived faith? This is what we have heard from the parents themselves: Take time to listen to your members, especially to parents. Given the opportunity, they will quickly and easily tell you their needs. While listening, be aware of the partnership in which you are involved. These partners have committed themselves to dance with you. They might not know how to dance that well, but they are willing to move around the dance floor with you. Respect them on account of their engagement, and provide them with the opportunity to experience the lightness of burden when a partner supports them in their quest for forming faith in their young.

In specific terms, parents want their congregations to provide holy spaces where they and their offspring can experience the presence of God. This could possibly happen in the main Sunday service, or in the children's church, but when they leave the campus of the church, they would like to know that they as a family, experienced holy ground today.

Secondly, parents need to know that their partner in faith formation, the congregation, is providing sound biblical teaching to their young. Call it Sunday school, or children's ministry if you would, but parents need to know that it occurred as time well spent. Intuitively they know that a solid foundation of Biblical knowledge is the bedrock on which faith is formed. Parents do not have the tools or the training, and the only way they can rest assured that their children obtain this information, is when the congregation provides it as a solid staple.

In the third place, parents of teenagers are concerned. They hear the questions arising from the ranks of their young ones who are in need of answers which they undoubtedly will seek for in places other than at home or at church. When a congregation invests its time and thought in activities that could be of help to these teenagers during this vulnerable phase, parents interpret such activities as a demonstration of interest and care which could be expected from partners.

A fourth expectation that parents have of the congregation, is that it acknowledges the challenges and uphill battles that parents have to fight daily. They are almost begging for help! They are asking for assistance in respect of a variety of needs, including assistance regarding information, or merely a social network that parents can revert to when they require guidance. With reference to the adage: "It takes a village to raise a child", it might mean that the village is the spiritual community of the parents.

Finally, in an attempt to answer SRQ5 (What constitutes a partnership between congregations and the home in the formation of lived faith in children?), we have discovered that parents are aware of the fact that they have to bear the brunt of faith formation which should happen 24/7 at home. But even so, parents require both guidance and reminders. The congregation needs to supply them with ideas and opportunities for personal interaction to spend time together, for converting a family meal into a family feast, and for optimizing the use of the available time. The congregation should develop suitable tools for facilitating faith talk, and should encourage parents to develop habits that will cement faith into the rhythms of life. The advantage of having an excellent dance partner is that such partner will endeavour to make you feel like you are the only person in the room, and you are the most beautiful dancer ever, regardless of your level of competency.

7.4.3 Recommendations to Parents:

As the primary custodians of care for their children, parents have the biggest impact on the formation of faith of their young. As such, it is essential that one realizes that the role of parents covers the following three areas, which were identified by the study: parents need to make time to be with their children. Spending time with their children, might very well result in children experiencing the relationship as being warm and friendly, and as such improves parents' chances of transferring their faith to their children. One of the most pleasant ways is to spend time together by eating together. A number of parents featuring in the study, were adamant that if they could do it over again, they would most certainly spend more time round a table with their young.

Secondly, parents must realize that their children cannot read minds. They need to hear their parents speaking about their passions, their faith and their spiritual experiences with the Lord. They need to see and hear how their parents deal with stress and fear, and they look up to them for teaching them the language of faith. This would become a reality through having caring conversations.

In the third place, you might talk the talk, but they will follow when you walk the walk. Parents' example shows their children how faith should be practiced in actual life. They might be so fortunate as to have heard of the dance of faith, but they desire to personally attest to someone enjoying dancing with the Lord. This may not always be a happy dance. Occasionally it might be a slow dance generating feelings of melancholy and sadness, or a dance executed in a tentative and contemplative mood. This provides them with a template to imitate. The most certain way of achieving this, is probably by developing regular spiritual habits such as devotions, prayer, and attending Sunday worship. These form a basis on which our children can build their faith in the ensuing future.

Parents have the responsibility to choose their partners well. As parents have the initiative to choose the school where their children would spend much of their future time, they should choose one that would probably enhance their message of faith. Parents have the privilege of becoming part of a community of faith. Their voice and engagement could contribute to the development of the partnership, so that their congregation would "become the greatest friend and best support you as parent has ever had." (Barna, 2003: e-source).

We have endeavoured to provide some feedback to each congregation included in this study, regarding the current state of family-ministry from the perspective of the parents, and to suggest what possible avenues should be explored in terms of the literature. (See appendices H, I & J) This feedback in terms of a report includes sensitizing the congregation to the need for change as well as equipping them with knowledge regarding change. As each congregation is unique, the contents of this report to each vary according to individual context. The normative task, however, remains that we aim to develop ways for the congregation to intentionally enter into partnership with the parental home. Our objective is to develop knowledge that would be useful to any congregation.

At this junction, we will do well to remind ourselves of the two questions posed by Martinson: Can families become more, rather than less, intentional and constructive in this moral and spiritual work? Leaders in faith communities are confronted by yet another question: How can the church best support and enrich these formative family dynamics so as to better nurture Christian faith, shape good values, and prepare disciples of Jesus Christ? (Martinson, 1997: 405)

7.5 Transferable knowledge, the by-product

As such, practical theology is normative in nature. It makes it imperative for those who practice it, to live in accordance with the sacred and transcendent convictions it professes. A greater measure of clarity regarding our deepest theological obligations and not just our practical contribution, is one of our challenges, but advances in this realm will only enhance the discipline and its value to religious communities and the common good. (Miller-McLemore, as quoted by Schoeman, 2015: 3).

Although we stand at the strong point of the normative, we however do so with a very humble disposition. “We begin our conversations by bringing our fallible views and judgements to those who traditionally make up our epistemic communities.” (Van Huyssteen, 1999: 265) This is the epistemological position emanating from weak rationalism. We cannot claim possession of absolute knowledge. This position demands that we should extent the scope of our

individual evaluation to communal evaluation, and even further to the position of trans-communal evaluation.

Being humble also implies being a servant. A recent development in the field of practical theology appears to be a need for being transformational, not only for the benefit of people, but also for the better understanding of the current situation locally and in the context of the world at large. By striving for excellence and significance, congregational studies could very well contribute to the transformation of people in general and their communities, and thus remain relevant. Although we primarily serve the Church, we become empowered to serve the world at large through the Church. Congregations remain intentional, potent and formative channels through which significant religious work is performed, ranging from merely participating to belonging, and from orientating to interpreting culminating in norming. (Niemann, 2012: 136)

No congregation has “become” what it already is in Christ. The identity of being in Christ is already validated. There is no need to “become” **who** we “are.” The eternal calling for congregations is to become **what** they already are in Christ (Nel, & Schoeman, 2015: 86). This project aims to assist in this undertaking by creating a new sound to start up the music of faith formation in a new way. Although ministry to our young has reached a moot point, a completely new movement may yet be unleashed if we could get congregations and parents to the dance floor. This does not comprise a minor detail only which could be relegated to a sub-committee involved in youth ministry. This is a matter at the very core of being church. Should the Kingdom of heaven not enter the hearts of our young, the church would be dying. If the “domestic units” of the church do not show a vibrant faith, the Lordship of Jesus Christ is being jeopardized and ultimately denied.

It is obvious that the three congregations included in this study differ from one another in various ways. As this is a qualitative study, the results cannot be generalised. Each congregation has its own unique character and history. Congregation A represents the traditional, mainstream institution surviving on a small budget and not much to offer in terms of meaningful activities happening. Congregation B represents a mainstream, dynamic institution employing a full complement of paid staff and a wide range of activities occurring. Congregation C comprises a small, emergent, and culturally diverse institution. It stands to reason

that should this theory hold for all of these congregations, many more would gain some form of benefit from it. A number of principles in this knowledge-stream appears to be universally applicable as lived faith seems to be the same everywhere. Biblical knowledge is regarded everywhere as essentially part of faith formation. Parents everywhere still exert the most influence on their children's lives, but the congregation is regarded as the best possible partner that they could have for the formation of the faith of their young. This is a universal truism, as synergy between these partners will definitely produce better results than trying to go it alone. Certain details regarding the roles that the congregation or the parents need to play, could be emphasized to a lesser or greater extend, but this theory can be applied wherever faithful parents and a community of believers are encountered.

As it makes more sense to establish a system for supplying pure water rather than having to cure endless cases of dysentery, it also makes more sense to transform communities into healthy places for faith formation of all youth, rather than trying to transform every youth into a resilient individual. A focus on only the "individual treatment" of young people is inadequate for promoting the development of their full potential. (Benson, et al, 2006: 12) Let us pay heed to Benson's advice for building faith communities where the formation of faith is entrenched into the system. Such is the power of the gospel that it is the divine design that has been disseminated all over the world. It is therefore clear that these principles are indeed transferable.

7.6 A new kind of dance

After all the voices have been heard, and after all the books have been read, we now propose the formation of a new partnership. A new perichoreo, is due for being launched: the dance of the Trinity, involving humanity in and through the Church and parental homes. We propose that the two partners join ranks and declare their commitment to perform this dance together. Be prepared to enter into a verbal contract by stating your level of expertise and the way along which you would like to proceed. We propose that the congregation should take the lead, and acknowledge its dance partner. The congregation and its leaders should not hesitate to talk about the families, and their homes as places of faith formation. The congregation should show the way, and lead the dance. If only the congregation can

lead the parents to engage in this dance, the young generation will certainly watch on and learn from that. As soon as they hear the music, they would undoubtedly like to engage in the dance.

The congregation, including the believing parents who represent part of this community of faith, comprises the Bride of Christ. They desire to partake of this dance, and as their partner (the congregation) leads them into the dance, he will develop her skills, and graciously guide her from the first step to the next. Of course this will require practice, but in time they will find their rhythm and enjoy the moment. Now they have acquired the skills to communicate not only with words, but through practices and actions that speak much louder than words.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A – ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR THIS PROJECT



Faculty of Theology

16-May-2016

Dear Rev Sarel Schoeman

Ethics Clearance: THE FORMATION OF LIVED FAITH IN CHILDREN: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CONGREGATION AND HOME

Principal Investigator: Rev Sarel Schoeman

Department: Practical Theology (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Theology, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: UFS-HSD2014/0434

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof Pieter Verster
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

APPENDIX B - AFRIKAANS VERSION OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Julle gemeente beoefen jeugbediening vanaf ouderdom 4 tot by geloofsbelydenis. Jou predikant beweer x% lidmate raak weg na belydenis. Dis die resultaat van die jeugbediening waarvan jou kind tans deel is. Hoe voel jy daaroor? Vrees jy dat dit met jou kind sal gebeur?

Opmerkings:

- Inleidende vraag.
- Toets gevoelens / emosies
- Vra uit oor die geslaagdheid al dan nie van die huidige jeugmodel.

2. Dink aan jou kind: Hy/sy is tans in 'n proses om sy/haar geloof te vorm. Watter strategie word tans gevolg om jou kind te help om 'n deurleefde geloof te ontwikkel?

- Toets ouers se persepsies van die proses.
- Ouers verwoord hulle indrukke daarvan

2.1 Verwag jou gemeente van jou 'n bepaalde inset t.o.v. hierdie plan?

- Opvolg: is daar kommunikasie vanaf die gemeente hieroor?

2.2 Watter aktiwiteite of bystand bied jou gemeente jou in hierdie taak van geloofsvorming van jou kind?

- Opvolg: gemeente se denke oor ouers se rol kom hier na vore.
- Ook: belê die gemeente tyd, middele en bystand in sy gesinne?

2.3 Hoe meet jy of jy suksesvol is met geloofsvorming? Het jy spesifieke geestelike doelwitte vir jou kind?

- Doelwitte: bewustelik of intuitief?

3 Indien die kleur van huis 'n warm geel is en kerk se kleur rooi, watter oranje aktiwiteite gebeur hier in die gemeente, m.a.w. gesinsgefokusde programme, daar waar gesin en bediening mekaar vind.

- Hierdie vraag toets waar die twee strome saamvloei.

- Kan verder invra op hierdie antwoorde.

4 Watter geloofsgewoontes wat gereeld herhaal word, beoefen julle tuis?

- Fokus op huis-stroom t.o.v. gewoontes en praktyke.

4.1 Hoe gereeld eet julle gesin 'n maaltyd saam?

4.2 Indien daar een bepaalde ding is wat julle tuis doen om jul kind se geloof te laat groei - wat geslaagd is, deel dit met ons.

- Opvolg: Toets een spesifieke aspek.

4.3 Is jy gewillig om geskool te word, toegerus te word as ouer om geloof meer effektief oor te dra? (Hoeveel aande per maand sal jy hiervoor afstaan?)

- Opvolg: Geleentheid vir spog...die vertel van stories.

- Opvolg: Toets erns van die saak / gewilligheid by ouers om die probleem te eien.

5 Watter faktore verhinder julle om meer aktief julle geloof uit te leef in julle huis? (tyd / besige programme/ pa afwesig/ regte materiaal/ gesindheid / hersaamgestelde gesinne)

- Waarskynlik die onderliggende verskonings wat tot op hede gegeld het.

5.1 Watter een ding kan julle
gemeente doen om julle te help met
julle taak as ouers?

- Nadat die onderwerp ontvries is,
mag hier kreatiewe konsepte na vore
kom.

6 Indien julle weer van vooraf kon
begin met julle kind, wat sou julle
anders doen?

- Kontrole-vraag: kom enige van die
konsepte weer hier na vore?

APPENDIX C – AFRIKAANS VERSION OF THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Sien jy die uitsak van kinders na aflegging van belydenis? Wat is die omvang? Na jou mening, wat is die redes hiervoor?
 - Toets hipotese.

2. Lys vir my al die jeug-aktiwiteite wat julle gemeente tans aanbied?
 - Dit toon die filosofie wat tans gevolg word.

3. 'n Kind word gebore vir 'n gesin in julle gemeente. Hierdie kind besoek julle kerk tot ouderdom 16. Wat behels die huidige proses wat gevolg word om hierdie kind te help om 'n deurleefde geloof te hê?
 - Ondersteun bogenoemde vraag
 - Vergelyk antwoorde met ouers se data.

4. Ervaar julle 'n silo-effek waar elke ouderdomsgroep afsonderlik bedien word met 'n eie spiritualiteit? Wat is die voor-en nadele hiervan?
 - Toets enige vorm van vennootskap.

5. Indien huis geel is en kerk rooi, watter oranje aktiwiteite vind plaas hier in die gemeente waar die bediening doelbewus by gesinne aansluit?
 - Vra in op vennootskap.
 - Ondersoek hoe bedieninge ingestel is vir gesinne.

6. Hoe meet julle of julle suksesvol is met die vorming van geloof? Het

julle enige spesifieke geestelike
doelwitte vir julle jongmense?

7. Indien geld en tyd geen
probleem sou wees nie, wat droom jy
kan jou gemeente vir gesinne doen
om hulle by te staan?

8. Indien jy van voor af kon begin
met jou eie kind in jou gemeente, hoe
sou jy die gemeente se jeugwerk
anders organiseer?

9. Indien die huidige model van
geloofsvorming bestempel kan word
as "gemeente-gesentreerd en gesins-
ondersteunend", hoe dink jy, sal 'n
model lyk wat "gesins-gesentreerd
en gemeente-ondersteunend" is?

- Kontroleer of daar planmatig
gewerk word.

- Watter begrip van die normatiewe
is hier?

- Watter kreatiewe verbeelding is
aanwesig?

- Kontrole-vraag op 5 & 6.

- Klem op persoonlike aandeel.

- Toets vir begrip van die proses

APPENDIX D – INFORMED CONSENT LETTER



THEOLOGY
TEOLOGIE
UFS·UV

Departement Praktiese Teologie
Department of Practical Theology
Lefapha la Thutatshebets

5 April 2016

Informed consent

1. **Researcher:** SJ Schoeman
Contact details: 082 411 4080

2. **Title of the study:**

THE FORMATION OF LIVED FAITH IN CHILDREN: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CONGREGATION AND HOME

3. **Purpose of the study:**

Parents have a God-given responsibility. They committed to the baptism vows and they have deep emotions invested in seeing their children growing up with or without the faith.

In the same way, the congregation has the God-given mandate to make disciples, to teach people the Word and form faith that will last a lifetime.

This study argues that we are not doing very well with forming faith in our children. We need to re-evaluate what we are doing and why we are doing it. We believe when you have two problem-owners, you need to develop a partnership. The two parties involved need to see each other's strengths and weaknesses and find new ways of developing a symbiotic partnership. This research will help us understand the current state of affairs to unlock a better future in faith formation.

4. **Procedures:**

Both the structured interview and the focus group interview will last approximately one hour. We will explain beforehand what to expect and why this study is being undertaken. We will also ask for permission to tape the interviews, although we will abide by the principle of confidentiality.

✉ 339 Internal Box 93, UFS, Bloemfontein 9300
Prof Kobus Schoeman (Head of Departement)
Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg
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APPENDIX E – LIST OF CODES AFTER FIRST READING

Code-Filter: All

HU: Lived Faith

File: [C:\Users\Jaco Schoeman\Documents\Scientific
Software\ATLSti\TextBank\Lived Faith.hpr7]

Edited by: Super

Date/Time: 2016-04-11 15:39:24

Accommodate everyone in the service

Assisting parents: content

Assisting parents: modelling

Bible knowledge lacking

Children's church

Children active in church

Children active in service

Children in service: not listening

Confirmation big deal for parents

Different modes of worship

Drop-off after confirmation

Eating together

Example

Faith at school, yes or no

Faith habits

Faith talk

Family activities

Family ministry

Fear for drop-off

Few youth activities
Forming relationships at church
Generation to generation
I don't want to separate church...
I myself believe that we need...
In the past: many youth activities
More freedom in ministries
My parents kept me on the right...
New families involved
New leadership in Sunday school
No plan for faith formation
Only on Sundays
Parenting: support
Parents are taking responsibility...
Parents not taking responsibility
Parents: goals
Possibilities: youth programs
Reasons for drop-off: numbers driven
Reasons for drop-off: other churches
Reasons for drop-off: other cities
Role of parents
Service inclusive
Shortest route to confirmation
Signs of lived faith
Spending time as family
Sunday school structure
Sunday service must be one big...
That families can go to church..
Time issues
We are one family
Young adult phase: exploring

APPENDIX F – FINAL LIST OF CODES

Code neighbors list

Code-Filter: All

HU: Lived Faith

File: [C:\Users\Jaco Schoeman\Documents\Scientific
Software\ATLAsTi\TextBank\Lived Faith.hpr7]

Edited by: Super

Date/Time: 2016-05-23 05:12:30

Code: Assisting parents_activities {16-0}

Code: Assisting parents_content {28-0}

Code: Assisting parents_modelling {4-1}

Role of congregation <is cause of>

Code: assisting parents Rated low {7-0}

Code: Bible knowledge {18-0}

Code: conf_drop-off numbers {2-0}

Code: conf_drop-off {10-0}

Code: conf_drop-off other churches {10-0}

Code: conf_drop-off other cities {2-0}

Code: conf_fear drop-off {4-0}

Code: conf_important for parents {2-0}

Code: Eating together {22-1}

Role of parents <is property of>

Code: Example {46-1}

<is property of> Role of parents

Code: Faith habits {76-1}

Role of parents <is property of>

Code: Faith talk {49-1}

Role of parents <is property of>

Code: Forming relationships at church {23-0}

Code: Generation to generation {16-1}

Role of parents <is cause of>

Code: I don't want to separate church.. {1-0}

Code: I know I'm responsible for my .. {1-0}

Code: I myself believe that we need .. {1-0}

Code: More freedom in ministries {1-0}

Code: my parents kept me on the righ.. {2-0}

Code: New families involved {1-0}

Code: New in the faith {4-0}

Code: Parents are taking responsibil.. {3-0}

Code: Parents not taking responsibility {3-0}

Code: Role of congregation {66-5}

<is cause of> Assisting parents_modelling

<is cause of> S school_better structure

<is cause of> S Service_ that families can go to church..

<is cause of> youth activities_possibilities

Role of parents <noname>

Code: Role of parents {69-8}

<is property of> Eating together

<is property of> Faith habits

<is property of> Faith talk

<is cause of> Generation to generation

<noname> Role of congregation

<is associated with> Role of school

<is property of> Spending time as family

Example <is property of>

Code: Role of school {8-1}

Role of parents <is associated with>

Code: S school_ no plan for faith formation {4-0}

Code: S school_better structure {16-1}

Role of congregation <is cause of>

Code: S school_new leadership {2-0}

Code: S Service_ accommodate all ages {30-0}

Code: S Service_ children's church {15-0}

Code: S Service_ Children don't listen {10-0}

Code: S Service_ different modes of worship {2-0}

Code: S Service_ that families can go to church.. {7-1}

Role of congregation <is cause of>

Code: S Service_ must be one big.. {3-0}

Code: Signs of lived faith {36-0}

Code: Spending time as family {22-1}

Role of parents <is property of>

Code: Symbiosis church and home {10-0}

Code: Technology {14-0}

Code: The family is small-church {1-0}

Code: Time issues {33-0}

Code: We are one family {22-0}

Code: Young adult phase: exploring {18-0}

Code: Young adults feeling judged {4-0}

Code: youth activities _ few {22-0}

Code: youth activities_ past {6-0}

Code: youth activities_possibilities {22-1}

Role of congregation <is cause of>

APPENDIX G – COHEN’S KAPPA TEST

1. Purpose

Cohen’s Kappa Test was developed to rate the inter-subjectivity of researchers when doing their research in qualitative measurements. According to Baarde, De Goede & Teunissen (2005: 332): “Bij intersubjectiviteit gaat het om de vraag in hoeverre onderzoeksresultaten afhankelijk zijn van de toevallige kenmerken van een onderzoeker. Leveren de analyses van de gegevens, wanneer ze worden uitgevoerd door iemand anders, andere resultaten op?” This is a statistic that measures inter-rater agreement for qualitative (categorical) items. It is generally thought to be a more robust measure than simple percent agreement calculation, since κ takes into account the agreement occurring by chance.

2. Method

To do the Cohen’s Kappa Test, I recruited a fellow student to rate the following codes. With myself as researcher #1, and the second student as Researcher #2, I drafted the formula below at results. ***(Reader B’s answers are marked with the X)***

3. Codes

This project concerns itself with faith formation, as a partnership between the congregation and the home. The “Role of the congregation” and “The role of the Parents” are two codes that occur most often during the interviews. We will also test for elements of each code family to measure that the inter-rater probability correlates well. The test is set up as follows:

Five codes to test for the “Role of the congregation / parents”.

Three codes to test “Assisting Parents”.

Two codes to test the code family “Confirmation class”.

Five codes to test the code family “Sunday School”.

Five codes to test the code family “Sunday service”.

The codes for “Role of congregation / parents”

Each time an interviewee refers to the specific expectations they have of themselves in terms of faith formation, or expectations that they have of the congregation for the development of the faith of their young, one of these codes are given.

Code: ‘Role of congregation’

This code contains the expectation of members that the congregation to which they belong, should act in a certain manner. This may not be in writing or even spoken out loud, but still the expectation remains.

Code: ‘Role of the parents’

This code depicts the expectations that parents have of themselves when it comes to the topic of faith formation of their young. They understand this as their task, and their responsibility.

Examples of: The role of the congregation / parents.

The role of the congregation

The role of parents

“Structure in Sunday School”

“To be a good role model”

“More activities for our teenagers” “To pray at bedtime with your kids”

Which code would you give each of the following five statements?

“My daughter is a teenager, and I have to admonish her to do devotions on her own. She is older, and she has to take the responsibility on herself to develop her relationship with the Lord. I need to remind her often to read her Bible and to pray.”

Role of congregation

Role of parents

“Another building block is what we do at home, by reading and praying together. We try to do it every evening. That is our time together. I think it is important to fix it as a habit, because that is what you need to get you through the day.”

- Role of congregation
- Role of parents

“I would ask for more support for the youth. Like doing youth camps. I mean, they do women’s’ conferences, and men’s’ conferences, why not something similar for the youth?”

- Role of congregation
- Role of parents

“I also think children’s church on Sunday are very helpful. We don’t just want to entertain the children, we are teaching the Bible. They don’t just come for the fun and games.”

- Role of congregation
- Role of parents

“There was a time when eating dinner together was non-existent in our house, we just sat in front of the TV all the time. But I decided to change all that. I set the table, and my two sons had turns to help me with that. And their phones must stay in their rooms, and we have those 20 minutes together as family and we talk a lot.

- Role of congregation
- Role of parents

The codes for “Assisting parents”

As an element of the role of the congregation, parents spoke about the need that parents have to be assisted by the congregation. This includes activities, for instance

coaching and training to be better parents, support in times of need, help with specific issues and to be integrated into a special structure at church that may help and support parents and families.

Code: 'Assisting parents_rated low'

This code is assigned each time an interviewee states that his / her congregation is not doing enough to assist parents.

Example:

"Seldom do you find parents who know how to coach their young, and the church didn't equip us to do that. The church didn't equip parents to teach their children how to live in this busy, modern world".

Code: 'Assisting parents_modelling'

This code is assigned each time an interviewee expresses the need for good role modelling from the church.

Example:

"We left our previous congregation because we had problems with some of the people in leadership positions. My child said to me: f that person is a leader in the church, why does he act in this way? It just isn't right."

Code: 'Assisting parents_content'

This code is assigned each time an interviewee speaks of the manner in which they would like to be assisted by their congregation.

Example:

"I would have searched for a church that can assist me in living up to the promise I made at my child's baptism".

Code: 'Assisting parents_activities'

This code is assigned each time an interviewee mentioned ideas of how they would like the congregation to assist them in their role as parents.

Example:

“I think this congregation offers a lot of opportunities to bring people together. There are meetings, and parents can get involved in a lot of good happenings”.

Which code would you give in each of the following three quotations?

“This one guy has a farm just outside our town, and I would like to take families there, for bike riding, and fishing and eating and spending time together. This is my idea of family ministry.”

X I would assign the code: “Assisting families_activities”.

I would not assign the code: “Assisting families_activities”.

“Say for instance, one of us organizes a braai at his house on a Friday, and we give each person a topic: you, for instance, have teenagers in the house, how do you handle this and that? And you have to give advice according to your topic.”

X I would assign the code: “Assisting families_content”.

I would not assign the code: “Assisting families_content”.

“Individually we get good messages in the teaching. Each week you get useful tools for life. But I have not really gotten anything to help me as a parent.”

X I would assign the code: “Assisting families_modelling”.

I would not assign the code: “Assisting families_modelling”.

The codes for the family on “Confirmation Class”

The literature spends a great amount of time on the subject of confirmation and drop-off after confirmation. In the interview guide we asked in on this, and the data were assigned the following codes.

Code: ‘Conf_drop-off numbers’

Wherever members or pastors mentioned the fact that young people are leaving the congregation, and they add quantifiable information, this code applies.

Example:

“Yes, children are definitely falling away. There’s a huge percentage that falls away. I can only say that I also saw this. I think, one of the main reasons is that our congregation is so numbers driven.”

Code: ‘Conf_drop-off’

This code applies whenever people are remarking on the drop-off after confirmation, without specifics.

Example:

“I would say, for instance, my eldest son should have been confirmed two years ago, and now he doesn’t want to come to church anymore.”

Code: ‘Conf_drop-off other churches’

Wherever members or pastors mentioned the fact that young people are leaving this congregation to join some other denomination, this code applies.

Example:

“I think the reason why they drop off, is that there are too many choices. They can do whatever they like. There are many churches to visit and sports and stuff to do on a Sunday.”

Code: ‘Conf_drop-off other cities’

This code applies whenever reasons are given for young people who are not seen in church because they are studying elsewhere.

Example:

“There are different reasons. Sometimes the young ones leave to go study in the city”.

Which code would you give in each of the following two quotations?

“It may also be that they are simply elsewhere. Maybe they are studying in Pretoria or the Cape in that period. But when they return, then they go to church with us.”

X I would assign the code “Conf_drop-off other cities”

I would not assign the code “Conf_drop-off other cities”

“I was born here, baptized, did confirmation and then I also went to explore elsewhere. There comes a time that you want to go see what else is available, and often they are caught up in this new way of doing church. There is a lot of vibe and music and stuff and they miss the plot. So, I think many young people do this.”

I would assign the code “Conf_drop-off numbers”

X I would not assign the code “Conf_drop-off numbers”

The code family “Sunday school”

Sunday school has long been a vital part of youth ministry, but very often is found in a state of disrepair. This code is linked to statements concerning Sunday school.

Code: ‘S school_no plan for faith formation’

This code relates to all the opinions and experiences of parents when they indicate that Sunday school doesn’t have a plan or strategy at present.

Example:

“There was a big gap here. I felt that the kids came very willy-nilly to Sunday school: if you want to come, fine, if you don’t want to come, fine.”

Code: ‘S school_better structure’

This code refers to all the comments made on how Sunday school could be structured to be more effective in faith formation.

Example:

“I want there to be better structure. There must be structures that assist me in teaching the right stuff to my kids. I grew up with Sunday school outings, and had to memorize scripture.”

Code: ‘S school_new leadership’

This code refers to the remarks made on the impact that new volunteer leadership makes on Sunday school.

Example:

“Now we have some younger adults who are involved in the leadership of the Sunday school. These guys did the rounds: they have visited other churches but for whatever reasons they are back. And they say that our system has been too lax. We need to know who each and every child is.”

Which code would you give in each of the following five quotations?

“I think when we were young, they didn’t put in much effort with Sunday school. Now we do activities with the kids. And then they go to their separate classes, and there is a message, and a game. Sometimes they have to act out some Bible verse. I think the children love it.

I would code this segment with “S school_new leadership”.

X I would not code this segment with “S school_new leadership”.

“Our son attended the children’s Sunday school here, and he said it becomes boring after a while: they sing, and then nothing more.”

X I would code this segment with “S school_no plan for faith formation”.

I would not code this segment with “S school_no plan for faith formation”.

“The thing I miss, is, when I was young we used to have Sunday school handbooks, and you had some homework to do, on Monday, Tuesday, and so on. You had to fill in stuff, write out a verse and it was good to do that. But our children don’t have any of that.”

I would code this segment with “S school_new leadership”.

X I would not code this segment with “S school_new leadership”.

“When I think back on how I grew up, I remember the parables and the Bible stories. That is what church (Sunday school) taught me. And I still remember the pictures. If you ask me about the parables, for instance, my references are the pictures that were used to teach us.”

X I would code this segment with “S school_beter structure”.

I would not code this segment with “S school_beter structure”.

“Honestly, I don’t know what the building blocks of faith formation is. Well, you have heard what we are doing at present. Maybe it’s a little thumb suck, but we hope our activities will lead to that point.”

X I would code this segment with “S school_no plan for faith formation”.

I would not code this segment with “S school_no plan for faith formation”.

The family of codes on “Sunday service”

Six codes revolve around the experiences of congregation members in the Sunday service at church. I grouped this together as they are interlinked and should be treated as neighbours.

The code: “S service_accommodate all ages”

This code is linked to all instances where people express a meaning that the Sunday service should include people of all ages.

Example:

“I saw it with our Christmas service, where the children were involved in the service”.

Code: ‘S service_children’s church’

This code refers to the activities of a separate children’s church that is happening during the time of the Sunday service.

Example:

“But I will not close the children’s church. But it must not become a place where people dump their babies”.

The code: "S service_children don't listen"

This code is linked to all instances where people say that young children sitting in the Sunday service have a hard time to listen, concentrate, and understand what is being said.

Example:

"Personally, I prefer that they attend children's church. They won't understand half of what the pastor says on a Sunday morning".

Code: 'S service_different modes of worship'

This code refers to an understanding of the local congregation to accommodate different styles of worship because there are different ages-groups involved in the service.

Example:

"The organist we have at present, she doesn't have the time to practice with children in the evenings, but we want to develop a children's ensemble. That is one of the ways that we get children involved, we need an ensemble".

The code: "S service_that families can go to church"

This code is a reflection of all the quotations where people express their desire to visit the service together as a family.

Example:

"I would have brought my kids to church from early on. For a long time we took turns: I would stay at home with the kids while my husband goes to church, and then it would be my turn and he would stay at home with the kids. I think that's wrong, we should have just come as a family to church."

Code: 'S service_must be one big family'

This is an in vivo code referring to a statement a pastor made about his perception of the Sunday service.

Example:

“Sunday service must be one big family event.”

Which code would you give in each of the following five quotations?

“My kids are older now, and even now they can’t listen to the pastor. I have threatened them to ask questions when we come home, and then they will sit upright and listen for a few minutes, but soon they’ll start to slide back again.”

X Yes, I will code this with: “S service_children don’t listen”

No, I will not code this with: “S service_children don’t listen”

“But it is tricky. I want my congregation to teach my children stuff, but if they attend church with me in the mornings, they will quickly get bored. It will be way over their heads”

Yes, I will code this with: “S service_must be one big family”

X No, I will not code this with: “S service_must be one big family”

“I also would say that if our children enjoy children’s church, it makes it easier for us to come as well. Some Sunday mornings it is difficult to get them out of bed. But you go through the motions, and afterwards when we leave church, she will say: I’m glad we attended. So, if they enjoy it, it is easier for us to go.”

X Yes, I will code this with: “S service_children’s church”

No, I will not code this with: “S service_children’s church”

“And you must tell them to bring their kids to church from a very early age. They often think people will be irritated by a little child. I’m dead set against a nursing room at the church, chaos reigns there. Sometimes I am also irritated by a crying baby in church, that’s o.k. then you can go out for a while.”

Yes, I will code this with: “S service_different modes of worship”

X No, I will not code this with: “S service_different modes of worship”

“Jesus said: let the little ones come to me. They must also feel welcome at church. The Bible was written so that regular people can understand it. We need to lower the level.”

X Yes, I will code this with: “S service_accommodate all ages”

No, I will not code this with: “S service_accommodate all ages”

4. Scoring the Kappa test

The equation for κ is:

$$\kappa = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e}$$

where P_o is the relative observed agreement among raters, and P_e is the hypothetical probability of chance agreement, using the observed data to calculate the probabilities of each observer randomly saying each category. If the raters are in complete agreement then $\kappa = 1$. If there is no agreement among the raters other than what would be expected by chance (as given by p_e), $\kappa \leq 0$.

		B	
		y	n
A	y	12	0
	n	3	5

Note that there were 20 quotations to code. Of these, 12 were coded “Yes” by both reader A and reader B, and 5 were coded “No” by both readers. Thus, the observed proportionate agreement is $P_o = (12 + 5) / 20 = 0.85$

To calculate P_e (the probability of random agreement) we note that:

Reader A said "Yes" to 12 codes and "No" to 8 codes. Thus reader A said "Yes" 60% of the time.

Reader B said "Yes" to 15 codes "No" to 5 codes. Thus reader B said "Yes" 75% of the time.

Therefore the probability that both of them would say "Yes" randomly is $0.60 \cdot 0.75 = 0.45$ and the probability that both of them would say "No" is $0.40 \cdot 0.25 = 0.10$. Thus the overall probability of random agreement is $\Pr(e) = 0.45 + 0.1 = 0.55$.

So now applying our formula for Cohen's Kappa we get:

$$K = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e} = \frac{0.85 - 0.55}{1 - 0.55} = 0.6$$

APPENDIX H - REPORT ON FAITH FORMATION IN THE CONGREGATION A

1. Thank you for the opportunity.

First and foremost, let me thank the Board from my heart for the opportunity to be able to do my research in the Congregation of A. It entailed additional organization and effort from a lot of people. Additionally, it exposes a congregation: it makes them vulnerable to let strangers talk to members in this way. I appreciate the fact that you were willing to submit yourself to this learning process. For this reason, I gladly share my findings with the Board. If you so request, I will give a detailed report, but for the sake of brevity, I'll be concise.

2. What I heard

(A total of 15 people was part of the two focus group interviews, which means that this research is by no means representative of the whole congregation. It can, however, be seen as a good cross-cut of ideas and opinions of parents in the congregation):

- a. We enjoy the Sunday service together. The congregations' understanding of the main service on Sundays is that it is inclusive. All ages should be there, even the very young ones and the young-adults as well. There is some frustration with bringing younger children to church, as a lot of what is happening, is way over their heads. One possible answer to this is the existence of the children's church, but people are only partially convinced that this is a good idea – because it takes the children out of the main service.
- b. We wish to have that family-feel at church. The image of a granddad, dad and son, all sitting around the same Christmas tree on Christmas Eve, is applicable here. Many members still do not experience this, though. They're aching for some kind of network where they can become involved with other believers, and be part of a social structure of believers.

- c. Sunday school is a big frustration. We don't provide good study material. There is no systematic plan in place, and neither the congregation, nor the children are excited about what is happening. The confirmation class is ok, but the other classes really need attention.
- d. Younger families are getting involved in the congregation, and they are starting to take part in what is happening. It is heartening to see them taking initiative. There is a lot of latent energy that may be unleashed here.
- e. Parents are asking for more youth activities during the week. Teenagers are in need of this, and they will keep on searching, even if their search takes them to other congregations.

3. What does the research show?

- a. In the process of faith formation, two partners are involved: the congregation and the home. Both are necessary, and have a crucial role to play. This partnership is already in place, although it might not have been formalized in words as yet: parents expect some actions from the congregation, and the congregation have certain expectations for the parents to fulfil. It often happens that these partners don't do what is expected of them. In the same way that this kind of situation may sour a marital relationship, it may hurt the partnership between the congregation and the home - it may lead to members resigning and leaving to go to other congregations. Thus, we believe that this partnership should be explored, and developed. It has to be verbalized and become part of the plans of the congregation.
- b. The role of the congregation in this partnership. The members and parents who are part of the congregation have certain expectations of their congregation. When these expectations are complied with, it strengthens their role as parents. These are their expectations: **A.** Create a Sunday worship service where we can come as family and experience God's presence. The music must speak to us all, and the message must be such as to give as food for thought

for the week to come. We would like to be able to bring our small children and even our young-adults and not worry whether they are being bored out of their minds. It is ok if these ministries are age-specific and happening in different venues. **B.** Produce a Sunday school that is effective. We would like our children to get a solid Biblical foundation. They need to be introduced to the faith in a planned, systematic way. We, as parents, can focus on the practical side of lived faith, but we don't have the tools or knowledge to explain it all in a well-thought-out process. **C.** Create opportunities where our teenagers can come and socialize at church. They must feel that the congregation cares about them and their needs, and are catering for their needs. These will include camps, visiting places and socials on Friday evenings. **D.** Please assist us, as parents. Life is hard, and we have many challenges. We do not have the time or energy to read up on parenting, so make it easy for us. Give us the necessary information that may be of help. Also, give us a social network on which to fall back on, where we can ask our questions, get good advice and know that our burdens are shared.

- c. The role of the parents in this partnership. There are some responsibilities that only parents can comply with, in this partnership. These include: **A.** Parents, make time to be with your children. Spending time with your children shows that you care about them. It creates spaces for caring conversations. We know parents are busy, and that time is always pressed, but we have heard parents repeatedly lamenting the fact that they would have liked to spend more time with their young. The congregation can help parents by giving creative ideas how to make better use of the available time in hand. **B.** Eat dinners together at the table. One of the most effective ways of parenting is dining together. The congregation can highlight this expectation. They may even make it a congregation-wide focus for a quarter: show examples; give the families ideas of how to make this a great experience. **C.** The example of the parent's lives. Kids will do what you do; they will not do as you say. Parents need to be reminded of this on a regular basis. **D.** The best way of enhancing your example is by forming regular habits of faith. When you are constant in your practice of praying before meals, or going on journeys, having devotions and attending Sunday service, these practices will assist in transferring your faith to the next

generation. Lastly, parents teach your children rules to govern their use of technology so that it will not rule their lives.

- d. When these mutual expectations aren't being met, there is no symbiosis happening between the congregation and the home. When this becomes the case, often parents will leave in search of another congregation that will accommodate their expectations. It is like dancing with a partner who cannot dance. The dance will not last long, before you go in search of a partner who will be willing to dance with you. There is a strong indication that drop-off after confirmation may be linked to this reason.

4. Suggestions

- a. Family ministry is an executive decision. The church board needs to buy into the philosophy. They need to link this ministry to specific persons and a definite budget. It should become a priority for a while, something like: the year of the family. During this period, certain activities and structures can be put into place for the long haul.
- b. Develop the Sunday main service as central focal point. In your congregation this is the expectation, and people are coming with that expectation. You also have more than one style of worship already (organ and piano). One option you may want to explore is to create a youth-church-board. These youth may be able to enhance the service with their creative ideas. Constructively plan for the kids who are attending the Sunday services: create a children's segment that repeats every Sunday. Or you may place one or two questions in the weekly bulletin to take home so that families may discuss the sermon in the week. One parent shared that they bring a notebook to church every Sunday, and write down the text and main point of the sermon. Afterwards they will see if their children understood everything that was said, and they will look at it again a few times during the week. Thus, the worship service remains the central focal point, but the home becomes a partner in faith formation.

- c. Empower volunteers to grow the youth ministry. This energy is already at your disposal through the new families who are getting involved; it just needs to be managed well. Be cautious not to out-source this to an outsider, for instance a candidate student of theology or a gifted youth worker who isn't part of the congregational structure. Furthermore, be careful not to over-extend any volunteer. The ideal is to have a team who can share the responsibilities. Then, divide the task into smaller segments, which people can do without exerting too much time or energy.

- d. Involve parents and the personnel of the Sunday school to spend a day planning and envisioning a plan for Sunday school. This might be in the form of a workshop; you might even want to involve a facilitator. The idea is to take time to think through the complete process of what you want to achieve with Sunday school. How are we going to measure success? Which materials are we going to use? How do we structure this into the different age-related groups? Communicate this well to parents. Prepare well for this event. Research a lot of materials.

- e. Develop a team who will take responsibility to start some youth activities at church. This might even be a project for the families involved with confirmation class. Task this team with organizing two social events per month for the youth of the congregation. They can prepare a program for months ahead, which has a fair amount of diversity in it. Sometimes it may be a barbeque, at other times maybe a Christian movie (For instance: Bulletproof, God's not dead, etc.) Some of these events may include the whole family, so that parents may have the opportunity to social with other families at church.

- f. Equipping the parents. The congregation needs to create events from time to time that will assist the parents in their role (maybe twice a year). Examples of such events may be to get known speakers like Hettie Brits, Vibrant Faith, Cassie Caarstens, and Deon Kitching. Take time to listen to the needs of parents. Parents may even be invited to write down their needs anonymously beforehand so that the speaker may prepare to answer their

issues. Parents must walk away from such an event feeling: my congregation really helps me with my God-given task as being parent.

- g. Communicate the expectations that the congregation has of its parents on a regular basis during the sermons. Often remind the families to spend time together / have meals together / look at your conduct / commit to spiritual practices. This should happen often, because vision leaks, people get busy and forget. The congregation needs to help parents form these habits.

5. Conclusion

One parent in the study said: “If I could turn back the clock, and my child was one year old again, I would go in search of a congregation that will help me to live out my baptismal vows.” Parents eagerly desire to have a partner who will assist them in this great endeavour in life.

I do believe that these guidelines I shared in this document will assist the congregation in forming an agenda that will realize the dream of family ministry and faith formation at home. During the research I was struck by the teachable spirit of your leaders and members, this is key to handling the challenges that may come as a result. May our Lord bless you with the task at hand.

APPENDIX I - REPORT ON FAITH FORMATION IN THE CONGREGATION B

1. Thank you for the opportunity.

First and foremost, let me thank the Board from my heart for the opportunity to be able to do my research in the Congregation of B. It entailed additional organization and effort from many people. Additionally, it exposes a congregation: it makes them vulnerable to let strangers talk to members in this way. I appreciate the fact that you were willing to submit yourself to this learning process. For this reason, I gladly share my findings with the Board. If you so request, I will give a detailed report, but for the sake of brevity, I'll be concise.

2. What I heard

(A total of 15 people was part of the two focus group interviews, which means that this research is by no means representative of the whole congregation. It can, however, be seen as a good cross-cut of ideas and opinions of parents in the congregation)

- a. We enjoy the Sunday service. Respondents often expressed their appreciation to Ds Pieter-Nel for the powerful messages and the worship experience that the adults can experience week after week in the main service.
- b. We enjoy the children's ministry and children's church. Zelna is honoured for her dedicated work with the smaller children. Both the parents and their children can see the results of her continual creative investment into their children.
- c. We are experiencing chaos in the teen ministry. People look back with fondness on the ministry that Jaco Oosthuisen had with the teens in previous years, but the gap left by him going away, is huge. The parents understand that the

congregation is trying to fix this situation, but that it will take time, but as it is, there is a steady outflow of youth to other congregations because of this.

- d. Families get little attention. The congregation offers excellent ministries to the adults, and the children, and are working on ministry to the teens, but this all happens in isolation. Families are not being cared for as a unit.
- e. The issues of living in the city. Members experience the pain of living in the city, for instance fear of crime, commuting, time constraints tearing families apart and a feeling of isolation.

3. What does the research show?

a. In the process of faith formation, two partners are involved: the congregation and the home. Both are necessary, and have a crucial role to play. This partnership is already in place, although it might not have been formalized in words as yet: parents expect some actions from the congregation, and the congregation have certain expectations for the parents to fulfil. It often happens that these partners don't do what is expected of them. In the same way that this kind of situation may sour a marital relationship, it may hurt the partnership between the congregation and the home - it may lead to members resigning and leaving to go to other congregations. Thus, we believe that this partnership should be explored, and developed. It has to be verbalized and become part of the plans of the congregation.

b. The role of the congregation in this partnership. The members and parents who are part of the congregation have certain expectations of their congregation. When these expectations are complied with, it strengthens their role as parents. These are their expectations: **A.** Create a Sunday worship service where we can come as family and experience God's presence. The music must speak to us all, and the message must be such as to give as food for thought for the week to come. We would like to be able to bring our small children and even our young-adults and not worry whether they are being bored out of their minds. It is ok if these ministries are age-specific and happening in different venues. **B.** Produce a Sunday school that is effective. We would like our children to get a solid Biblical foundation. They need

to be introduced to the faith in a planned, systematic way. We, as parents, can focus on the practical side of lived faith, but we don't have the tools or knowledge to explain it all in a well-thought-out process. **C.** Create opportunities where our teenagers can come and socialize at church. They must feel that the congregation cares about them and their needs, and are catering for their needs. These will include camps, visiting places and socials on Friday evenings. **D.** Please assist us, as parents. Life is hard, and we have many challenges. We do not have the time or energy to read up on parenting, so make it easy for us. Give us the necessary information that may be of help. Also, give us a social network on which to fall back on, where we can ask our questions, get good advice and know that our burdens are shared.

c. The role of the parents in this partnership. There are some responsibilities that only parents can comply with, in this partnership. These include: **A.** Parents, make time to be with your children. Spending time with your children shows that you care about them. It creates spaces for caring conversations. We know parents are busy, and that time is always pressed, but we have heard parents repeatedly lamenting the fact that they would have liked to spend more time with their young. The congregation can help parents by giving creative ideas how to make better use of the available time in hand. **B.** Eat dinners together at the table. One of the most effective ways of parenting is dining together. The congregation can highlight this expectation. They may even make it a congregation-wide focus for a quarter: show examples; give the families ideas of how to make this a great experience. **C.** The example of the parent's lives. Kids will do what you do; they will not do as you say. Parents need to be reminded of this on a regular basis. **D.** The best way of enhancing your example is by forming regular habits of faith. When you are constant in your practice of praying before meals, or going on journeys, having devotions and attending Sunday service, these practices will assist in transferring your faith to the next generation. Lastly, parents should teach their children rules to govern their use of technology so that it will not rule their lives.

d. When these mutual expectations aren't being met, there is no symbiosis happening between the congregation and the home. If this is the case, often parents will leave in search of another congregation that will accommodate their

expectations. It is like dancing with a partner who cannot dance. The dance will not last long, before you go in search of a partner who will be willing to dance with you. There is a strong indication that drop-off after confirmation may be linked to this reason.

4. Suggestions

a. Family ministry is an executive decision. The church board needs to buy into the philosophy. They need to link this ministry to specific persons and a definite budget. It should become a priority for a while, something like: the year of the family. During this period, certain activities and structures can be put into place for the long haul.

b. The model where a single, gifted person heads the youth ministry, is called the superman-model (Doug Fields), and it is dangerous. The research that Karen-Marie Yust did, came to the same conclusion: "Children's ministries are heavily dependent on the vision, energy, and creativity of one or two persons in the congregation, usually – but not always – the Director of Christian Education or an associate pastor. If this person were to leave, the innovative ministries they are trying to create would revert to more traditional models or would cease. This creates a significant barrier to the development of a congregational theology of ministry with children or the communal implementation of the vision held by the person on whom that ministry depends. When the primary person seeks to empower others by delegating authority or tasks, the theological and methodological import of her or his vision rarely transfers with the task."

The risks in this kind of model showed themselves when Jaco Oosthuisen left. While it is true that we believe the right people must be in the right place for the right ministry, it is crucial that a team of volunteers should augmented this person's ministry. Search for persons in the congregation who have the spiritual gifts of working with youth, and organize them around the youth worker, so that, should he leave for whatever reason, the ministry should still be standing firm.

c. Involve parents and the personnel of the Sunday school to spend a day planning and envisioning a plan for Sunday school, catechism classes and youth ministry.

This might be in the form of a workshop; you might even want to involve a facilitator. The idea is to take time to think through the complete process of what you want to achieve with Sunday school. How are we going to measure success? Which materials are we going to use? How do we structure this into the different age-related groups? Communicate this well to parents. Prepare well for this event. Research a lot of materials.

One of the parents involved in the focus group interview shared the following: “We attended another church for a short while, and what I liked was that their youth ministry was very structured. We received an e-mail every Friday saying what the children in grades 1-3 were doing on Sunday, and the children in grades 4-6, and so. They all received handbooks that stayed at church, so that it could not be forgotten at home. They did a series for the whole year. You knew exactly what they were busy with at any given time. It made so much sense to me. That e-mail was very useful for starting a conversation later.”

d. Equipping the parents. The congregation needs to create events from time to time that will assist the parents in their role (maybe twice a year). Examples of such events may be to get known speakers like Hettie Brits, Vibrant Faith, Cassie Caarstens, and Deon Kitching. Take time to listen to the needs of parents. Parents may even be invited to write down their needs anonymously beforehand so that the speaker may prepare to answer their issues. Parents must walk away from such an event feeling: my congregation really helps me with my God-given task as being parent.

e. Communicate the expectations that the congregation has of its parents on a regular basis during the sermons. Often remind the families to spend time together / have meals together / look at your conduct / commit to spiritual practices / govern the use of technology. This should happen often, because vision leaks, people get busy and forget. The congregation needs to help parents form these habits.

f. Parents would like to worship together with their offspring from time to time. You may consider having an inclusive family-oriented Sunday service a few times a year. Another way of breaking the silo-effect is to align the ministries on a Sunday:

to use the same basic theme in the main service, but also at children's church and the teen ministry. This enables the families to talk about their experiences and to take the message home for further discussion.

- g. Cell group ministry is a powerful tool to connect families. Repeatedly in the interviews people mentioned how they have been strengthened in their parenting by the other members of a cell group. One interviewee had this to say: "We once attended a cell group where the other couples' children were somewhat older than ours. And they talked about stuff that parents have to grapple with. Even practical stuff like what to do when they don't want to eat their greens. And it helped a lot." The congregation can invest time and energy in growing cell groups. Make this a focus area, especially amongst families with young children.

5. Conclusion

One parent in the study said: "If I could turn back the clock, and my child was one year old again, I would go in search of a congregation that will help me to live out my baptismal vows." Parents eagerly desire to have a partner who will assist them in this great endeavour in life.

I do believe that these guidelines I shared in this document will assist the congregation in forming an agenda that will realize the dream of family ministry and faith formation at home. During the research I was struck by the teachable spirit of your leaders and members, this is key to handling the challenges that may come as a result. May our Lord bless you with the task at hand.

APPENDIX J - REPORT ON FAITH FORMATION IN CONGREGATION C

1. Thank you for the opportunity.

First and foremost, let me thank the Board from my heart for the opportunity to be able to do my research in the Congregation of C. It entailed additional organization and effort from many people. Furthermore, it exposes a congregation: it makes them vulnerable to let strangers talk to members in this way. I appreciate the fact that you were willing to submit yourself to this learning process. For this reason, I gladly share my findings with the Board. If you so request, I will give a detailed report, but for the sake of brevity, I will be concise.

2. What I heard

(A total of nine people was part of the two focus group interviews, which means that this research is by no means representative of the whole congregation. It can, however, be seen as a good cross-cut of ideas and opinions of parents in the congregation)

- a. **We love our faith community.** This congregation consists of new believers from diverse backgrounds. This is a powerful witness to the transformational power of the gospel. This is also a small and intimate community, where people can easily become friends and have support from each other. The members experience acceptance and they value the diversity of cultures and race. No matter what your history or background, or if the rest of your family would like to worship with you or not, you are welcomed here. Acceptance is a high value in congregation C.
- b. **As young believers, we find it difficult to do faith formation with our young.** Most of these parents did not have a model of faith formation from when they grew up. Furthermore, as they are new to the faith, they have not yet developed the discernment to know what materials and content is good and

acceptable for their kids. Often a partner may not yet be as committed to the faith, thus one parent has to do the faith formation exercise solo, and this is a challenge. Also, we have heard that some of the members regret starting this walk of faith late in life, thus there are some habits in the home that must first be unlearned – there is a lot of “catching-up” to do with regards to faith formation at home.

- c. **Parents feel the need for support**, especially parents with young children (pre-primary and primary school). Parents with toddlers have frustration over the fact that they can seldom hear the complete Sunday service. Their attention is divided and they fear being a nuisance to the other members. Some children enjoy the children’s church, so that is a great plus, but parents with kids in the 12+ age group also wonder how their kids can become involved and excited about church. They feel isolated and fear that their children will reject church because this congregation does not meet their needs.
- d. **The congregation’s understanding of the main service on Sundays is that it is inclusive**. All ages should be there, even the very young ones and the young-adults as well. People like having the children around, as they are seen as part of the fabric of the congregation. The devil is in the details: how do we structure this to serve everyone?
- e. **Parents are asking for more youth activities during the week**. Teenagers are in need of this, and they will keep on searching, even if their search takes them to other congregations.

3. What does the research show?

- a. In the process of faith formation, two partners are involved: the congregation and the home. Both are necessary, and have a crucial role to play. This partnership is already in place, although it might not have been formalized in words yet: parents expect some actions from the congregation, and the congregation have certain expectations for the parents to fulfil. It often happens that these partners do not do what is expected of them. In the same way that

this kind of situation may sour a marital relationship, it may hurt the partnership between the congregation and the home - it may lead to members resigning and leaving to go to other congregations. Thus, we believe that this partnership should be explored, and developed. It has to be verbalized and become part of the plans of the congregation.

- b. The role of the congregation in this partnership. The members and parents who are part of the congregation have certain expectations of their congregation. When these expectations are complied with, it strengthens their role as parents. These expectations are generic and universal, they are found in all faith settings. I will add additional detail in *italics* that are specific to congregation C. These are their expectations: **A.** Create a Sunday worship service where we can come as family and experience God's presence. The music must speak to us all, and the message must be such as to give as food for thought for the week to come. We would like to be able to bring our small children and even our young-adults and not worry whether they are being bored out of their minds. It is acceptable if these ministries are age-specific and happening in different locales. *Assist parents with small children to be part of and enjoy the Sunday service.* **B.** Produce a Sunday school that is effective. We would like our children to get a solid Biblical foundation. They need to be introduced to the faith in a planned, systematic way. We, as parents, can focus on the practical side of lived faith, but we don't have the tools or knowledge to explain it all in a well-thought-out process. *Source materials that parents may use in the formation of the faith in their young.* **C.** Create opportunities where our teenagers can come and socialize at church. They must feel that the congregation cares about them and their needs, and are catering for their needs. These will include camps, visiting places and socials on Friday evenings. **D.** Please assist us, as parents. Life is hard, and we have many challenges. We do not have the time or energy to read up on parenting, so make it easy for us. Give us the necessary information that may be of help. Also, give us a social network on which to fall back on, where we can ask our questions, get good advice and know that our burdens are shared.

- c. The role of the parents in this partnership. There are some responsibilities that only parents can comply with, in this partnership. These include: **A.** Parents, make time to be with your children. Spending time with your children shows that you care about them. It creates spaces for caring conversations. We know parents are busy, and that time is always pressed, but we have heard parents repeatedly lamenting the fact that they would have liked to spend more time with their young. The congregation can help parents by giving creative ideas how to make better use of the available time in hand. **B.** Eat dinners together at the table. One of the most effective ways of parenting is dining together. The congregation can highlight this expectation. They may even make it a congregation-wide focus for a quarter: show examples; give the families ideas of how to make this a great experience. **C.** The example of the parent's lives. Kids will do what you do; they will not do as you say. Parents need to be reminded of this on a regular basis. **D.** The best way of enhancing your example, is by forming regular habits of faith. When you are constant in your practice of praying before meals, or going on journeys, having devotions and attending Sunday service, these practices will assist in transferring your faith to the next generation. Lastly, parents teach your children rules to govern their use of technology so that it will not rule their lives.
- d. When these mutual expectations aren't being met, there is no symbiosis happening between the congregation and the home. When this becomes the case, often parents will leave in search of another congregation that will accommodate their expectations. It is like dancing with a partner who cannot dance. The dance will not last long, before you go in search of a partner who will be willing to dance with you. There is a strong indication that visitors come to visit a few times, looking for this, and when they don't see it, they simply never return.

4. Suggestions

- a. Family- and youth ministry is an executive decision. The church board needs to buy into the philosophy. They need to link this ministry to specific persons and a definite budget. It should be discussed with parents to hear

their expectations, and to tap their collective creative imaginations. The leadership of this congregation needs to form a plan how to minister to children of every age group who are part of this congregation.

You may want to involve parents and other personnel from the congregation to spend a day planning and envisioning a plan for faith formation of the children in your congregation. This might be in the form of a workshop; you might even want to involve a facilitator. The idea is to take time to think through the complete process of what you want to achieve. How do we develop faith formation with the amount of kids and the diversity of their ages as it is at present? How are we going to measure success? Which materials are we going to use? How can we include the home and parents in the process? How do we structure this into the different age-related groups? Communicate this well to parents. Prepare well for this event. Research a lot of materials. (Personally, I think this should rather be a model that is home-centered and supported by the congregation.)

- b. Develop the Sunday main service as central focal point. In your congregation this is the expectation, and people are coming with that expectation. You need to communicate your strategy for including the young on a regular basis. Members need to know: we value our younger members. They are part of this community of believers. All children are our children – if a toddler crawls up to your leg, you pick him up and care for him as if it is your child. We are relaxed with the noises children make. We want them to be here.

Constructively plan for the kids who are attending the Sunday services: create a children's segment that repeats every Sunday. Or you may place one or two questions in the weekly bulletin to take home so that families may discuss the sermon in the week. One parent shared that they bring a notebook to church every Sunday, and write down the text and main points of the sermon. Afterwards they will see if their children understood everything that was said, and they will look at it again a few times during the week. Thus, the worship service remains the central focal point, but the home becomes a partner in faith formation. Furthermore, help families to serve together at church: children can help with serving tea and coffee, or handing out the bulletin, or greeting people at the door.

- c. From the interviews it was obvious that the members of congregation C are struggling with the realities of city-life: time constraints, working long hours and having precious little time at home. As most of the members did not grow up in Christian homes, they need the guidance of the congregation how to develop good faith habits and practices. The congregation needs to teach parents how to do devotions at home, how to have meals around a table, how to develop rhythms of faith in the home. Communicate the expectations that the congregation has of its parents on a regular basis during the sermons. Often remind the families to spend time together / have meals together / look at your conduct / commit to spiritual practices, because vision leaks, people get busy and forget. The congregation needs to help parents form these habits.

- d. A budding strategy for families, that may be a blessing to many, is the concept of forming home cell groups with families. This strengthens the message of this congregation that “we are all one big family.” When members develop the habit of regularly meeting at each other’s homes, they become extended family to each other. They create a support system within the congregation. Their needs are met on different levels: they don’t feel so isolated anymore, they develop trust, they can discuss the issues of parenting, they can share resources, and they can even do some studies on parenting in their meetings.

- e. Take hands with the Afrikaans congregation on various levels. One asset that this congregation can utilize more is the partnership with the Afrikaans congregation. This may help on different levels, but let me highlight two: **A.** Ministry to teenagers. As the English congregation has few teenagers, you cannot effectively build a ministry to teens yet. This is already in place in the Afrikaans church, so use it. In order for this to happen, a meeting must be set up so that the youth worker can go visit with the teens from the English congregation, get to know them and welcome them into whatever activities they are doing. **B.** The Afrikaans congregation has some family activities planned on their calendar. Communicate these to the families in the English congregation and motivate them to be part of those events.

- f. Equipping the parents. The congregation needs to create events from time to time that will assist the parents in their role (maybe twice a year). Examples of such events may be to get known speakers like Hettie Brits, Vibrant Faith, Cassie Caarstens, and Deon Kitching. Take time to listen to the needs of parents. Parents may even be invited to write down their needs anonymously beforehand so that the speaker may prepare to answer their issues. Parents must walk away from such an event feeling: my congregation really helps me with my God-given task as being parent.

5. Conclusion

One parent in the study said: "If I could turn back the clock, and my child was one year old again, I would go in search of a congregation that will help me to live out my baptismal vows." Parents eagerly desire to have a partner who will assist them in this great endeavour in life.

I do believe that these guidelines I shared in this document will assist the congregation in forming an agenda that will realize the dream of family ministry and faith formation at home. During the research I was struck by the teachable spirit of your leaders and members, this is key to handling the challenges that may come as a result. May our Lord bless you with the task at hand.